THE CONTRIBUTION OF PAUL HIEBERT TO FOLK RELIGION A MISSIOLOGICAL STUDY AMONG THE DENDIS OF NORTH-EAST BENIN

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ABSTRACT

Hiebert contends that one of the reasons Christian mission has failed or not been very successful among folk religion, is the long ignorance of the folk religion worldview held by many of the early Western Christian missionaries (1982:35-47). Building on insights from his classic essay on the "excluded middle," Paul Hiebert suggests a new concept and paradigm for cross-cultural mission–a three-tiered view of the universe (1982:44-47).

Firstly, using the Dendi people of North-East Benin as the context of the empirical study, this research examined the impact of a phenomenological study of folk religion mission among folk religionists. The researcher argues in this research that the implications for missions of Hiebert's three-tiered view of the universe is the development of two theological concepts: "a theology of the invisible" (Hiebert et al. 1999:370) and "a theology of the kingdom of God." (Love 2000:40; cf. Bosch 1991:10; Glasser et al. 2003:74; Hiebert et al. 1999:25; Ott et al. 2010: 65, 315).

Secondly, this researcher reviewed the Dendi responses to spirit attacks with *ruqyah* and adorcism and discusses how a Christian ritual of exorcism could replace these Dendi crisis rituals. The objective of this study was to evaluate how life crises or special events in the life of the Dendi people call for radical shifts or paradigm shifts. The ethnographic research of this study comprised interviews conducted in two different cities (Kandi and Malanville). The data randomly collected from 28 Dendi adult men and women was analyzed and interpreted using ATLAS.ti 9, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). The qualitative data obtained from the field not only established the fact that the Islam practiced by the Dendi is still heavily influenced by the Dendi animist pre-Islamic worldview, but that a mission strategy that focuses on the people's felt needs would be most efficient.

This study concludes that the felt need approach to mission among folk religion should be preferred and encouraged in Christian mission, because it is Christological missiology, holistic mission, which leads to worldview transformation and conversion: first meet the felt needs of the people and then invite them to follow Jesus (Love 2000:91; Ott et al. 2010:276; White 1905:143).

Declaration

"I, Michée Bakandé Badé, declare that the thesis hereby handed in for the qualification Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at the University of the Free State, is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work for a qualification at/in another University/faculty."

I herewith cede the copyright of this thesis to the University of the Free State.

Signature: <u>Michée Bakandé Badé</u>

Date: April 14, 2022

Dedication

To my dear wife Elmire and our two children, Eliora and Elie-Dana. Thank you for your understanding, sacrifice, patience, and unfailing support throughout the five years of this study. *Sursum corda*!

I also dedicate this research to the Adventist Mission in general and the Adventist Frontier Missions (AFM) in particular. Thank you for giving me and my family the privilege of working among the Dendi people of North-East Benin.

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Chapter 1: General introduction

1.1. Introduction

Paul Gordon Hiebert (13 November 1932-11 March 2007) was considered by his peers as "one of the leading missionary anthropologists of the past half-century" (Netland 2008 in Hiebert 2008:4). Hiebert contends that one of the reasons Christian mission has failed or not been very effective among folk religionists, is the long ignorance of the folk religion worldview by many of the early Western Christian missionaries (1982:35-47). With his classic essay on the "excluded middle," Paul Hiebert introduced a new concept and paradigm for cross-cultural mission–a three-tiered view of the universe (1982:44-47).

1.1.1. Background to the study

From the nineteenth century until the early decades of the twentieth century, Christian missionaries were not very successful in reaching out to Muslims. Rather, with great difficulty and relative paucity, their methods to present the Gospel have been polemical, apologetical, and dialogical based on their understanding of Islam (Skreslet 2012:126-127). In considering the next steps to reach Muslims, some have established contextualized methods relevant to missiology. Using Qur'anic terminologies and literary traditions, these approaches have tried to establish new churches in Muslim-majority societies while avoiding the problem of extraction (2012:126-127).

Increased contextualization efforts among Muslims have led to greater consideration of critical contextualization among folk Muslims–the majority of Muslims, the "spiritually hungry", who emphasize the "unfathomable mercy of God" (Parshall 2004:5). Hence,

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considering that most Muslims are folk Muslims, some have explored the phenomenon of dreams and visions in the realm of power encounters and spiritual warfare to attract Muslims to Jesus, amongst others, Hiebert (1989), Musk (1988; 2005), Love (2000), Parshall (1975; 2004), Stacey (1989), and Woodberry (1989).

Although most of the studies listed above address the subject of mission among folk Muslims, only a few (Hiebert 1989; Love 2000; Stacey 1989) have given a Christian response to the recurring phenomenon of spirit possession among folk Muslims. As such, this researcher argues that there is still a gap in the information, understanding, and mission strategy in the area of mission among folk Islam. As such, this researcher explored the possibility of expanding current critical contextualization approaches to folk Islam using power encounters and a Christian exorcism into a clear critique of the folk Islamic use of *ruqyah*[1] (Islamic exorcism) and adorcism[2] rituals for cases of spirit possession, and developing a Christian response to these through mission work among the Dendi people. As Hiebert, Shaw and Tiénou state, "transformative ministries have to do with the particular, not only the universal. The gospel is truth for people living in specific places and times, and caught in their own dilemmas" (1999:29, 389).

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[1] *Ruqya* or *ruqyah* is seen by some as "a kind of treatment" or a spell, an incantation, or a speech considered divine and "recited as a means of curing disease" (Imam M.B. Yazeed and Ibn M. Al-Qazwini. 2007. *Sunan Ibn Mâjah*. Vol. 5:510). For instance, *ruqyah* is "to recite Sûrat Al-Fitihah or any other Sūrah of the Qur'an and then blow one's breath with saliva over a sick person's body-part." (2007:510).

[2] The term adorcism, according to Openshaw, by opposition to exorcism, was coined by the Belgian structuralist Luc de Heusch (1927-2012). Openshaw points out that the works of the anthropologist Ioan Myrddin Lewis (1930-2014) in Somalia, where the Zar cult is dominant, discuss adorcistic rituals (see Ioan Myrddin Lewis. 1989. Islam in tropical Africa, ecstatic religion: A study of Shamanism and spirit possession; cited in Kathleen Openshaw 2020. "Adorcism" in *The SAGE encyclopedia of the sociology of religion:* 5-7).

According to Hiebert, most Western missionaries came to power-oriented cultures believing in the dualism worldview of the Enlightenment. They neither believed in invisible earthly spirits, living ancestors, and spirit possessions, nor did they take seriously the local rituals and medicines, omens, oracles, shamans, and prophets, and the guidance and assistance they provide to people facing uncertainty in business, marriage, and childbearing (1982:39; 1985:222). As a result, Western missionaries, during the Enlightenment period, neglected "folk religion" or "middle religion" (1982:39-47) and failed to "provide biblical answers to the everyday questions the people face" (1985:222). They had their worldviews unconsciously shaped and influenced by that of the Enlightenment that believed in "Cartesian dualism that divides the cosmos into two realities–the supernatural world of God, angels, and demons, and the natural material world of humans, animals, plants, and matter" (Hiebert et al. 1999:229). Bosch points out that the grand object of mission for Western missionaries during the Enlightenment period was not only to introduce 'Christ' to Africa and Asia, but also to introduce Western civilization ([1991], 2011:287-288).

Consequently, Hiebert's analytical framework has called on Western missionaries (with their belief in rationality and empirical science) to pay more attention to the logical standard (magic and occult phenomena) to explain illnesses, misfortunes, failures, and mystical deaths (1982:36-39). In order to correct their worldview and be more effective in their mission to folk religionists, Hiebert invited Christian missionaries to address the religious belief system of their listeners and answer their questions (1982:43-46). Charles Kraft concurs and argues that Hiebert justly reveals the point that most Western Christian missionaries miss the fact that "an enormous number of invisible spirit beings are between us and God–in a kind of middle zone." (2002:224).

In the case of folk Islam, the main focus of this dissertation, Hiebert explains that, with a biblical critique of folk Islamic beliefs and practices (ancestors, amulets, baraka, dhikr, evil eye, jinn, magic, qismet, sacred sites, and saints), Christian missions can offer a comprehensive *missio Dei*, which touches the major themes of creation, sin, and redemption (1989:61). Thus, in the process of developing an analytical framework that will contrast with the Western Platonic dualistic view (which viewed the world only in a two-tiered dimension) and help in understanding the worldview of folk religionists, Hiebert distinguishes three different levels of religion or belief systems, namely the high or formal religion level; the low or folk religion level; and the natural or social science level (1989:40; Hiebert et al. 1999:73-75).

1.2.   Dendi People of North-East Benin

1.2.1. Nation of Benin

Before 1975, the French colonial name of the Republic of Benin was Dahomey, which was one of the most powerful kingdoms on the Slave Coast of West Africa during the precolonial period (Falen 2011:3; Green 2015:26; Jerry 2015; Monroe 2012:192;). In terms of its influence, Green asserts that, unlike the Songhay empire "which traded just with North Africa", and the realm of the "Kongo which traded just with Atlantic powers", the kingdom of Dahomey "had commercial links both with European traders and with Arab merchants who traded north across the Sahara to Cairo in Egypt and Tripoli in Libya" (2015:26). According to Monroe, the tactics employed by Dahomey's kings to maintain and extend their political order until the collapse of the kingdom, when it was eventually conquered by French colonial forces between 1892 and 1894, "have been the source of much historical research" (Akinjogbin 1967; Polanyi 1966 cited in Monroe 2012:192). Falen describes the religious dynamic of the kingdom in pointing out that deities from neighboring lands were either purchased or borrowed "after

victory of the Dahomean army, either by enslaved captives, or by a desire to appease the enemy's god" (Le Herissé 1911:2 cited in Falen 2011:2). In this context, argues Falen, one of the reasons why earlier Christian mission attempts failed at the beginning of the 17th century was the lack of interest from local people in a religion with no visible deities (Labouret & Rivet 1929 cited in Falen 2011:3, emphasis mine). Thus, it was not until the mid-19th century that Christianity established a permanent presence in the kingdom of Dahomey (Francois, 1906; Clement 1996; Alladaye 2003; Henry 2008 cited in Falen 2011:3).

The Republic of Benin became "The People's Republic of Benin" under the Marxist-Leninist ideology after the coup that brought Major Mathieu Kérékou to power in 1972. The name was shortened again in 1990/1991 to the Republic of Benin after the collapse of the Kérékou government (Bako-Arifari 1995:16; Bierschenk 2009:2;). Today, the Republic of Benin is characterized by ethnic plurality, including not only the ancient Fon kingdom of Dahomey, but also regions inhabited by five other major people groups (Yoruba, Adja, Batombu, Dendi and the Fulbé–the latter three groups being ethnic groups in the North), with more than 100 sub-ethnic groups in pacific coexistence (INSAE 2003:28).

The small country of the Republic of Benin in West Africa is considered the "least evangelized non-Muslim country south of the Sahara" (Joshua Project 2016). With the "highest percentage of ethnic religionists", the Republic of Benin has "Africa's highest percentage of followers of traditional religions" (Joshua Project 2016). After more than three centuries of Catholic and Protestant mission work, the influence of the local traditional religions on Christianity in the country is so strong that "dual allegiance" or "syncretism" is practiced by over 80% of the Christians in the country (Claffey 2007:224). Claffey asserts that a form of Christianity exists in the country, which is "essentially a religion of the elite" (2007:224), while he refers to the "popular, indigenous forms of Christianity", as seen in most African countries,

as "Christianity according to the Beninese" or "Christianity according to the masses" (2007:224). Claffey further explains that the country of Benin appears to be moulding its own Christianity across the different Christian denominations (2007:225). According to Claffey, the strong syncretism that exists in the country of Benin, where, for most Christians, the many deities of the traditional cults are never far away, is due to the fact that "the missionaries may have felt the constraints of Cartesian rationalism in their approach to their ministry, eschewing visions, healing and miracles" (2007:225). Claffey further comments:

> In my encounters with Christians of all denominations, including Catholics, I discovered many common features, fundamental preoccupations and forms of religious expression across the spectrum that blur the well-defined colours of the denominational prism. … It is part of what Karla Poewe describes as "a global popular religiosity which is transcultural, eclectic and fluid". Transcultural but also trans-denominational, since amongst the Churches themselves I discovered a lot of borrowing and improvisation, as they look both to each other and to traditional religions in an attempt to come up with new forms more suited to meeting the realities of living in Benin today and of a rapidly-expanding religious market. (Claffey 2007:226).

The northern part of Benin in particular has very little Christian presence and is dominated by the local traditional religions and Islam. Among the ethnic groups of the North, the Dendi in particular remain heavily under the influence of Islam.

1.2.2. Dendi People

The term 'Dendi' means "down the river" in Songhay (Amusa 2019:115; Moraes Farias 2013; Walter 2012:77). It is used to refer both to two geographical locations in West Africa: the southernmost historical province of the Songhay empire, located downstream from the capital of Gao and the contemporary border area intersected by the Niger River–over 120 km between Niger, Benin, and Nigeria; and a peripheral set of cities and villages connected by a similar language known as Dendi (Walter 2012:77).

Walter describes that the descendants of "aristocratic and warrior groups that emerged from the disintegration of the Songhay Empire" and the local population and land nobles and owners (the Kyanga are known for their worship of local deities) are known today as the Dendi people, regardless of "their Nigerienne, Nigerian, or Beninese nationality" (Walter 2012:78).

The Dendi territory became a regional commercial center because of "its strategic location on the border of three West African countries" (2012:78; see maps 1 and 2). From being an area of insignificant trade in colonial times, the Dendi region (with three main border markets: Malanville (Benin), Kamba (Nigeria), and Gaya (Niger)) has emerged in recent times as a commercial hub, specializing in regional agricultural products such as rice, millet, maize, pasta, wheat semolina, sugar, salt, yam, diverse fruits, manufactured goods (second hand cars and clothes, cement, construction materials, cigarettes, plastic products, and oil), unrefined hydrocarbons, etc. (Boluvi 2004:7; Walter 2012:78).

Map Source: Bethany World Prayer Center

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Map 2: repartition of the Dendi people in the country of Benin
(Source: Joshua Project 2021)

As non-indigenous people, many of the Dendi were traders who moved around the urban areas of northern Benin and tended to settle along the principal ancient caravan routes (Houngnikpo & Decalo 2013:137). At present, the Dendi in the country of Benin are predominantly found in Parakou, where most dignities, successful merchants and urban chiefs are; Dendi in Djougou, where they form a very powerful commercial and political elite; Kandi; Malanville; and Nikki (Houngnikpo & Decalo 2013:137). Originating from the ancient Songhay kingdom or empire, the Dendi people embraced Islam around 1010 after the conversion in 1009 of Dia or Za Kossoi, the early Songhay monarch of Gao (Davidson 1959:97; Niane 1987:123). Since then and still currently, the Dendis have adopted Islam as their religion (Adjeran 2018:21; De Souza 2014:103, 228). Igué (1998:49 cited in Adjeran 2018:21) notes, for instance, that in naming their children, the Dendis abandoned their anthroponomic system and now use the Arab-Muslim anthroponomic system based on birth order, the day or place of delivery, or Qur'anic verses.

Despite the presence of Christianity in the country of Benin since the 17th century, when the first Catholic mission station was established at Ouidah in 1680 on the southern coast (Claffey 2007:143), 99.93% of the Dendi are Muslims, and as such, they constitute an unreached people group (Debourou 2013:69; Houngnikpo & Decalo 2013:137; Joshua Project 2016; Moraes Farias 2013; Olson 1996:143; PeopleGroup 2018). Nevertheless, the Dendi people continue to practice their traditional religion with Islam existing as a superficial religion among them. While "Islam introduced new elements to the Dendi culture", it "left the underlying framework of custom and tradition virtually untouched" (Joshua Project 2016). The Joshua Project further explains:

Islam is superficially important–Spirit possession, magic, sorcery, ancestor worship, and witchcraft, however, remain the vital components of Dendi belief. Most of the villages have possession troops, magician-healers, and witches. In some places, ceremonies of spirit possession occur at least once a week. The most important ceremonies are the genji bi hori (a festival in which the Dendi make offerings to the «black spirits» believed to control pestilence) and the yenaandi («rain dance»). Both of these are held in the dry season. Marabouts (Islamic holy men) lead community prayers but are also used in healing the sick. (Joshua Project, 2016)

Of the four ethnic groups of North-East Benin, the Dendi people today represent the greatest challenge in terms of mission work. Christian missionaries have traditionally focused on cognitive communications in their mission approach among folk religionists. Such mission emphasises the importance of the final realities of a Christian life as taught in Christian hamartiology, eschatology, and soteriology, whereas folk religionists are often deeply concerned with folk-religious practices (astrology, magic, witchcraft, etc.) that affect their daily lives and answer their "why" questions (Hiebert 1985:222).

1.3. Definition of key terms

The methodology of science, especially in social sciences, requires defining the terms at the beginning of any study. Because the word folk qualifies religion, this study starts the definitions with the term religion. Defining the term folk religion will occur later as a consequent task. Hence, this study explains why the word folk is mostly considered as a noun and not as an adjective in this study. Subsequently, this study supplies a working definition for the expression folk religion for the purpose of this research.

1.3.1. Religion

The term religion, from the Latin root *religio* (meaning to unite) (Muck 2000:818) or *religare* (to tie something tightly) (Partridge & Dowley 2013:518), has a varied scope of usage.

For some, the word is a familiar concept that "communicates a commonly recognized content" (Muck 2000:818). For others, it is an "elusive and problematic" term not easily defined (Bowie 2008:862; Hexham 2011:15–19; Muck 2000:818; Stek 1996:665; Stein & Stein 2017:18). Hexham, for instance, points out that students only find a "bewildering series of definitions" when they are looking for a definitive definition of the word 'religion' (2011:15).

Some, such as the Steins and Bielo, argue that it would be difficult to arrive at a universally accepted definition of the word religion (Bielo 2015:13; Stein & Stein 2017:15). Anthropologists such as the Steins warn against a definition that could be ethnocentric, in the sense that it would be either too narrow ("apply only to some cultures and only to some of the phenomena that anthropologists traditionally place within the domain of religion") or too vague, to the point of losing much of its meaning and usefulness, because of being too inclusive (Stein & Stein 2017:15). The Steins, instead, suggest a definition that would be observable and measurable for any social science study, such as working with Ninian Smart's six dimensions of religion, namely the

1   institutional dimension (organization and leadership);
2   narrative dimension (myths, creation stories, worldview);
3   ritual dimension (rites of passage and other important ritual activities),
4   social dimension (religion being a group activity that binds people together);
5   ethical dimension (customs, moral rules); and
6   experiential dimension (religion involving experiences of a sacred reality that is beyond ordinary experience) (Stein & Stein 2017:15).

In contrast, Bielo argues that a definitive and succinct definition of the term religion would be unhelpful and misleading (Bielo 2015:1). To defend his assertion, Bielo, in occurrence, points out that Karl Marx (1818-83), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), and Max Weber

(1864-1920), three of the most influential thinkers in the study of religion, only articulated theoretical sensibilities or different ways of thinking about religion, but did not offer any operational definitions (Bielo 2015:3). Thus, even though Bielo (2015:4-12) compares nine anthropological definitions of the word religion (Table 1), he points out that his comparative exercise was neither to be exhaustive (because it is a futile task), nor to identify links between definition and theories (they will not always be obvious); rather, he explains, his comparative work is intended to demonstrate the relationship between a definition and what aspect(s) of religion the author is prioritizing in his study of religion (2015:13). Thus, Bielo observes that the nine definitions he compared present a range of aspects that have been instrumental for the authors of each of the nine definitions in their definition of religion (2015:13). According to Bielo, characteristics of religion, such as "belief, order, experience, the sacred, ritual practice, and symbolic meaning" are important aspects of religion, or what he calls "usual suspects" of religion, which no single definition could completely exhaust (2015:13).

Decades ago, Paul Hiebert (1976, 1983), who was similarly aware of the difficulty to narrow the study of religion to a single definition, advocated that religion be approached as "explanatory models" used to explain the reality of all things or as patterns and products of human behaviour (1976, 1983:356). According to Hiebert, a satisfactory description of a religion "includes not only its assumptions and beliefs, but also its myths, rituals, sites, and objects" (1983:356). A few years later, Hiebert referred to religion as the "core of the culture" that permeates every aspect of life (beliefs, behaviors, and institutions) in many societies (1985:184). For Hiebert, religion uses organic analogies with faith in visions, dreams, inner feelings, miracles, and exceptions to the natural order (1985:43). More recently, Paul Hiebert reinforced his early concepts about religion as a belief system that is an "essential component

of culture" which reflects the three major interacting dimensions of culture, namely "ideas, feelings, and values" (Hiebert et al. 1999:36). Thus, according to Hiebert, religion is "belief systems concerned with ultimate cosmic realities: heavenly gods, demons, fate, karma, heaven, and hell" (Hiebert 2008:132).

Table 1: Nine definitions of religion
(Source: Bielo 2015:12)

No.	Author	Date	Definition
1	E.B. Tylor (1832-1917)	1871	Belief in spiritual beings
2	James G. Frazer (1854–1941)	1890	A propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life
3	William James (1842-1910)	1902	The feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine
4	Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)	1912	A unified set of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden–beliefs and practices which unite one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them
5	Paul Radin (1883-1959)	1937	[Religion] consists of two parts: the first an easily definable, if not precisely specific feeling; and the second, certain specific acts, customs, beliefs, and conceptions associated with this feeling. The belief most inextricably connected with the specific feeling is a belief in spirits outside of man, conceived of as more powerful than man and as controlling all those elements in life upon which he lays most stress
6	Anthony F.C. Wallace (1923–)	1966	A set of rituals, rationalized by myth, which mobilizes supernatural powers for the purpose of achieving or preventing transformations of state in man and nature
7	Clifford Geertz (1926–2006)	1966	A system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic
8	Morton Klass (1927–2001)	1995	That instituted a process of interaction among the members of that society–and between them and the universe at large as they conceive it to be constituted–which provides them with meaning, coherence, direction, unity easement, and whatever degree of control over events they perceive as possible

No.	Author	Date	Definition
9	Scott Atran (1952–)	2002	A community's costly and hard-to-fake commitment to a counterfactual and counterintuitive world of supernatural agents who master people's existential activities, such as death and deception

1.3.2. Folk religion

The term folk religion is another challenging concept to define (Hukantaival 2013:101). Used for the first time around the 12th century, the word folk referred to anything "originating or traditional with the common people of a country or region and typically reflecting their lifestyle" with the meaning of "archaic, ancient, old or outdated (Merriam-Webster 2003). Another etymological meaning of the word 'folk' represents the majority in any area. In that sense, the noun 'folk' (or folks in plural) from old English 'folc' and similar to the Old High German 'folc', refers to "the great proportion of the members of a people that determines the group character and that tends to preserve its characteristic form of civilization and its customs, arts and crafts, legends, traditions, and superstitions from generation to generation" (Merriam-Webster 2003).

In contrast, the contemporary usage of the word folk refers more to a pejorative concept than to the notion of past or old-fashioned. According to Sonja Hukantaival, European religious authorities of the Enlightenment era are partially responsible for the negative concepts associated with the term folk religion. Quoting folklorist Leonard Norman Primiano (1995), she notes that by contrasting folk religion and official religion, religious leaders during the the Enlightenment era implied that the latter "exists as a pure element which is then transformed and contaminated into folk religion" (Primiano 1995:38-40 cited in Hukantaival 2013:103). In Primiano's view, the term folk religion is misleading and contradictory in the sense that the term folk religion, which means popular religion, is contrasted with the term official religion,

to mean a religion less prevalent or uncommon (2013:103). Given the ambiguity on the usage of the term folk, it is important to first elucidate Paul Hiebert's thinking when he used the term folk religion in his classic text, *The flaw of the excluded middle* (Hiebert 1982).

Hiebert has used folk to mean old when he says that "Science as a system of explanation, whether folk or modern, answers questions about the nature of the world that is directly experienced" (1982:44). This idea of antique but not corrupt is implied when he uses the terms folk natural science, folk remedies or the existence of folk sciences in all cultures to control the world or to "explain many of the ordinary, immediate experiences of their lives", etc. (1982:39-40). Nonetheless, Hiebert mentions folk or low religion in contrast to high religion (1982:40). This researcher argues that by low religion, Paul Hiebert did not mean a substandard religion or a lesser rank religion, which could be lacking dignity, as some churches in Christianity were designated during the Enlightenment era (*low church* being applied to evangelical churches, *broad church* being applied to liberal churches, and *high church* being applied to Anglo-Catholicism) (Cairns 2002:27). Although Hiebert's use of the term low religion could be puzzling in this regard, this researcher asserts that Hiebert valued folk sciences appropriately by equating it with Western science when he writes that Western science is not unique in explaining ordinary and immediate experiences of human life (1982:40). In other words, Paul Hiebert is saying that, like Western science, folk sciences meet the needs of the culture and of the people who use it. Any other comparison of these two sciences in terms of methodology or efficiency will be relative and speculative according to different worldviews. Thus, this research assumes that Paul Hiebert's use of folk or low religion is in the form of the noun and not of the adjective. Hence, this researcher contends that Hiebert, as an anthropologist, was aware of

ethnocentrism and cultural imperialism. For instance, concerning ethnocentrism, Paul Hiebert affirms:

> Cross-cultural confusion on the cognitive level leads to misunderstandings, but on the affective level it leads to «ethnocentrism, the normal emotional response people have when they confront other cultures for the first time. They have the feeling that their culture is civilized and that others are primitive and backward. This response has to do with attitudes, not with understandings. The root of ethnocentrism is our human tendency to respond to other people's ways by using our own affective assumptions, and to reinforce these responses with deep feelings of approval or disapproval. When we are confronted by another culture, our own is called into question. Our defense is to avoid the issue by concluding that our culture is better and other people are less civilized. (Hiebert, 1985:97)

Thus, the solution to ethnocentrism, according to Hiebert, is empathy and critical hermeneutics, while avoiding stereotyping or making premature judgments on people or practices in other cultures (1985:98, 103). Consequently, as Paul Hiebert argues, a functional definition or generalizations about the term 'folk religion' may not be adequate. However, Hiebert et al. use the term folk religion to refer to the shockingly diverse religious beliefs and practices of the common people (Hiebert et al. 1999:75). Hiebert et al. point out that, because folk religions are sociocultural systems, they have a social dynamic. They write:

> Folk religions must be studied as social systems made up of real people relating to one another in many and complex ways. Communities of believers organize religious activities. Ancestors must be fed, spirits placated with blood sacrifices, high gods worshiped with fire and incense, and animals and earth accorded respect through offerings. Newborns must be transformed into children, children into adults, adults into married couples, and the aged into ancestors through proper rites. Festivals, rain dances, pilgrimages, and religious fairs must be organized and funded, magic performed to assure good crops, and amulets made to guard brides and grooms from any evil eye that may be in the audience (Hiebert et al. 1999:43).

Continuing on the sociocultural line of thought, Yoder defines folk religion as "the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and

alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion" (Yoder 1974:14 cited in Hukantaival 2013:103).

Based on the above analysis, the term folk religion is used in this research to refer to the adaptation of animistic beliefs and practices, such as the power of magic, sorcery, witchcraft, evil eyes, and the interaction of humans with other living beings, such as animals, plants, and spirits (demons), into one of the formal world religions (Morgan 2012:43). Thus, for this study, with or without a functional definition, the term folk religion is used in a starkly different way than some authors in the West have used it. Consequently, this research does not study folk religion as an odd religion, but as a traditional or a primal religion that is gaining recrudescence in most parts of the world, even in the West.

Some experts estimated that 40% of the world's population is "essentially animistic in everyday belief and practice" (Dockery 1992:882). In some world religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the percentage of folk practices is even higher. For instance, 70-85% of the Islam practiced worldwide is folk Islam or animistic Islam (McCurry 1980; Parshall 1983:16 cited in Love 1994:87). In some countries and among some groups of people, it is argued that the Islam practiced is almost totally animistic. This researcher believes that the Dendi people of North-East Benin fall into that group.

These statistics confirm the reason for Paul Hiebert arguing that missionaries have to prepare to witness to folk religions more than they prepare to witness to high religions (1985:222). Hiebert's audience back then comprised Western missionaries, but the principle also applies to non-Western missionaries such as this researcher. Hiebert justifies his recommendation by arguing that most of the people who missionaries will deal with in the mission field are people "who do not know much about their own high religions", and that these

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folk people "are often more deeply involved in such folk-religious practices as magic, astrology, witchcraft, and spirit worship" (1985:222). These folk people, according to Hiebert, are not interested in questions of ultimate truth, or realities and its meaning, which are important to high religions, but to the problems of everyday life though omens, oracles, shamans, and prophets (1985:222). Thus, while the high or formal religions (orthodox religions), such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism "claim universal application" with their institutionalized systems and schools, "sacred texts and commentaries, philosophical traditions and orthodoxies, professional leaders and organized churches, temples, and mosques" (Moreau, 2000:364), folk religions focus on local beliefs, practices and rituals, and appear as "legitimate belief systems that do, in some measure, answer the longing of human hearts" (Hiebert et al. 1999:10).

1.4.   Research problem statement

According to Hiebert et al., a major blind spot in Christian missions is the inability of Western missionaries to understand popular/folk religions (Hiebert et al. 1999:29). The problem has been that, while missionaries prepared to "witness to people who are tied to Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and other high" or formal "religions which deal with questions of ultimate truth and meaning", they were surprised to discover that most of the people they meet in the mission fields "do not know much about their own high religions, and that they are often more deeply involved in such folk-religious practices as magic, astrology, witchcraft and spirit worship" (Hiebert 1985:222-223). For instance, 65% of the Taiwanese population practice Chinese folk religion; the majority of religious believers in China are folk Buddhists; most of the Hindus in the world are folk Hindus; and most of the Muslims in Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia,

and Indonesia are folk Muslims (Chiu 1988:5; Warton 1996:38 cited in Hiebert et al. 1999:77). Whether the failure to understand folk religions is linked to their great diversity around the world or to the modern worldview of missionaries (based on science, logic and civilization), the challenge with folk religion is real and constant for Christian mission, because animistic beliefs and practices do not easily die out (Hiebert et al. 1999:88).

With the Dendi people of North-East Benin as a case study, this research used Hiebert's analytical framework, which distinguishes three different levels of religion or belief systems (formal, folk, and natural) to understand the worldview of the Dendi people and consequently suggests a few reasons why they are still uninfluenced.

1.5.   Purpose of the study

This research primarily seeks to understand why Christianity has failed to influence the Dendi people in North-East Benin. In addition, it is hoped that this research will help in avoiding having future Dendi converts live syncretistic Christian lives with dual allegiance characteristics and a split-level Christianity, as is generally the case with folk religionists who become Christians (Hiebert et al., 1999:88). Hiebert and his colleagues write that many people who become Christians "by sincere confession and church attendance" remain animists in their everyday practice. Both systems (Christianity and Animism) continue to be considered right and are understood as "situationally relevant" (1999:88). Thus, after accepting the gospel and affirming orthodox Christianity, those folk religionists who have become Christians, but with a split-level Christianity, still go back to omens, oracles, shamans, witch doctors, diviners, healers, rituals, and medicines (1999:88). Hence, for such converts their old faith, i.e., folk

Islam, becomes an underlay that coexists and runs parallel to "their public accommodation to the new religion brought by their conquerors" (1999:88).

Using Paul Hiebert's model of critical contextualization (Hiebert et al. 1999:21-29) described in four steps: 1) Phenomenological analysis; 2) Ontological reflections; 3) Critical evaluation; and 4) Missiological transformations, this dissertation aims to suggest a balanced Christian mission approach among the Dendi people. Emphasising the first and fourth steps of Hiebert's critical contextualization model (phenomenological analysis and missiological transformations or transformative ministries), this dissertation critically evaluates *Bounded and centered set theory*, one of Hiebert's five key seminal concepts. Hiebert's five seminal ideas are: 1) The flaw of the excluded middle; 2) Worldview transformation; 3) Bounded and centered set theory; 4) Critical contextualization; and 5) Missional theology (Priest 2009:171-175), which this researcher found inclusive and symmetrical with the four steps of the critical contextualization model (Hiebert et al. 1999:22), and which are thought to be the major contributions to understanding folk religion (**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**).

Table 2: Hiebert's Critical Contextualization and Five Seminal Concepts in Parallel

Hiebert's Critical Contextualization Model		Hiebert's Five Seminal Concepts
1	Phenomenological analysis	The flaw of the excluded middle
2	Ontological reflections	Bounded and centered set theory
3	Critical evaluation	Critical contextualization
4	Missiological transformations	Missional theology & worldview

1.6. Research questions

There are two central questions to this research: 1) How can the persisting pre-Islamic beliefs and practices of the Dendi be addressed in mission? The subquestion that narrows down the focus of this first question is: What are the dominant beliefs and practices of the Dendi people? The second central question that was addressed was 2) What mission strategy will best respond to the Dendi cognitive, affective, and evaluative folk religious needs?

1.7. Scope and delimitations of the study

The first limitation of this study was the researcher's inadequacy to speak the Dendi language. Although living in Kandi among the Dendi people for ten years from December 2006 to December 2016, this researcher unfortunately did not master the Dendi language to the point of using it for normal everyday conversation.

The second limitation of this research was geographical. The researcher only focussed on the Dendi people in the north-eastern part of Benin (**Error! Reference source not found.**), and as such, this study cannot claim to be intrinsically relevant to other Dendi people groups in Benin such as those found in other towns, such as Karimama (two hours north of Kandi), Parakou (three hours south of Kandi), or Djougou (four hours south-west of Kandi). Specifically, this research was limited to the Dendi people living in the geographical region of the Alibori department, delimitated by the towns of Kandi and Malanville (a town one hour north of Kandi).

A third constraint was the lack of academic materials on the Dendi people in general and the Dendi people of Benin in particular. This situation considerably affected the research process, especially with regard to their religious rituals of exorcism and adorcism.

Finally, this study neither gives a thorough biography of Paul Hiebert and his writings, nor does it attempt to give a critical evaluation of Hiebert's five seminal concepts. This could be the task of a book on Paul Hiebert's contribution to missiology. However, this study attempted to put Hiebert's seminal concept, which addresses conversion in dialogue, with his other four seminal concepts.
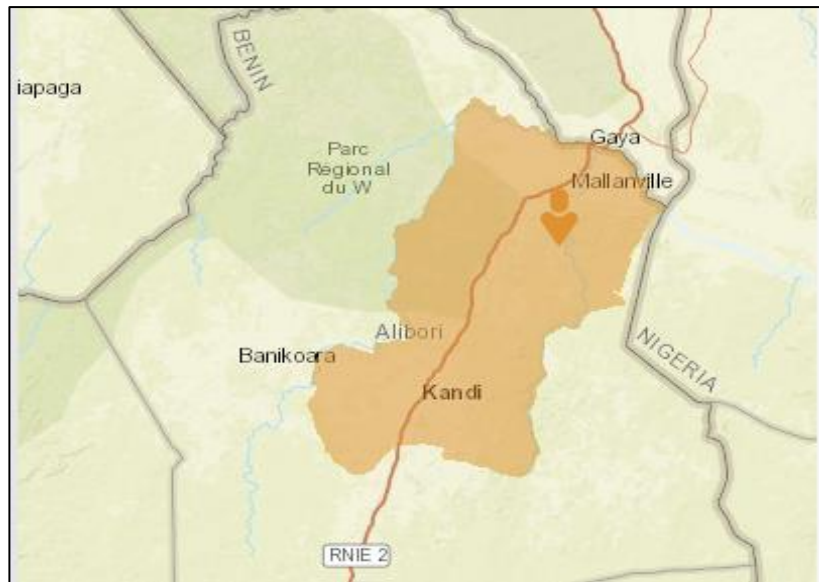
Map 3: The towns of Kandi and Malanville where the field research was conducted
(PeopleGroup 2017)

1.8. Empirical research

The Alibori department is one of 12 departments of the Republic of Benin and contains six towns ('communes'): Banikoara, Gogounou, Kandi, Karimama, Malanville, and Segbana (Houssou 2016:30). Three major ethnic groups dominate the population of the department: the Batombou (32.6%), the Peulhs (22.1%), and the Dendi (18.2%) (INSAE 2003:xix, 39). The dominant religion in the Alibori department is Islam, with 77% of the population adhering to

the religion. The Dendi and the Peulhs are almost entirely Muslim with a proportion of 98.4% and 95% respectively (INSAE 2003:65, 71).

The towns of Kandi and Malanville were chosen for the empirical field research conducted in February 2020. Whereas the Dendi population in Kandi constitutes only 9.47% of the town's population (Republique du Benin, Ministere de la Decentralisation, de la Gouvernance Locale, de l'Administration et de l'Amenagement du Territoire. 2015:21, 22), the Dendi and the Djerma (the Dendi population from Niger) are in the majority in Malanville, and Islam is practiced by 80% of the town's population (Ahoyo Adjovi 2006:12; Boluvi 2004:7-20).

The grounded theory qualitative research conducted in Kandi and Malanville provided the qualitative data of this study. Eleven (11) Dendi were interviewed in Kandi and seventeen (17) in Malanville. As a social research approach to study social phenomena based on qualitative data, the grounded theory field research of this study promoted a systematic acquisition and analysis of qualitative data, in order to generate a theory that could lead to the discovery of a theory (Glaser & Strauss 1999:1; Merriam 2009:6-7). As Hiebert notes, while "theology provides us with an overall picture of the building, the builder, and key events in its history", empirical studies in science provide us with insights into various structures of reality (Hiebert 1985:27).

1.9. Methodology and theoretical framework

The primary research methodology of this dissertation is a descriptive and evaluative approach. Building on Hiebert's system theory ("a system view of religion or religion as a cultural system" (Hiebert et al. 1999:32-33, 35-36, 39-42)), this study articulates around four

phases. The first phase (Chapters 1 & 2), focuses on the introduction to the study and a brief biography of Paul Hiebert's life and writings and how his contribution to folk religion was developed. This phase helps to understand the 'why' and 'how' of Hiebert's contribution to folk religion. This phase is mostly based on a literature review.

The second phase of the study (Chapter 3) is dedicated to a phenomenological study of the Dendi folk religion. In other words, the second phase of this research uses "a phenomenological exegesis" of the Dendi culture. This means the uncritical *"gathering and analyzing"* of the recipient culture's "traditional beliefs and customs associated" with the question at hand (Hiebert 1987:109).

The third phase of this study (Chapter 4) is dedicated to the field research–the empirical research of answers to the research questions. Through interviews, empirically defined criteria (religious beliefs, values and practices, beliefs in rites, healers, spirit attacks, different rituals of healing, etc.) that are core to folk religion are logically analyzed and interpreted as they are found and practiced among the Dendi people in Northern-East Benin.

The fourth and final phase of this study (Chapters 5 & 6) focus particularly on providing Christian responses to the field research findings in terms of the Dendi questions and felt needs; and comprise missiological suggestions and recommendation in the concluding chapter.

1.10. Conceptual framework

Hiebert et al. state that their book does not provide ready answers to understand the different forms, "beliefs and practices of folk religions around the world today" (Hiebert et al. 1999:29); rather, they point out that they have attempted to develop a conceptual framework which could be used by Christians to biblically respond to any type of folk religion in the world

(1999:29). While a theoretical framework is based on theories, a conceptual framework is grounded on concepts (Grant & Osanloo 2014). Grant and Osanloo (2014:17) quote Miles and Huberman (1994) and Camp (2001) who respectively define a conceptual framework as "a system of concepts, assumptions, and beliefs that supports and guides the research plan and lays out the key factors, constructs, or variables, and presumes relationships among them" and "a structure of what has been learned to best explain the natural progression of a phenomenon that is being studied". However, the most important insight this researcher has gained concerning conceptual frameworks is what Luse, Mennecke and Townsend (2012 cited in Grant & Osanloo 2014:17) point out. These authors argue that a conceptual framework is not "simply a string of concepts, but a way to identify and construct for the reader your epistemological and ontological worldview and approach to your topic of study" (Grant & Osanloo 2014:17).

Thus, the conceptual framework for this study is organized around the four steps of critical contextualization suggested by Hiebert et al.: phenomenological analysis; ontological critique; evaluative response; and transformative ministries. These are the concepts that provided theological and missiological guidelines for this research into the type of folk religion practiced by the Dendi people (Table 3).

Table 3: Methodology and conceptual framework
(see Hiebert 1987:109, Hiebert et al. 1999:21-29)

Research methodology and conceptual framework		
4-phase study	**Dissertation chapters corresponding**	**4-step Critical contextualization** (see Hiebert 1987:109, Hiebert et al. 1999:21-29)

Phase 1	(**Chapters 1 & 2**) Study introduction and brief biography of Paul Hiebert's life and writings.	1. **Phenomenological analysis**
Phase 2	(**Chapter 3**) Phenomenological study of the Dendi folk religion	
Phase 3	(**Chapter 4**) Field research: answers to research questions.	
Phase 4	(**Chapters 5 & 6**) Christian responses to the Dendi questions and felt needs, and study conclusion and recommendations.	2. **Ontological critique** 3. **Evaluative response** 4. **Transformative ministries**

1.11. Value of the study

Good, thorough, and "thoughtful research in a faith-based study context in the field of practical theology can not only enhance missionaries' effectiveness, but also "enable ministry and mission to achieve greater faithfulness" (Cameron & Duce 2013:xiii). As mentioned earlier, Christian missionaries have traditionally focused on cognitive communications in their mission approach among folk religion; their emphasis has been on the importance of the final realities of a Christian life as taught in Christian hamartiology, eschatology, and soteriology, whereas folk religionists are often deeply concerned with folk-religious practices, such as magic, witchcraft, astrology, etc. which can affect their daily lives and answer their why questions regarding sudden illnesses, accidents, misfortunes, marriages, and health of humans, and how

to handle them in the midst of the influence of the local gods or demons (Hiebert 1985:222; Hiebert et al. 1999:45-72). According to Hiebert, folk religionists ask such questions because they operate from a different level of belief –the middle level (1982:40).

Thus, this researcher endeavoured to advance knowledge in model-building within the critical contextualization of folk Muslims. Using Hiebert's theory of religion as a system, this research might contribute to a greater understanding of the Dendi people of North-East Benin and their phenomenon of spirit possession, exorcism, and adorcism–an area where there are very few scholarships available for mission among folk Muslims. If the very core of God's mission (*missio Dei*) to any culture resides in the emphasis of his dominant authority and power over Satan and his agents (Hiebert, 1989:55), then the manifestation of God's power as part of his nature in relationship with his creation should be, for every missionary, a matter of faithfulness to the owner of the mission.

1.12. Chapter descriptions

Chapter **1**

The first chapter is a general introduction. It introduces key terms and defines them. The chapter then presents preliminary requirements, such as the background to the study, the research questions, a brief overview of the literature available, and the rationale for the research. This chapter also succinctly introduces Paul G. Hiebert and his key model of critical contextualization. As key elements of Chapter 1, the methodology and the conceptual framework of the research are clearly presented. The target people group of the study is introduced alongside the context of the empirical research. Finally, the chapter describes the limitations and delimitations related to the study and the value of the study.

Chapter 2

The second chapter presents a brief biography of Paul G. Hiebert (1932-2007). Hiebert was a Christian anthropologist, missiologist, and third generation Mennonite missionary to India. The chapter summarizes Hiebert's five seminal concepts which, in chronological order, are: 1) The flaw of the excluded middle (1967, 1971, 1982); 2) self-theology, global theology, missional theology (1973); 3) bounded, centered, and fuzzy set theory (1978-2008); 4) critical contextualization models (1984-1999); and 5) worldview transformation (1989-2008) (Priest, 2009).

Chapter 3

This chapter describes the Dendi folk religion phenomenologically without passing any judgement on its mixed and bewildering collection of rites, celebrations, beliefs, practitioners, music, and processions. The chapter exposes the particularities of the Dendi folk religion as a syncretistic fusion of Sunni Maliki Islam beliefs and practices with Tidjaniyya Sufism and Songhay African Traditional Religion (ATR).

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 covers the design and methodology used in this study for the field research. The chapter describes the grounded theory used for the field research in Kandi and Malanville among 28 randomly selected Dendi. The chapter combines using triangulation and a computer programme (ATLAS.ti 9) to code, categorize, analyze, and interpret the field data.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 provides tentative answers to the research questions. Christian responses are suggested to meet the Dendi major felt needs identified in the findings of the field research. The chapter also provides theological and missiological insights on concepts and principles, such as

substitution, exorcism, adorcism, 'kingdom of God, C 1-6 contextualization spectrum, syncretism, etc.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 provides the general conclusion of the study. The chapter summarizes the dissertation while the research questions are reviewed. The chapter makes suggestions and includes a recommendation for a holistic ministry to the Dendi people and for further missiological studies among folk religion.

1.13. Conclusion

Chapter 1, as a general introduction to this study, provided the background to this research. The key insight in this first chapter is the need for Western missionaries to pay more attention to folk religion. As covered in the chapter, one of the reasons Christian mission has failed or not been very effective among folk religionists is the long ignorance of the folk religion worldview by many of the early Western Christian missionaries (Hiebert 1982:35-47). Hence, this first chapter introduced Paul Hiebert's contribution to folk religion. The chapter also identified the Dendi people of North-East Benin as the target people group of this missiological study.

This first chapter presented the background, the purpose, and the limitations of the study. As an important value of this research the chapter named faithfulness in ministry and mission (Cameron & Duce 2013:xiii). According to Hiebert, folk religionists operate from a different belief level–the middle level (1982:40). And as such, God's mission (*missio Dei*) to any culture resides in meeting the felt needs of the people of that culture. As Hiebert and his colleagues

point out, folk religious beliefs, as the dominant religious form around the world today, represent a major challenge to Christian missions (Hiebert et al. 1999:77).

Chapter 2: Paul G. Hiebert: The journey to his five seminal concepts in missiology

2.1.   Introduction

It is not an easy task to write a biography for Paul Gordon Hiebert (1932-2007). The first difficulty in the duty is that neither Paul Hiebert nor his wife Francesca (1934-1999) left autobiographies or personal journals that could be used for a thorough qualitative biography. Describing someone from the person's perspective or in the person's terms is, in my opinion, the best source for a biography. Unfortunately, there is no existing biography of Paul Hiebert based on an interview he granted for that purpose.

According to Denzin, biographical methods could be defined as:

> The studied use and collection of life documents, or documents of life (Plummer 1983:13), which describe turning-point moments in individuals' lives. These documents will include autobiographies, biographies (Diltheyan 1910/1961:8, 93), diaries, letters, obituaries, life histories, life stories, personal experience stories, oral histories, and personal histories (1989:7).

Based on Denzin's insights, the account of Paul Hiebert's life in this study is based on secondary sources such as Paul Hiebert's biographical materials available from his children, close friends, colleagues, and former students.

The second challenge of the task resides in the fact that Paul Hiebert was a missionary and a Christian anthropologist whose writings are considered a successful contribution to the field of missiology (Priest 2009:173, 174). Paul Hiebert has 12 published books and more than 150 scholarly articles (2009:174). As such, anybody attempting a biography of a prolific writer such as Paul Hiebert, even within the boundaries of his/her topic, will be challenged. Although the topic of this dissertation delimits approaching his biography in regard to Hamilton's

questions concerning writing a biography ("Are biographies to commemorate or to judge? Are biographies about individuals' achievements or the individuals–and why? Are biographies intended for readers to learn of particular persons or from them?" (Hamilton 2008:8)), this researcher had to decide what to use and what to leave out of the plethora of Hiebert's writings on folk religion, therefore believed safety is on the side of presenting commemorative information or applicable knowledge only–information in a biography that, according to Samuel Johnson, gives us "what comes near to ourselves, what we can put to use" (Johnson 1750 cited in Hamilton 2008:10-11).

However, currently human biographies are the record and the psychological and sociological interpretation of lives (Denzin 1989; Hamilton 2008:21). In this regard, Denzin points out that "the telling of a life is an artful and selective endeavor. It involves a good deal of bold assertion and immodest neglect" (Denzin 1989:5). Accordingly, people's biographies contribute to our understanding of unique individuals who have significantly impacted others. Some of these details surrounding the life of an individual and described in a biography are principles that were or are the "master-motive of the person's life" (Denzin 1989:5). Thus, the biography of Paul G. Hiebert in this study is brief, selective, and interpretive when needed. The goal of the biography of Paul Hiebert is not just to narrate the who, what, where, and when of Paul Hiebert's life, but to understand the why and the how of Paul Hiebert's contribution to missiology in general, and to understanding folk religion in particular.

Hiebert is considered a scholar in missiology and cultural anthropology who has made a "unique contribution to missiology" (McConnell 2008 cited in Hiebert 2008:4), and as one whose writings were at "the forefront of twentieth-century missiological thought and practice" (Bonk 2008 cited in Hiebert 2008:4). Paul Hiebert's reputation is recognized worldwide among

Christians of different denominations (Priest 2009:174). Robert J. Priest, in his article "A life remembered" in Paul Hiebert's biography, makes this important comment in memoriam: "Paul's missiological commitments were undergirded by a life filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the hope of the resurrection" (2009:174).

In 2004, the Trinity Consultation on Missiology gathered about 180 missiologists, theologians, colleagues and friends from 15 countries on Trinity's campus in Deerfield, Illinois, for a weekend in honour of Hiebert's seminal contributions to missiology (Ott & Netland 2006:12), which was followed two years later by the publication of *Globalizing theology: Belief and practice in an era of world Christianity* (Baker 2006), a Festschrift of 383 pages comprising the papers presented at the Consultation gathering. Paul Hiebert completed two book manuscripts shortly before his death (*Transforming worldviews,* 2008 and *The gospel in human contexts,* 2009), which were subsequently published after his death. *Transforming worldviews: An anthropological understanding of how people change* (2008) was selected by *Christianity Today* as "the top book under the topic of Missions/Global Affairs" in 2009 (Priest 2009:174). Thus, many of Paul G. Hiebert's essays have become fundamental reading in the discipline of missiology, and his claims, concepts, and proposed approaches to missions "have influenced missiology in the past and present" (Barnes 2011:5).

Priest (2009:173), in an article, identifies Hiebert's five core concepts in the field of missiology as: 1) set theory, developed in his essay on conversion (contrasting bounded-set vs. centered-set), 2) critical contextualization, 3) split-level Christianity, 4) self-theologizing, and 5) the flaw of the excluded middle. The same publication contains Priest's 2009 article in the the fall 2009 issue of *Trinity Journal* (the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS)'s tribute to Paul Hiebert), that lists Hiebert's five seminal concepts in a different order with different

titles: 1) *Understanding Christian identity in terms of bounded and centered set theory in the writings of Paul G. Hiebert*; 2) *Paul G. Hiebert's The flaw of the excluded middle*; 3) *Paul G. Hiebert and critical contextualization*; 4) *Self-theology, global theology, and missional theology in the writings of Paul Hiebert*; and 5) *Paul G. Hiebert's legacy of worldview*. As indicated in Chapter 1, the researcher chose the list of the five core concepts attributed to Paul Hiebert provided by the journal of TEDS, where he taught during his last seventeen years. This chapter summarizes each core concept in chronological order of its publication, focusing on the role each seminal concept played in Hiebert's understanding of folk religion and how that understanding has advanced the cause of Christian mission.

2.2.   Paul G. Hiebert: Family story to his birth (1875-1932)

Nicholas Nikolai Hiebert (1874-1957), a Mennonite Brethren pastor in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, USA, was Paul Hiebert's grandfather. The oldest of a family of twelve children, Nicholas N. Hiebert emmigrated with his parents to America in 1875 from Lochtefeld, Monotechnic, the Mennonite settlement in South Russia, and settled in Mountain Lake, Minnesota (Hiebert 2011).

Mennonites (a part of the Anabaptist movement, named after Dutch Anabaptist Menno Simons [1496-1561]) are known for at least three peculiar views: 1) opposition or repudiation of infant baptism; 2) pacifism or non-resistance to violence; and 3) excommunication (Dyck 1993:175, 401; Cairns 2002:277; Klaassen & Klassen 2008:199, 222, 354; Johnson-Weiner 2007:2;). Johnson-Weiner points out that Mennonites trace their roots to the suffering and martyrdom of the radical reformation of the sixteenth century, where, in January 1525, secret meetings and illegal rebaptisms held (early Anabaptists re-baptized each other–the pejorative

term means re-baptizer) after several students of Zwingli, leader of the Swiss Protestant Church, defied their teacher and the Zurich City Council (Johnson-Weiner 2007:2). The goal of the early Anabaptists, writes Johnson-Weiner, was to establish a church of believers founded on "evangelical truth and the word of God" (2007:2). For early Anabaptist-Mennonites, a church separated from the state, this meant a church in which "membership was voluntary and marked by adherence to the principles of nonresistance, pacifism, and non-conformity" (2007:2). Thus, the Mennonites have always strived to be a "faithful church" (Dyck 1993:11).

It is with this Christian background that Nicholas N. Hiebert and his wife Susanna Wiebe Hiebert (1879-1963) sailed to India in 1899 as missionaries with the Mennonite Brethren Church (Hiebert 2011). After attending the McPherson College for one year (1897-1898), Nicholas returned to the United States just two years later (in 1901), due to ill health, "selecting and opening" a mission field on his return (Hiebert 2011). From 1901-1912, Nicholas traveled in the interest of missions and taught at a district school for five years. He then served from 1912-1927 as principal of the Mountain Lake Bible School, and worked as a Bible instructor at Tabor College for three years (1930-1932), while also serving as secretary to the Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions for thirty-three years (1903-1936). During his time at Mountain Lake Bible School, Nicholas N. Hiebert published *Missions-Album* and *Commentary for Sunday School Quarterly* in 1914 (Hiebert 2011). The researcher believes that Paul Hiebert's missionary mindset and writing dispositions can clearly be traced back to his paternal grandfather, Nicholas N. Hiebert.

John Nicholas Christian Hiebert (March 5, 1904-July 20, 1956), Paul Hiebert's father, was born to Nicholas and Susanna Hiebert during the time that Nicholas was traveling much for mission purposes and serving as secretary to the Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign

Missions. It is therefore no surprise that John Hiebert later received missionary calls. After his studies at the St Paul Bible Institute, the Christian Missionary and Alliance Bible School at Nyack, New York, Tabor College (where he received his BA degree), Willamette University (where he received his MA degree in South Asian History), and the University of Southern California, John N. C. Hiebert and his wife Anna (who were married on August 9, 1927, in Mountain Lake, Minnesota) sailed to India as missionaries with the Mennonite Brethren Mission where they served from 1929 to 1942, and again from 1947 to 1952 (Hiebert & Thiessen 2011). Anna Luetta Jungas (August 2, 1906-January 13, 1997), Paul's mother, was the daughter of John Jungas (1870-1946) and Helena P. Pankratz Jungas (1874-1960), of whom not much is known.

During the first three years of their missionary service in India, John and Anna became parents to Paul Gordon Hiebert, who was born on November 13, 1932, in Shamshabad. The Shamshabad village where Paul Hiebert was born is now a town in the Ranga Reddy district of Hyderabad (then the Hyderabad State which was dissolved in 1956) in the Telangana State in India.

2.3.   Paul G. Hiebert: Educational background (1939-1967)

Paul Hiebert began his formal education at Kodaikanal School in South India. When the Second World War intensified in 1942 and Japan entered India, all American expatriates were evacuated. Like all other missionaries, Paul, who was ten years old at the time, moved back to the United States with his parents and siblings. When the war was over, the Hiebert family, including Paul and his six sisters, returned to India for their second missionary service in 1947. Paul was fifteen years old and returned to Kodaikanal School, where he became involved in the

school's debate club and continued participating until he graduated high school in 1950 (Barnes 2011).

Kodaikanal School, the researcher believes, greatly contributed to shaping Paul's deep learning and critical thinking abilities. The school, now known as Kodaikanal International School (KIS), was created in the early twentieth century (1901) for missionary children. Its location in hill-station was to avoid tropical diseases and create the best learning environment. Recognized today as one of "India's most prestigious independent academic schools" (EducationWorld 2020), KIS has accumulated, during a century of existence, a rich heritage of service-oriented young people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, including Paul Hiebert.

Back alone in the United States in 1950 after his graduation, Paul attended Tabor College in Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas. The liberal arts college was then owned and operated by the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren (MB) Church of North America (later known as the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches). While the college is now operated under an independent charter, "the board of directors is responsible to the Mennonite Brethren churches of the Central, Southern, Latin American, and North Carolina districts" (Prieb & Ratzlaff 2018). When his parents moved back to the United States on permanent return in 1952, Paul Hiebert's father John Hiebert was president of his college for one year (Hiebert 2011).

In 1954, Paul completed his BA degree at Tabor College, and subsequently married Francesca Lorraine Flaming (22 August 1934-16 April 1999) in Enid, Oklahoma, on December 29. Three years later, in 1957, Paul graduated from the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (MBBS). His years in seminary were considerably influenced by Jacob Loewen, the seminary

missionary anthropologist. Paul Hiebert found his lectures exciting, iconoclastic, and making much sense (Priest 2009:171). Thus, motivated to study anthropology, Paul Hiebert completed his MA degree in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Minnesota in 1959. The Hiebert family took education seriously (four of Paul Hiebert's seven sisters obtained PhD degrees). Paul Hiebert completed his PhD coursework eight years later (in 1967) and earned his PhD in Anthropology from the University of Minnesota. Some believe that Paul Hiebert's reputation in his field came to the fore when his doctoral dissertation was published in 1971: *Konduru: Structure and integration in a South Indian Village* (Frykenberg 2007:128).

2.4.   Paul G. Hiebert: Marriage and mission trip (1954, 1960-1965)

While studying physics and history at Tabor College, Paul Hiebert met a young lady, Frances Flaming, who was a fellow student. Hiebert tells the story of how, in 1954, they started their forty-five years of friendship, romance, and marriage. When thy met, Paul Hiebert approached Frances with these terms: "Miss Flaming." "Yes?" "I'm Paul Hiebert. I'm going to be a missionary. Would you like to have dinner with me?" (Priest 2009:171). On December 29, 1954, Paul and Frances were married at Enid, Oklahoma, and six years later, they sailed to India as missionaries with the Mennonite Brethren Mission Board, accompanied by their two daughters, Eloise and Barbara.

Paul Hiebert's first assignment in India was to serve as principal of Bethany Bible School and College in Shamshabad, where he was born. Thus, from 1960 to 1965, Paul Hiebert and his wife served as a school administrator, Bible teachers, and trainers of local church leaders (Frykenberg 2007:128; Priest 2009:172). John Hiebert, Paul Hiebert's son, named after his father, was born during the family mission service in India.

Although Paul Hiebert used their six-year mission term in India to do his PhD fieldwork, his disposition for long-term mission service, and even lifelong mission service, was clearly known. Robert Priest, one of Paul Hiebert's colleagues at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, reports that when asked by fellow senior missionaries in India, "Do you really have the call of God? Are you going to be here for forty years and not quit? Are you going to stay and die here and be buried?" Paul Hiebert answered "Yes!" (Priest 2009:172).

For unknown reasons, Paul Hiebert's Mission could not send him back to India after his furlough in 1967. Hoping that the obstacles stopping him from returning to the mission field were temporary, Paul Hiebert (after rejecting the more attractive offer for a professional career as a faculty teacher "at a leading graduate program of anthropology") accepted a one-year teaching appointment in anthropology at Kansas State University in order to be close to family and supporters (Priest 2009:172). Unfortunately, writes Priest, Paul Hiebert's dream to have a missionary career vanished when Frances' health deteriorated a few months later and the Mayo Clinic doctors treating her insisted that she should not return to the mission field (2009:172). According to Barnes (2011), a PhD student who had an interview and email correspondence with Eloise Hiebert Meneses (Paul and Frances Hiebert's eldest daughter) in 2010 while researching for his PhD dissertation: *Missiology meets cultural anthropology: The life and legacy of Paul G. Hiebert*, it was Frances' ill health that forced the Hiebert family to do six years of service in India instead of seven. Eloise explained that her mother, Frances, did not adjust well to life in India (Barnes 2011:63). When his wife's health did not improve after three years, Paul Hiebert understood that God had other plans for him and his family.

Before her death on April 16, 1999, Frances and Paul co-edited *Case studies in missions* (1985, 1987). Frances completed her BA degree at Kansas State University and her MA degree

in Bible Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. She was awarded a Doctor of Ministries in Missions at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School after her death (Barnes 2011:48). Frances also served on the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services "for nine years." At Fuller Theological Seminary, she served as Director of Women's Ministries, and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, she served as Director of International Student Affairs. As her articles (*Pastoral counseling for an abused wife* and *When a woman should be a man*) in *Case studies in Missions* demonstrate, Frances Hiebert published in the area of missions and women's ministries (Frances Hiebert 1982; Paul & Frances Hiebert 1985).

Qualitatively, Paul and Frances were seen as "conjoined disciples of Jesus" and their marriage was considered by their friends (Elizabeth Patterson, Pannell), as lovely, "a marvelous illustration of mutuality in marriage", and "one of warmth and devotion to each other and the Lord" (Barnes 2011:48-49). There are no known comments regarding Paul Hiebert's bad qualities and imperfections. Rather, Paul Hiebert has often received compliments regarding his good Christian moral life and his excellent scholarship. Frykenberg, Paul Hiebert's childhood friend, "schoolmate at Kodaikanal, and colleague through most of his professional life as a scholar and missionary" (Frykenberg 2007:128), summarizes what one could say about Paul Hiebert's moral qualities, Christian virtues, and academic professionalism in these terms:

> Paul Hiebert, a faithful follower of Jesus Christ as his Lord until his death on March 11, 2007, was more than a saintly man of God who, richly endowed with the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), became a spiritual giant. He was also a courageous missionary statesman of consummate diplomatic skill and a learned academic who combined indefatigable research, imaginative scholarship, and highly original thinking with sensitive teaching and gentle guidance for those less gifted than himself (Frykenberg 2007:128).

More testimonies on Paul Hiebert's exemplary Christian life are available from his former students. The *MB Herald* of June 1, 2007 (a publication of the Mennonite Brethren

Churches), which appeared a few months after his death on March 11, 2007, pays a tribute to Paul Hiebert's contribution to mission offered during his obituary and includes the testimonies of three of his former students who shared their unforgettable first-hand experiences of Paul Hiebert treating people of all backgrounds with great dignity. E.D. Solomon, now a professor at the Mennonite Brethren seminary in India, recalls the last day he spent with Hiebert in these terms: "He took me out for lunch and he ordered one soft drink. He asked me to drink first and then he drank from the same bottle in the sense of the Lord's Supper. He removed the feeling of white missionary and Indian Christian Dalit" (Yoder 2007). Another experience in India, qualified as an "amazing introduction to India and the Mennonites Brethren work there" (Yoder 2007), is narrated by Darren Todd Duerksen who, while studying for his PhD, spent considerable time in India with Paul Hiebert. Duerksen recalls that, in 2001, Paul Hiebert invited him and other students to accompany him on a three-day trip to some villages, including the place where he did his PhD research during his mission service in India in the 1960s. Talking about his experience during those days spent with Paul Hiebert, Duerksen writes: "He took an interest in us, and helped introduce us to the place. He was sharp missiologically, but also loved people" (Yoder 2007). Nash Lumeya (founder of the MB School of Mission in Congo), also a former PhD student under Hiebert's leadership), recalls that Paul Hiebert let him use his office in a way that impacted him greatly: "When other missiologists from around the world came to visit him, he didn't ask me to leave during their discussions. At times I was embarrassed but I later came to realize that he wanted to expose me to world leaders in mission" (Yoder 2007).

Paul Hiebert was a fascinating and inspiring Christian, cultural anthropologist, and passionate missionary. In his veins flowed the blood of at least two generations of committed Mennonite pastors and missionary families. The Hieberts' strong Christian faith and mission

call can be traced back to the Anabaptist heritage of the Mennonites. As a branch of the Protestant Reformation, Anabaptists formed "a radical but Biblical branch of the Reformation" (Cairns 2002:19). Quoting Harold S. Bender, Cairns argues that Anabaptism "conceived of itself as carrying through more completely and consistently the original goals of the Reformation which had been abandoned by Luther and Zwingli; namely the restoration of original, unadulterated New Testament Christianity" with ten distinctive tenets: 1) a voluntary church of believers only, with the baptism of adults on the confession of faith and commitment to discipleship; 2) separation of church and state; 3) full liberty of conscience; 4) holiness of life in full obedience to Christ; 5) nonconformity to the world; 6) a love-ethic including nonresistance and total rejection of warfare and the use of force"; 7) a brotherhood type of church with mutual aid; 8) non-swearing of oaths; 9) literal obedience to the Sermon on the Mount and the other teachings of Jesus; and 10) the simplicity of life and dress (Cairns 2002:19). Cairns also points out that Anabaptists fully held early Christian doctrines and creeds such as justification by faith, the sole authority of Scripture, and the priesthood of all believers (Cairns 2002:19).

The next sections explore some of Paul Hiebert's professional struggles, his accomplishments, and his contributions to missiology.

2.5. Paul G. Hiebert: Academic career and five seminal concepts (1966-2009)

2.5.1. Paul G. Hiebert: Academic career

Kansas State University (1966-69, 1970-1972)

Paul Hiebert began his academic career at Kansas State University (KSU) in 1966 and was able to complete his PhD dissertation in 1967. As mentioned above, Paul Hiebert was not

initially looking for a professional job when he accepted the teaching position at KSU, but when his wife Frances' health prevented them to return to the mission field in India, Paul Hiebert's one-year teaching contract with KSU ended up being six years of teaching as a professor of Anthropology and South Asian Studies (Frykenberg 2007:128; Priest 2009:172). However, Paul Hiebert was not at KSU for six consecutive years. After almost three years of academic research and teaching, Paul Hiebert realised that his passion for mission was greater than his fascination with academic work. This struggle between his missionary call and his academic aptitude led him to leave KSU in 1969 for the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (MBBS) in Fresno, California. But when he discovered that his teaching at MBBS "involved very little missions and no anthropology", Paul Hiebert returned to KSU a year later (1970) (Priest 2009:172). Back at Kansas State University, writes Priest, Paul Hiebert will "teach Anthropology to undergraduates, write anthropology books and articles, and direct the South Asian Study Center" (2009:172). Thus, Paul Hiebert went back to India three times (1968, 1969, 1971) while at KSU with some prestigious grants (Frykenberg 2007:128). It was also during his academic years at KSU that Paul Hiebert published his PhD dissertation as a book: *Konduru: Structure and integration in a South Indian village,* 1971. As Paul Hiebert's first major publication, *Konduru,* surprisingly, established Paul Hiebert's reputation in the field of cultural anthropology and "placed him in the front ranks of scholars in his field" (Frykenberg 2007:128).

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (1969-1970)

Paul G. Hiebert taught at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (MBBS) located in Fresno, California, for only one year, from 1969-1970 (Frykenberg 2007:128). As a Mennonite, Paul Hiebert helped his denomination's seminary as a resource person and consultant for mission projects when possible. But Paul Hiebert returned to Kansas State University when he

did not find the Mennonite seminary environment suitable for his academic and professional ambitions.

University of Washington (1972-1977)

While at the Kansas State University, Paul Hiebert received an invitation from the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle. With "its large graduate anthropology program" (Priest 2009:172), Paul Hiebert joined the staff of the university's anthropology department to further his career as an anthropologist in the leading graduate programme of anthropology. Paul Hiebert's experience at UW was very successful and supported by "tenure, prestigious research grants (ACLS, SSRC) and honors (Fulbright)" (Priest 2009:172).

While at the University of Washington, Paul Hiebert was able to serve as visiting professor for one year at Osmania University in Hyderabad in India (1974-75) when on research trips (Frykenberg 2007:128). Notwithstanding his successful professional experiences teaching anthropology at secular universities, Paul Hiebert was "unable to connect his professional achievements with his sense of calling" (Priest 2009:172). No wonder Paul Hiebert one day worded out his frustration in these terms: "I was never able to understand my calling in terms of being an anthropology professor" (2009:172). Priest reports Paul Hiebert's struggle while teaching in secular universities in these terms:

> Each weekend he preached about missions in churches, served on the Mennonite Brethren Mission Board, helped edit mission publications, and ministered on research trips to India—struggling to link the free moments of his life to what really mattered, missions. For years he kept telling people that he and Fran would someday return to India as missionaries, only gradually acknowledging even to himself that this would not happen (Priest 2009:172).

Fuller Theological Seminary (1977-1990)

Convinced that it was not God's plan for him to return to the mission field, Paul Hiebert considered that his new call was to teach future missionaries–a conviction that "would position him at the center of American missiological training" (Priest 2009:172). So, when Paul Hiebert accepted a call from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1977, he knew he was joining a non-denominational evangelical seminary, which was the only school offering doctoral studies in missiology in the 1970s (Priest 2009:173). Located in Pasadena, California, Fuller Theological Seminary opened in 1965 after the model of the Kennedy School of Missions closed in the mid-1960s (2009:173). For Paul Hiebert, being able to teach and coach the next generation of missionaries was a "return to mission" (2009:173). Thus, commenting on Paul Hiebert's early years at Fuller, Priest points out that Paul Hiebert found Fuller "an intellectually exciting place" although he struggled initially to "maintain ties to the secular world of anthropology" (2009:173). Nevertheless, adds Priest, Paul Hiebert was able to adapt.

> With a heavy teaching load, minimal funds to attend academic conferences, and a very different institutional and community set of priorities, Paul soon redirected intellectual efforts into the world of missiology. For the first time he was able to devote teaching, writing, and interaction with colleagues and doctoral students to issues of gospel and culture, contextualization, and mission theology. (Priest 2009:173).

Consequently, while at Fuller Theological Seminary, Paul Hiebert wrote essays which built on the anthropological concepts he had expressed in his PhD dissertation (*Konduru: Structure and integration in a South Indian village*); concepts related to "religious rituals" and "social change" (Hiebert 1971:131-156, 159-166), theories and principles that would become core concepts in the field of missiology (Priest 2009:173). As indicated in Chapter 1, Priest lists five core concepts in the field of missiology, which he attributes to Paul Hiebert:

1) set theory, developed in his essay on conversion (contrasting bounded-set with centered-set); 2) critical contextualization; 3) split-level Christianity; 4)"self-theologizing; and 5) the flaw of the excluded middle.

The researcher believes that Priest mentioned the flaw of the excluded middle last, because of controversies that surfaced at Fuller as a result of Paul Hiebert's ideas and classes on the subject of the excluded middle published in 1982 (Priest 2009:174). The controversy between Fuller theology faculty and some teachers who had popular, but controversial, courses on "signs, wonders, and church growth", contends Priest, began when John Wimber, Peter Wagner, and Charles Kraft began to develop in their classes approaches to power encounter, healing, and spiritual warfare "explicitly justified in terms of Paul's notion of the 'excluded middle'" (2009:174). Unfortunately, the "balanced missiological perspective" Paul Hiebert provided on the controversy left some people unsatisfied and the controversy, even though absorbed by the Fuller administration, still left visible tension that would resurface from time to time–to the point of splitting Mennonite Brethren Churches. This time, Paul Hiebert and James Coggins (a fellow Mennonite) addressed the controversy in their denomination. They coedited *Wonders and the Word* (1989), in which both Mennonite scholars proposed an alternative model of power encounter and articulated a critique of ideas espoused by John Wimber, Peter Wagner, and others (Priest 2009:174). Regrettably, because he was no longer feeling understood at Fuller, Paul Hiebert took the opportunity offered by Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and left Fuller Theological Seminary in 1990.

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1990-2007)

In 1990, while at Fuller Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) contacted Paul Hiebert and offered him the opportunity of coaching and training their

PhD students in Intercultural Studies (Priest 2009:174). With the opportunity to leave the controversy at Fuller behind him, Paul Hiebert expressed visible enthusiasm to join TEDS. As Priest writes, with his new vision, Paul Hiebert used his seventeen years at Trinity to expand the PhD Program in Intercultural Studies at an "astonishing rate" (Priest 2009:174). Robert Priest himself, as he mentioned in his article, was one of the staff members Paul Hiebert recruited for TEDS (Priest 2009:174).

Services with several boards (1972-2007)

Eric Frykenberg, Paul Hiebert's childhood friend and colleague, gives a short sketch of Paul Hiebert's professional appointments. According to Frykenberg, though prolifically thinking and writing in the field of missiology, Paul Hiebert had multiple commitments to several boards (Frykenberg 2007:129). As someone very sensitive to the needs of others (especially when mission institutions needed missionary anthropologists on their boards), Paul Hiebert agreed to assist the boards of many mission agencies despite his heavy academic teaching and research loads with a good number of PhD students to mentor. Below is a list of several boards on which Paul Hiebert served:

- 1972 onward: Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services (consultant)
- 1977-1981: Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary
- 1984-1987: Mennonite Brethren Center for Missions Studies
- 1985-onward: Overseas Ministries Study Center (regular instructor for a one-week seminar "Missionary Response to Folk Religion")
- 1991-98: Member of the board of trustees of Overseas Ministries Study Center (OMSC) and contributing editor of International Bulletin of Missionary Research. (Frykenberg 2007:128, 129)

In 2001, after eleven years at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS), Paul Hiebert was promoted to the position of distinguished professor of mission and anthropology (Frykenberg 2007:128). Paul Hiebert found time at TEDS to complete two book manuscripts which were published after his death: *Transforming Worldviews* (2008), and *The Gospel in Human Contexts* (2009). As mentioned earlier the former was awarded "the top book under the topic of Missions/Global Affairs" by *Christianity Today* in 2009 (Priest 2009:174).

Honouring Paul Hiebert

Paul Hiebert has been at the forefront of developing (through analysis and interpretation) a bifocal theology–a theology that is committed "to the particular and the local while taking account of the fact that we live with an intensified awareness of the global" (Shenk 2006:11). He has pioneered the principle of rethinking and revising theological concepts, methods, and programmes which are faithful to God's revelation (holy scriptures), missionally motivated, and contextually appropriate (Ott & Netland 2006:11).

As mentioned earlier, in 2006, a year before his death, Paul Hiebert was honored by his colleagues with a Festschrift edited by Craig Ott and Harold Netland, entitled *Globalizing theology: Belief and practice in an era of world Christianity* (2006). According to the editors, the book was the result of a consultation between 180 missiologists, theologians, and friends from fifteen countries, which took place on Trinity's campus in Deerfield, Illinois from June 21-22, 2004 (Ott & Netland 2006:12). Gathered for the 2004 *Trinity Consultation on Missiology,* papers were presented on the theme of *Doing theology in a globalizing world*, addressing several issues raised in Paul Hiebert's writings (2006:12). The edited papers, which built on Paul Hiebert's heritage, but present from a variety of perspectives on the theme, are a

worthy tribute to Paul Hiebert's almost five decades of teaching and writing with prophetical repletion on the importance of globalizing theology (Ott & Netland 2006:12).

From his 12 books and more than 150 scholarly articles (Priest 2009:174), Paul Hiebert has addressed several pivotal issues in his published works, which some have called "seminal contributions to missiology" (Ott & Netland 2006:12). *Trinity Journal,* 31(2) (2009), is another commendable tribute to Paul Hiebert's landmark contributions to the fields of missiology, anthropology, and theology. Co-authored by Paul Hiebert's former colleagues, Craig Ott, Robert Priest, and many of their doctoral students, the Fall 2009 issue of *Trinity Journal* addresses Paul Hiebert's five seminal concepts: *Paul G. Hiebert's The flaw of the excluded middle* by A. Anane-Asane, T. Eckert, J. Tan, and R. Priest; *Paul G. Hiebert and critical contextualization* by E. Chang, J.R. Morgan, T. Nyasulu, and R. Priest *Paul G. Hiebert's legacy of worldview* by A. Scott Moreau. These five key concepts represent a few of the overarching themes in Hiebert's writings and a summary of his seminal contributions. In developing each of these key thoughts, Paul Hiebert used his anthropological background and some basic knowledge in other disciplines such as mathematics. The next section addresses chronologically (according to their year of publication) each of Paul Hiebert's five seminal theories and focus on their contribution to Hiebert's understanding of folk religion.

2.5.2. Paul G. Hiebert: Five seminal contributions to missiology (1967-2009)

Acquired through his exposure to Indian culture as a missionary and also as a Christian anthropologist, Paul Hiebert's knowledge of folk religion (theoretical or practical) is demonstrated in each of his five seminal contributions: 1) the flaw of the excluded middle, 2) self-theology, global theology, and missional theology, 3) bounded and centered set theory, 4) critical contextualization, and 5) worldview legacy.

2.5.2.1.   Paul G. Hiebert: The flaw of the excluded middle (1967, 1971, 1982)

As a brilliant theorist, Paul Hiebert's concepts and theories, used in a trialogue between theology, anthropology, and missions, have widely influenced the study and practice of missiology (Frykenberg 2007:129). In *The flaw of the excluded middle*, Paul Hiebert spotted "that the Western two-tiered view of the universe typically left out an entire dimension" of local gods and goddesses, ancestors, dead saints and ghosts, spirits and evil spirits, demons, angels, and different powers "seen quite readily by people of non-Western cultures" (Anane-Asane et al. 2009:191; Hiebert 1982:40, 46; Moreau 2000:363).

It is worth pointing out that Paul Hiebert's understanding of folk religion described above is in a form that has progressed and matured throughout the years. In one of his earlier articles, published in 1967[3], Hiebert describes folk religion in terms of "Pure Spirit, high gods, lesser gods, demons and spirits, demi-gods, saints", etc. (Hiebert 1967:255). A slightly later article, published in 1970[4], included figures or terms distinctive to folk religion, such as god-like stranger, spirits, magical rites, celestial beings and demi-gods, etc. (Hiebert 1970:358-359). It is obvious that Hiebert's 1967 and 1970 articles are portions of his PhD work, completed in 1967, but only published in 1971, where Hiebert refers to the notions of low and high religion, or ghosts, demons, devils, spirits (Hiebert 1971:133, 138). These terms are present, directly or indirectly, in his previously published articles, but explicitly described with more general connotations in his 1982 article (Hiebert 1982).

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[3] In his 1967 article: "Missions and the understanding of culture", Paul Hiebert already compares the 'American concept of life' with the Indian concept of life (see Figure 2. "A comparison of American and Indian views of life"; Hiebert 1967:254). Hiebert's early comparison showed a missing zone in the American's view of reality.

[4] Hiebert's article "Treasure-lore in India's great and little traditions" in *Folklore* (October 1970) resembles sections of his PhD dissertation. One could argue that the article is based on his PhD research defended in 1967 (see Hiebert 1971:132-138).

With new insights by 1982 and more categorical evaluation, Paul Hiebert argued that Western missionaries historically "had no answers to the problems of the middle level" within their Christian worldview because they often did not even see it (Hiebert 1982:44). Thus, Western missionaries had only "addressed the 'natural' world of people and things, and the spiritual world of God and eternity", but had failed to recognize the world in-between these two. Consequently, Western missionaries had failed to appropriately address the middle-range religious experience of folk religions, made up of healings, visions, ancestral spirits, demons, and local deities (Hiebert 1982:39, 44, 45), and as such, they had been unsuccessful in developing a Christian theology of ancestors, of animals and plants, of local spirits and spirit possession, of "principalities, powers and rulers of the darkness of this world" (Hiebert 1982:45 referring to Eph. 6:12). According to Hiebert, when tribal people spoke of the fear of evil spirits, Western missionaries denied the existence of the spirits instead of claiming the power of Christ to rebuke the spirits (Hiebert 1982:44); the result, argues Hiebert, has been a secularized Christianity, and as Newbigin has affirmed, "Western Christian missions have been one of the greatest secularizing forces in history" (Newbigin 1966 cited in Hiebert 1982:44). Pocock, Van Rheenen and McConnell comment on Hiebert's observation in these terms:

> Hiebert argued that during the Enlightenment period (1750–1850), which led to the era of modernity (1850–1980), Westerners separated reality into two distinct compartments. They formed an upper-level category of the transcendent or religious and a lower level of the immanent or mundane world of nature (1982, 82; see also Love 2000; Moreau 2000b). For Westerners, little or nothing exists in the space between the upper and the lower level. The upper level cannot be known except through empirically unverifiable faith. It is therefore not susceptible to scientific investigation, and what cannot be demonstrated verifiably may not exist. The lower level, nature, can be investigated and known through empirical means, namely the scientific method (Pocock et al. 2005:196).

Despite these important missiological insights, the flaw of the excluded middle is Paul Hiebert's seminal idea which generated serious controversies. It is argued earlier that Priest mentioned the flaw of the excluded middle, as Hiebert's last seminal contribution to missiology because of polemics that surfaced at Fuller as a result of his ideas and classes on the subject of the excluded middle. Priest points out that Paul Hiebert accepted the call to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School to leave the controversies at Fuller behind (Priest 2009:174; Anane-Asane et al. 2009:194). But, the focus in this section is neither to answer why and how Hiebert's lectures as a professor at Fuller's School of World Mission influenced[5] the theology and missiology of John Wimber (his student), Peter Wagner, Timothy Warner, and Charles Kraft (missiologists, former missionaries, and Paul Hiebert's colleagues) on spiritual warfare to the point of creating tensions, disagreements, divisions, different interpretations and conclusions, nor is the focus to critique or evaluate Paul Hiebert's 1982 article in terms of its limits and lacks. The researcher is aware that, while some have denounced Hiebert's ideas and argued that the pendulum has swung so far that there is now the danger of "the flaw of an expanded middle in which every strange event is thought to have a middle domain explanation" (Moreau 2000:363), others have pointed out that the different understandings and usages of Paul Hiebert's article have arisen because his article did not provide detailed guidance on how to develop and practice missiology focused on the excluded middle (Anane-Asane et al. 2009:194). Thus, although the use of spiritual warfare as a mission strategy is addressed in Chapter 5, the focus now, as indicated in the subtitle for Hiebert's five seminal concepts, is to identify the link between the concept of

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[5]Anane-Asane et al. (2009:189) argue that Paul Hiebert's 1982 article could be considered "the most influential article written" on the topic of folk religion and spiritual warfare which has "influenced a wide variety of missiologists…. and spiritual warfare authors."

the flaw of the excluded middle and Paul Hiebert's understanding of folk religion as a missiologist and Christian anthropologist.

Paul Hiebert's article, *The flaw of the excluded middle*, is viewed in some academic circles as "tremendously significant", and as such the article has "been published, reviewed, and acclaimed in a great variety of contexts" (Hesselgrave 2005:194 cited in Anane-Asane et al. 2009:189). The researcher believes the significance of Hiebert's article lies in two important facts highlighted by Anane-Asane and his co-authors in the conclusion of their 2009 article:

1   Hiebert's article, like a catalyst, has opened the eyes of Western Christians to the reality of mid-tier supernatural beings, and in that sense, the article has helped Western missionaries to recognize the biases and blind spots in their understanding of the middle zone and motivated many Western missionaries to "strive for greater awareness of the beliefs and practices concerning supernatural realities operating in animistic contexts" (Anane-Asane et al. 2009:195); and

2   Hiebert's article, which was further developed in his subsequent publications (1989; 1992; 1994; Hiebert, Shaw, & Tiénou 1999), "provides the single best starting point for reflection on core 'spiritual warfare' issues faced by missionaries" (Anane-Asane et al. 2009:195).

Hiebert's diagram in his 1982 article clearly illustrates his understanding of folk religion. His model highlights the difference between a Western worldview, which tends to "see only two worlds (the seen world and the trans-empirical world)", and the non-Western worldviews held by most peoples of the world (folk-religious practitioners,), which recognize three levels of reality, with the middle world comprised of unseen beings and powers, such as living-dead, ancestors, angels, demons, evil eye, ghosts, local gods and goddesses, *jinn*, magical forces, and *mana* "that are very much a part of everyday human life" (Moreau 2000:363; Ott et al. 2009:252).

Thus, the foundational principle embedded in Paul Hiebert's article is that the failure to understand the major characteristic of folk religion, namely the daily relationship people in folk religion have with the middle zone, will inevitably produce an unhealthy split-level Christianity in mission, and as such, any approach to mission that does not provide some form of Christian answers to middle-level questions will not be successful (Anane-Asane et al. 2009:192). The tables that follow better illustrate Paul Hiebert's article as a tool that has been used not only to identify an area that many evangelical missionaries have missed in their training, but also to identify sources for a holistic theology that addresses middle-world issues in non-Western cultural contexts (Hiebert 1982:45; Moreau 2000:363).

ORGANIC ANALOGY
Based on concepts of living beings relating to other living beings. Stresses life, personality, relationships, functions, health, disease choice, etc. Relationships are essentially moral in character.

MECHANICAL ANALOGY
Based on concepts of impersonal objects controlled by forces. Stresses impersonal, mechanistic and deterministic nature of events. Forces are essentially amoral in character.

UNSEEN OR SUPERNATURAL
Beyond immediate sense experience. Above natural explanation. Knowledge of this based on inference or on supernatural experiences choice, etc. Relationships are essentially moral in character.

OTHER WORLDLY
Sees entities and events occurring in some other worlds and in other times.

HIGH RELIGION BASED ON COSMIC BEINGS: Cosmic gods angels Demons spirits of other worlds	HIGH RELIGION BASED ON COSMIC FORCES: Kismet fate Brahman and karma impersonal cosmic forces
FOLK OR LOW RELIGION local gods and goddesses, ancestors and ghosts spirits demons and evil spirits dead saints	**MAGIC AND ASTROLOGY** mana astrological forces charms, amulets and magical rites evil eye evil tongue
FOLK SOCIAL SCIENCE Interaction of living beings such as humans, and possibly animals and plants	**FOLK NATURAL SCIENCE** Interaction of natural objects based on natural forces

SEEN OR EMPIRICAL
Directly observable by the senses Knowledge based on experimentation and observation.

THIS WORLDLY
Sees entities and events as occurring in this world and the universe.

Figure 1: An analytical framework for the analysis of religious systems
(source: Hiebert 1982:40)

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American Concept of Life

God:
eternal,
supernatural
infinite

Creator | Relation between
God and humans

Creation | is vertical

Human:
natural, but with
an eternal soul.
A ━━━━ B
Relations between
humans are essentially
horizontal

Animals:
temporal

Plants

Inanimate world:
lifeless

Indian Concept of Life

Brahman: the only reality, unknowable to the passing world

Reality

Pure Spirit | Illusion

high gods

lesser gods

demons and spirits

demi-gods

Mixed | saints and incarnations | Relations are essentially vertical

priests

rulers

merchants

craftsman castes

worker castes

service castes

outcastes

high animals

low animals

Pure
Matter | Plants

Inanimate World

Figure 2: A comparison of an American and an Indian view of life
(Source: Hiebert 1994:109; Hiebert 1978:26; 1967:254-255)

2.5.2.2.   Paul G. Hiebert: The steps to his missional theology (1973-2006)

In Paul Hiebert's writings, the terms theology and Christian theology are used in connection to Hiebert's deep commitments to Christian values and creeds (Hiebert 1973:3,4; 1985:19-20, 211; 1985b:5-10; 1994:26, 31, 99; 1999:24-26; 2008:272-276) (cf. Cairns 2002:19). With his Anabaptist-Mennonite background (firm beliefs in justification by faith, the sole authority of Scripture, and the priesthood of all believers (Cairns 2002:19), Hiebert uses the expression Christian theology with loaded Christian assumptions. According to Paul Hiebert, a Christian theology is a theology that has "one foot in biblical revelation and the other in the historical and cultural context of the people hearing the message" (1985:19). Thus, Hiebert differentiated Christian theology, the theology done by Christians in general and evangelical Christians in particular, from secular theology[6], a theology which, in its beginning, was only present in poetry, philosophical reasoning, and politics (Schaff 1886:270). Correctness and effectiveness of theological praxis that is a scripturally sound, epistemologically balanced, anthropologically informed, critically contextualized, or culturally relevant theology has been Paul Hiebert's concern throughout his writings. This inclusive use of overlapping disciplines, such as systematic and biblical theology, anthropology, and missiology (in a critical-realist epistemological context) has played an extremely important role in the development of Paul Hiebert's "missiological or missional theology"–a complementary way of doing theology for

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[6] While Romans presented theology under three aspects (Varro's threefold division of theology): (1) mythical or poetic theology, that of the Greeks and chiefly used by poets; (2) physical theology, invented by philosophers; and, (3) civil theology, founded by statesmen (Philip Schaff 1886. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Series 1, Volume 2*; Augustine of Hippo or St Augustine. 410 [354–430], *City of God*, VI, 1).

Greeks such as Aristotle considered theology as a branch of theoretical philosophy and the most speculative, but the best of the three speculative sciences with mathematics and natural sciences being the other two (Jonathan Barnes (ed.). 1984. *The complete works of Aristotle: The revised Oxford translation*, Vol 1 & 2: 3486, 3614).

missiologists which Hiebert calls in some writings a "third"[7] way of doing theology in the West, after Systematic and Biblical Theologies (Hiebert 2000:167; Tiénou & Hiebert 2006:221).

In an article published in 2002, Hiebert and Tiénou called this complementary way of doing theology a fourth way of doing theology (Hiebert &Tiénou 2002:48). In that article, Tropological theology was added to systematic and biblical theologies as another way of doing theology. However, Hiebert and Tiénou seem to have referred to tropological theology only for academic honesty purposes rather than as an approach of theologizing to expand on. The fact that Tiénou and Hiebert omitted tropological theology in their 2006 publication confirms this researcher's assertion. Consequently, Hiebert does not refer to tropological theology in any of his major subsequent publications[8]. As they explicitly implied, the reason Tiénou and Hiebert abandoned exploration of tropological theology in their subsequent writings is rooted in their Western training. For Paul Hiebert, it even goes back to his Western culture and worldview. As they wrote in 2002, Western academics are "deeply influenced by Greek and Hebrew thought", which is why they are almost incapable of understanding Eastern Orthodox theology, which is done in the context of worship and "stresses the mystical, sacramental and iconic nature of truth" (Tiénou & Hiebert 2002:46). Accordingly, it is consistent that Tiénou and Hiebert (Hiebert in particular) do not mention Tropological theology in their 2006 article and

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[7] In 2000, in his article "Spiritual warfare and worldview" in *Global missiology for the 21st century*: *The Iguassu dialogue* Hiebert refers to "missiological theology", a synonymic expression of "missional theology", as a "third way" of doing theology (2000:167). Two years later, in the article co-authored with Tite Tiénou in 2002: "Missional theology" in *Mission Focus: Annual Review 2002, Vol. 10*, Hiebert and Tiénou qualified "missional theology" as the "fourth way of doing theology" after Systematic, Biblical and Tropological theologies (2002:48).

[8] While in his 2008 *Transforming worldviews: An anthropological understanding of how people change*, Hiebert does not mention even a single time the term 'Tropological theology', he does in his 2009 book *The gospel in human contexts: Anthropological explorations for contemporary missions*, but as a footnote in these terms (2009:58).

subsequent writings, and this might also explain why Hiebert does not develop further on the implications of a Tropological theology in mission in his subsequent writings.

Nonetheless, Tiénou and Hiebert were honest academics. From their 2002 article, one learns the essentials about tropological theology, e.g.:

1. Tropological theology has a long history among Christianity's Church Fathers such as Origen.
2. Tropological theology is based on tacit knowledge.
3. Tropological theology uses lyric theology.
4. Tropological theology is generative–this means that "there is a great mystery in seeking to understand God and his infinite nature.
5. Tropological theology uses the logic of analogy.
6. Tropological theology is doxological in the sense that it is not an abstract reflection on the nature of truth for the sake of truth itself, but it sees theological reflection as an essential element in worship.
7. Tropological theology assumes that we must use all our senses–sight, touch, hearing and smell–to experience truth (Tiénou & Hiebert 2002:46-47, 51).

To their credit, by highlighting the main features of tropological theology, as presented above, Tiénou and Hiebert have successfully been academically balanced. After all, they needed to put to practice a principle dear to Hiebert–the necessary and positive impact of a "hermeneutical community" (Hiebert 1985:192, 203; Hiebert & Hiebert 1985b:8, 110; Hiebert 1994:30-31, 90-91, 100-102; Hiebert et al. 1999:25, 375, 385, 387; Hiebert 2008:259, 267, 274-275, etc.). Thus, Tiénou and Hiebert argue that the contribution of theologians from different cultures in any theological discourse helps correct cultural biases in doing theology (Tiénou & Hiebert 2002:51.)

As argued above, Paul Hiebert, as a Western Christian anthropologist and missiologist, focused in his writings on the three Western ways of doing theology: 1) systematic theology,

2) biblical theology, and 3) missional theology. While the former two are not Hiebert's constructs, the latter is the culmination of Hiebert's works and arguments on his concepts of "self-theology" and global theology. While the focus for the next section is Paul Hiebert's seminal concept of missional theology, it is necessary to note, before proceeding, that Hiebert and Tiénou debate that missional theology could be considered in the West as a third way of doing theology that will complement systematic and biblical theological methods (2006:224-225). In his writings or coauthored writings with Tiénou, Paul Hiebert summarized these two traditional theological methods (systematic and biblical theologies) in pragmatic qualifications.

Systematic theology

According to Robin H. Boyd, systematic theology emerged in the Western church (which began in a Jewish setting) because, among many other reasons, the early church fathers pioneered systematic and authentic ways of communicating the gospel in Greek thought and needed to "deal with the heresies that emerged in the process" (Boyd 1974:47-52 cited in Hiebert 1985:206). Thus, the first task of systematic theology, as pointed out by Charles Taber, was to find answers to human problems. Taber writes:

> The theologian is called upon, long before doing any kind of systematic theology, to assess the life and testimony of the church, and to address himself, in the communion of believers, to the issues and problems that face the church and to the opportunities and challenges that it will try to meet. (Taber 1978:69 cited in Hiebert 1985:210-211).

Because theology is deeply influenced by the local culture, the early Christian church adopted a Greek worldview that emphasized rational and synchronic systems of thought after its remarkable spread to the Greeks. Bosch argues that, before the influence of the Greeks' worldview, there was virtually no single presence of systematization forms in the Bible and earliest Christian literature (Bosch [1991] 2011:195). Bosch asserts that "It is to the Greeks that

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we owe the intellectual discipline of theology and the classical formulations of the faith" ([1991] 2011:195). Thus, quoting Kannengieser, Bosch points out that the "Alexandrian theologian, Origen (ca. 185 to ca. 254 AD), may well be called the first 'systematic theologian' and the first person in whom the Eastern theological paradigm clearly manifested itself" (cf. Kannengieser 1984:154-156 cited in Bosch [1991] 2011:195).

With the above background, the traditional meaning of theology was Western systematic theology (Hiebert 2000:164; Tiénou & Hiebert 2002:40) with its assumptions, questions, and methods of philosophy (Tiénou & Hiebert 2002:40-41; 2005:119). Consequently, Western systematic theology became the most important research tradition in the West (Hiebert & Tiénou 2005:119). Despite its glorious days in the 12th century (Finger 1985:28-21 cited in Tiénou & Hiebert 2002:40; 2005:119; 2006:222), systematic theology, which was long considered the "queen of the sciences," was to later lose its supremacy and become, over time, "one discipline among others in theological education–alongside biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, history, missions, and other disciplines" (Young 1998:78-79 cited in Hiebert 2000:164; Tiénou & Hiebert 2002:40; 2006:222).

Tiénou and Hiebert summarized systematic theology with an assessment of two main aspects (strengths and limitations) that resemble the four aspects assessment technique (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT)[9] analysis) used in strategic planning for businesses and institutions. According to Hazzan and his four co-authors:

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[9] For further studies on SWOT analysis please consider: 1) Lawrence Fine. 2011. *The SWOT analysis*; 2) Tom Hinthorne. 2013. "SWOT analysis and the three strategic questions" in *Strategic management in the 21st century, Vol. 1: The Operational environment* edited by Timothy J. Wilkinson; 3) Alan Sarsby. 2016. *SWOT Analysis*; 4) Orit Hazzan, Einat Heyd-Metzuyanim, Anat Even-Zahav, Tali Tal, and Yehudit Judy Dori. 2018. *Application of management theories for STEM education: The case of SWOT analysis*.

Strengths are characteristics of an organization that give it advantages over others. Weaknesses are characteristics that place the organization at a disadvantage. Opportunities are phenomena, generally external to the organization that can be used to its advantage, and threats are external conditions that can hinder the organization's ability to achieve its goals. (Hazzan et al. 2018:30)

Although systematic theology is not an organization, the researcher tried to adapt the

SWOT analysis to the discipline (Table 4).

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY	
Central question: "What are the unchanging universals of reality?"	
STRENGTHS	**WEAKNESSES**
1) The assumption that "ultimate truth can be known using human reason" 2) The assumption that feelings and values should be separated from cognition or reasoning. 3) The assumption that "fundamental elements and categories in Scripture" should be examined. 4) The assumption that systematic theology "gives us a standard to test our knowledge and helps us understand, in some measure, the biblical worldview."	1) The assumption that "the ultimate, unchanging structure of reality" needs to be analyzed synchronically. 2) Systematic theology does not give due attention to history and historical events, and as such "loses sight of the cosmic drama or plot in the Scriptures". 3) Systematic theology "is an intellectual exercise remote from life's everyday issues" 4) Systematic theology "leaves little room for the particularities and ambiguities of life, the mysteries that transcend human comprehension, and the wisdom that can deal with the contradictions and paradoxes of a rapidly changing world" (Yancy 2000 cited in Tiénou & Hiebert 2006:223). 5) Systematic theology "has a weak sense of mission"
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
1) The assumption that "there are basic, unchanging realities" to be known in order to "understand the fundamental structure of all reality" 2) The assumption that "single systematic understanding of ultimate truth that is comprehensive, logically consistent, and conceptually coherent" can be constructed.	1) The assumption that "truth is ahistorical and acultural–it is true for everyone everywhere" 2) The assumption that there is no "internal contradictions and fuzziness in categories and thought" 3) Systematic theology "is in danger of becoming captive to the methods of philosophy" 4) Systematic theology "cannot adequately deal with change"

Biblical theology

The second theological research tradition, biblical theology, was developed in the West as Johann Gabler reacted to "the scholasticism of post-Reformation theologians" (Hiebert 2000:166; Tiénou & Hiebert 2002:45; 2006:224). Gabler "advocated a return to the Bible as history and an emphasis on the unfolding of the cosmic story" (Tiénou & Hiebert 2006:224). One of the main distinctive characteristics of biblical theology is its usage of categories drawn from Scripture to explore historical perspectives to "answer questions about God's purpose, design, and intention" which Hiebert called "biblical anthropological theology" in his 1994 publication (Hiebert 1994:11-12). In an even earlier publication, Hiebert exposed premises of biblical theology as the theology initially exposed in the early Christian church. Hiebert writes:

> Moreover, the God of the Bible is portrayed as acting in specific instances and not merely in generalized ways. Thus, the specific historical context of the biblical account acquires very important theological implications, and Christians have almost instinctively reacted against any attempts to transpose the cultural and historical context of the biblical accounts… From the standpoint of Judeo-Christian biblical theology, the entrance of God into history at specific times and places is both relevant and crucial. It is obvious, therefore, that the events recorded in the Bible cannot be altered. (Hiebert 1985:155)

Based on Tiénou and Hiebert's list of strengths and limits of biblical theology, the researcher has also created a SWOT analysis for this second theological research tradition (Table 5).

Table 5: SWOT analysis of biblical theology
(Tiénou & Hiebert 2002:45; 2005:123-124; 2006:224)

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
Central question: "What did the biblical passages mean at the time of those writing them, and what lessons can we learn from them today?"

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1) Biblical theology "focuses on the acts of God in history, particularly in the lives of his people" 2) Biblical theology "assumes that the heart of revelation is historical", and as such emphasizes "the narrative nature of Scripture" 3) Biblical theology is more concerned with "the diachronic dimension of a biblical worldview" 4) By portraying the cosmic story of human history and biography biblical theology "gives meaning to life".	1) "It focuses on diachronic meaning, leaving the unchanging synchronic structure of reality in our peripheral vision" 2) Biblical theology is more concerned about "past biblical history" than "present events" 3) Biblical theology focuses on "the universal story, not the particular lives of individuals and communities outside the biblical narrative" 4) "It does not directly help us apply biblical truth to the problems we face in specific cultures and persons today" 5) "It has not been a strong motivating force driving people and churches into missions."

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
1) Biblical theology "uses the questions, methods, and assumptions of modern historiography" 2) "It uses the temporal logic of antecedent and consequent causality and accepts teleological[10] explanations in which God and humans act based on intentions"	1) Biblical theology runs the risk of becoming "a study unto itself with little relevance to us today".

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[10] Basically, teleology "is derived from the term *telos* 'end'" and means the study (*logos*) of "ends or purposes" (see Lindsay Judson. 2006. *Aristotle's Metaphysics Book*: 194, 200; Merriam-Webster's vocabulary builder 2010.). Judson argues that teleology has "such a central place in Aristotle's arguments" on "priority in substance" because Aristotle viewed relationship between substances as teleological relations (Judson 2006:194). For instance, our understanding of time and teleology "gives history purpose and meaning" (Ott et al. 2010:90).

Missional theology

Missional theology is, in Paul Hiebert's view, the third theological research tradition, and is based on two other modules Hiebert brought to the field of missiology: 1) self-theologizing[11] or the fourth self; and 2) global theology. Self-theologizing is a term and concept first coined by Paul Hiebert in the context of the limitations of the indigenization of missionary churches overseas. Three conditions, promoted by Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) and Henry Venn (1796-1873) around 1861, were necessary before a young cross-cultural church was given the status of the mature and independent church (indigenous church): 1) self-governing; 2) self-supporting; and 3) self-propagating (Hiebert 1985:194). Skreslet points out that "a substantial literature has accumulated around the figures of Venn and Anderson and their shared goal of the 'three-self church'" (Skreslet 2012:137). Based on this well-known and widely referenced concept of the "three-self" or "three selves" (for some authors) policy or formula promoted by Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn, mission churches were evaluated and classified (Bosch [1991]2011:298, 372, 442, 443, 444, 459; Hiebert 1985:194; Ott et al. 2010:xxv, 115; Payne & Terry 2013:105-107, 112; Pocock et al. 2005:15, 140, 285, 328; Skreslet 2012:137; Sunquist 2013:105-106; Taylor 2000:6; Turaki 2000:277; etc.).

According to Wilkens anything complex (such as time and substance) "must have a creator, and thus that God exists" (Wilkens 2016:604).

[11] Rochelle Cathcart and Mike Nichols, in their 2009 article *Self-theology, global theology, and missional theology in the writings of Paul G. Hiebert* note that, although Hiebert was not the first to see limitations with the indigeneity model (Smalley 1958; Tippett 1973 cited in Cathcart & Nichols 2009:211), he was the first to identify "self-theologizing" as a "major missing component" (Hiebert 1985a; 1985c cited in Cathcart & Nichols 2009:211).

Before presenting a table for the SWOT analysis of Paul Hiebert's missional theology, it is worth to note that Hiebert's missional theology has two pillars: self-theology; and global theology.

(1) Self-theology or self-theologizing

As mentioned above, Hiebert, similar to William A. Smalley (1958) and Allan Tippett (1973), critically evaluated Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn's three-self mission theory. While Tippett (six-self[12]) and Hiebert (four-self) are more focused on expanding Anderson and Venn's three-self mission theory, Smalley is more virulent in his criticisms. For instance, Smalley exposes serious reservations to Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn's three-self mission theory. He labeled the theory as a "false diagnosis" and "misleading" (Smalley 1958:51-52). According to Smalley, an indigenous church is not necessarily by definition self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating, and as such, the three-self mission theory is not axiomatic or diagnostic of an indigenous movement and, hence, it cannot be the goal of modern missions (1958:52-61).

As mentioned earlier, Paul Hiebert's contribution to the indigenization of young churches had a wider audience and influence (Cathcart & Nichols 2009:211). According to Hiebert, a three-self existing church was still not fully indigenous if it still operated by the theological praxis of its Western missionaries (Hiebert: 1985:216). Hiebert asserts that only a

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[12] Alan Tippett (1911-1988) expanded the three-self mission theory of Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn. Tippett introduces three additional components of self (a six-fold self) to the three initially promoted by Anderson and Venn which Tippett suggests are complementary characteristics of indigenous churches. Tippett's six-fold self" are: 1) Self-image–Christ's local church independent from the missionaries; 2) Self-functioning–local worship and training etc.; 3) Self-determining–capable of local decision making; 4) Self-supporting–financially independent from the missionaries, (5) "Self-propagation"–locally organized outreach programmes; and 6) Self-giving–local involvement of community social needs (Tippett 1973:148-136; Terry 2000:484).

locally developed theology could make the gospel clear for local culture (1985:216). To reach a self-theologizing status, Hiebert recommended that local churches follow a two-step process: 1) train the local new Christians; and 2) train national theologians (Hiebert 1985:215-216). However, Hiebert indicated that all self-theologies should mature at some point into transcultural theology–a theology that, although pluralist (rich with theologies developed in different local cultures), is above cultural differences, accepts theological diversity and avoids a relativism, subjectivism or particularism that respectively undermines truth, reduces theologies to human creations, and "denies that the gospel transcends cultural differences" (Hiebert 1985:216).

(2) Global theology or globalizing theology

According to Ott and Netland, Paul Hiebert has "repeatedly and prophetically emphasized in his writings the importance of globalizing theology" (2006:12). Like the steps of a staircase, global theology was, in Hiebert's thinking, the next step after transcultural theology and self-theologizing. For Hiebert, not only were contextualized theologies (also called contextualized evangelism, local theologies or self-theologies) not enough, but they limited or prevented integration and the global dialogue between multiple theological systems–Hiebert talks about theological shock when such localized theologies meet (1985:196-219; cf. 1987:19; 1991:267, 271), while transcultural theology or metatheology creates an integration of the worldwide community of Christians and a pluralism that limits the effect of cultural differences (Hiebert 1985:219).

In 1987 and 1991, Hiebert draws attention to the different shifts in world cultures and the growing sense of theological pluralism in societies that were leading to a global era, a global view (semiotic), a global church, but also global crises, global perspective and global responses

(1987:17-19; 1991:274-279). From colonialism, the world moved to anti-colonialism, and now the world is in globalism. Thus, Hiebert asserts that globalism reminds us that "particular narratives have no ultimate meaning in themselves" (1991:277). The new era calls for a global Christian community. The world has known its epistemological shifts–from positivism during the colonial era to instrumentalism in the anti-colonial era, and now to critical realism in globalism (Hiebert 1985b; 1991:227-279). As a controversial and polarizing concept, globalization has touched cultures, economies and theologies. Netland argues that "at the heart of the notion of globalization is awareness of an increasingly complex interrelatedness on multiple levels across traditional boundaries" (Netland 2006:18-20).

As the dynamic of modern cultures leads the world to universalism and interconnectedness in a global system of relationships, globalization "as a process and as a reality is a direct fruit of modernity" (Shenk 2006:10). As such, to engage in globalizing theology today means that Christian theologians must "guard the commitment to the particular and the local while taking account of the fact that we live with an intensified awareness of the global" (Shenk 2006:11).

Hiebert listed five characteristics of what the transcultural, meta or global theology could look like: biblically-based; supracultural; historical; Christological; and spirit-led (Hiebert 1985:216-19). But Hiebert (1991:277), as some before him (Nida 1960; Kraft 1979; Conn 1984; cited in Cathcart & Nichols 2009:213) and others after him (Douglas 2006; Ott & Netland 2006; Strong & Strong 2006:127; Vanhoozer 2006:101, 104, 127) were concerned about the tension between pluralism and theological absolutes in a globalizing theology. Douglas, for instance, goes further in his list of factors, which could be intense dialogue in a global theology and points out that Craig Blomberg (1993) describes the "process of

globalization for biblical understanding" in five concepts consistently included in the agenda of globalization: liberation theology; feminism; pluralism; economics; and contextualization (2006:285).

Consequently, Paul Hiebert expands on areas of his concerns about the overwhelming consequences of the glocalization[13] of the world and the church for Christian missions in the twenty-first century. Hiebert enumerates seven topics of tense discussions in glocalization or globalization: truth; dialogue; religious pluralism; relativism; contextualization; ecumenism; 7) partnership; and local and global theologies (2006:289).

Based on the above understanding Hiebert and Tiénou (2006:226-230; Cathcart & Nichols 2009:217-219) established three[14] essential steps to do missional theology:

(1) Phenomenology.
- Study the situation as we see it.
- Seek to understand how the people see it *(emic* view)
- Develop an *etic* comparative frame to compare and evaluate different views.

(2) Ontology
- Do reality checks on the facts (Scripture and other similar church situations).
- Study Scriptural teachings on the case (systematic and biblical theology).
- Evaluate and make decisions on the case.

(3) Missiology
- Act on the immediate case (findings of phenomenology and ontology).

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[13] Vanhoozer (2006:99) defines glocal as "the point of intersection between the global and the local". As such, Vanhoozer explains that glocalization "describes the way in which people in a certain locale respond to globalization, the way the local goes global" (2006:99).

[14] Hiebert (2000:168) lists four steps in missiological or missional theology: Phenomenology; Ontology; an evaluation of the present situation in the light of biblical teachings and a decision on what should be done; and missiology". Six years later, Tiénou and Hiebert limit themselves to three essential steps to missional theology (2006:222).

- Begin procedure to deal with the underlying issues in the long run (anthropologically informed theology, and biblically shaped anthropology). (Hiebert & Tiénou 2006:226-230)

Accordingly, to do missional theology, phenomenology, ontology and missiology are put into dialogue in a complementary relationship. Just as, by analogy, constitutional law, statutory law, and case law are integrated in the American judicial system, so are systematic, biblical and missional theology integrated in Christian mission (Hiebert & Tiénou 2006:225). Cathcart and Nichols concur and argue that the complementarity between missional, systematic, and biblical theology maintain a relevant and balanced theological thinking and a biblically grounded missiology–a missiology that gives "value to human realities, worldviews, and experiences" (2009:217).

Table 6: SWOT analysis of missional theology
(Hiebert 2000:165; Tiénou & Hiebert 2006:226-230)

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">MISSIONAL THEOLOGY
Central Question: What does Scripture say to this particular human situation?</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">STRENGTHS</td><td align="center">WEAKNESSES</td></tr>
<tr><td>1) Missional theology "deals with the contemporary, particular problems we face in missions"
2) "It does theological reflection to make the message of Scripture understood and relevant to people in the particularities of their lives"
3) Missional theology "draws on systematic and biblical theologies to understand Scripture"
4) "It also draws on precedent cases in the life of the church–on how other Christians have reflected and ruled in similar situations"</td><td>1) Missional theology "must build the bridge that brings truths into the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which the missionary serves"
2) "It must seek to understand the cultural context as the people they serve understand it."</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">OPPORTUNITIES</td><td align="center">THREATS</td></tr>
<tr><td>1) Missional theology "seeks to bridge the gulf between biblical revelation given millennia ago and human contexts today"
2) Missional theology is concerned with the contextual communication and application of the gospel.
3) "It studies current ministry cases and biblical parallels to find precedents in Scripture"
4) "It helps people move from where they are to where God wants them to be"</td><td>1) Missional theology finds it difficult "to move from present to cosmic time and story."</td></tr>
</table>

Table 7: A comparison of evangelical systematic, biblical and missiological theologies
(Source Hiebert 2000:165)

	SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY	BIBLICAL THEOLOGY	MISSIONAL THEOLOGY
SOURCE	The Bible is divine revelation.	The Bible is divine revelation.	The Bible is divine revelation.
KEY QUESTION	What are the eternal, unchanging, cosmic realities?	What is the cosmic story?	What does Scripture say to this particular human situation?
METHODS	Abstract analogical logic	Historiography	Precedent teachings and cases
RESULTS	Helps develop the synchronic understandings of a biblical worldview	Helps develop the diachronic understandings of a biblical worldview	Helps develop missional vision and motivation based on a biblical worldview
LIMITATIONS	Difficulty in bridging from: – structure to story – universal to particular – explanation to mystery Not missiological in nature	Difficulty in bridging from: – story to structure – universal to particular Not missiological in nature	Difficulty in bridging from: – today to cosmic Structure – now to cosmic time and story

2.5.2.3.   Paul G. Hiebert: Bounded, centered and fuzzy set theory (1978-2008)

The origin of set theory is attributed to the Russian-born German mathematician Georg Cantor (1845-1918). The young Cantor devoted much of his mathematical career and work (1873 to 1895) to numbers, and he developed and founded a new branch of mathematics–the theory of sets–which stimulated 20th century exploration of number theory (Cunningham 2016:x, 20, 111; O'Leary 2016:225-226; Stolll 1963:viii, 1-8; Tanton 2005:11, 59-60;). Cantor defined the term set S as "any collection of definite, distinguishable objects of our intuition or

of our intellect to be conceived as a whole", as a single entity, where objects are called the elements or members of *S* (Stoll 1963:2). Thus, according to Cantor, a set is made up of objects called members or elements (Stoll 1963:4). Mathematically, this notion of set has been and is still expressed in the following ways:

- N = (0, 1, 2, 3....} is the set of natural numbers
- Z = {.... -3, -2. -1.0, 1, 2, 3....) is the set of integers
- Q is the set of rational numbers
- R is the set of real numbers
- 7 € R, to assert that 7 is an element, or a member, of the set R
- -7 ¢ N, to assert that -7 is not an element of the set N.
(Cunningham 2016:20; O'Leary 2016:225; Stoll 1963:2-5; Tanton 2005:61-62).

Consequently, sets are "exceedingly important in mathematics", because "most mathematical objects (e.g., numbers, functions) can be defined in terms of sets" (Cunningham 2016:1). Georg Cantor did not know that his pioneering work would serve as the "basis for the definition and explanation of the most fundamental mathematical concepts: functions, relations, algebraic structures, function spaces, etc." (2016:1) and "would eventually lead to a unifying theory for mathematics" which would dramatically change the course of mathematics (2016:ix). Thus, Cantor's "basic concepts in set theory are now applied in virtually every branch of mathematics" to the point that David Hilbert made this famous statement: "no one will drive us out of this paradise that Cantor has created for us" (O'Leary 2016:226). Other mathematicians, such as Ernst F.F. Zermelo (1871-1953) and Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), became known for their independent work on some of the many difficult issues and paradoxes raised by Cantor's revolutionary research on set theory (Cunningham 2016:20, 25, 30, 67; O'Leary 2016:225; Stoll 1963:9, 289; Tanton 2005:199).

Based on this background (set theory as a concept gaining pre-eminence in the field of mathematics), it is logical that Paul Hiebert, who had a passion for mathematics during his

undergraduate studies, would use such pivotal mathematical insight to address the missiological issue of conversion to Christianity among folk religionists such as Papayya in India. It is interesting to see that Robert R. Stoll's *Set theory and logic* (1961, 1963), one of the well-known mathematics text books of the 1960s, cited by Paul Hiebert (1994:111), comprehensively mention Cantor's theory and theorem (Stoll 1963:viii, 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 56, 80, 83, 86, 92, 98, 113, 127, 128, 159, 289, 301, 304, 315, 316, 317, 404, 438, 452, 453).

Certainly, for Robert Stoll, Georg Cantor was a famous mathematician whose set theory and related theorem won general acceptance–to the extent of being recognized by 1890 as "an autonomous branch of mathematics" (1963:1). However, as with any work, Cantor's set theory had some critics, but as this is not a mathematics dissertation, these contradictions[15] are not expanded on in this study. Nonetheless, knowing that Cantor's set theory was considered relative and non-absolute by others will assist in the later evaluation of the missiological implications of Hiebert's use of set theory in mission. Referring to the contradictions to Cantor's theory, Stoll writes:

> Before discussing the best-known contradictions, a preliminary remark is in order. A cornerstone of Cantor's theory is that we are guided by intuition in deciding which objects are sets and which are not. For this reason, the name "intuitive set theory" is often applied to it. The implicit faith that individuals have in their intuition seems to be responsible for the contradictions of intuitive set theory commonly being called paradoxes. This is a misnomer, since the connotation of the word "paradox" is that of a seemingly, or superficial, contradiction, whereas the examples in question are bonafide contradictions. As such, they should be labeled "antinomies," which is the correct technical word to describe their status. (Stoll 1963:127)

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[15] For further insights on Skolem and other paradoxes to Cantor's set theory see works like: *Mathematical fallacies and paradoxes,* 1997, by Bryan H. Bunch; Volume 2: 2003, by George Tourlakis; *Set theory: With an introduction to real point sets,* 2014, by Abhijit Dasgupta; *A first course in mathematical logic and set theory,* 2016, by Michael L. O'Leary.

Consequently, while Stoll referred to the Skolem's paradox—the fact that Cantor's theorem has a denumerable model in one hand and on the other asserts the existence of uncountably many sets (1963:453)—he points out that "the vantage point from which to view" the reliability of Cantor's theory is on the fact that axioms on the theory have been divided, because, according to Stoll, known contradictions of Cantor's theory are associated with too large sets, which are not the sort that occur ordinarily in mathematics (1963:127). Thus, this researcher believes that Paul Hiebert used Cantor's set theory taking his knowledge of this background into consideration.

As he did with the two previous seminal concepts (the flaw of the excluded middle and missional theology), Hiebert refers to set theory to solve a missiological problem—the problem of conversion from a folk religion to Christianity. Published as five chronologically distinct articles (1978, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1997) and chapters or parts in four books (1992, 1994, 2005, 2008), Hiebert's bounded, centred and fuzzy set theory applied to conversion from folk religion to Christianity, and to some extent they have been improved and fine-tuned in each consequent publication. In this section, initially referring to Hiebert's early publication of 1978, the summary is based on his 1994 and 2008 publications.

Paul Hiebert's 1978, 1983, 1994 and 2008 publications on conversion

Paul Hiebert's article of 1967 already showed the tip of the iceberg of Hiebert's many years of thinking and analysis on and of the issue of conversion in mission (Hiebert 1967:251, 257, 265). When his first article on conversion from folk religion to Christianity was published in 1978, much of what he was thinking surfaced. Contrasting bounded-set versus centred-set concepts, Paul Hiebert used Cantor's set theory in conceptualizing the conversion of Papayya

to Christianity (1978:24-29). From his missionary experience, Paul Hiebert asked a fundamental but challenging question about conversion: "How much must Papayya 'know' about the Gospel to be converted?" (1978:24). Like every rhetorical question, Paul Hiebert had his own answer–an answer tailored to his taste and insights as a Christian anthropologist. And using rhetorical effect or awareness, Hiebert appealed to the Western culture's specific rules of rhetoric through his question: "How much must Papayya 'know' about the Gospel to be converted?" Thus, if rhetoric is the "artful and skilled use of language" for the purpose of persuasion (Saville-Troike 2003:145), this researcher believes Paul Hiebert's question about Papayya's conversion was intended to influence his Western readers.

Saville-Troike argues that traditional rhetorical strategies and analysis are mostly comparative in nature with the focus on an "audience with the same language and culture"–"a group with similar social characteristics and/or academic or professional orientations, as well as a shared set of rhetorical norms and conventions" (2003:145). As such, this researcher believes that Hiebert's question is asked to fellow missionaries, mission agencies and institutions, and fellow Western missiologists with the implication that a question such as "How much must Papayya 'know' about the Gospel to be converted?" can only result in a conditioned answer. Thus, by asking a counterintuitive question such as "Could it be that our problem with deciding whether Papayya is or is not a Christian has to do with the way we form our mental category Christian?" (1978:27), Hiebert demonstrates opposition and disagreement with the initial question. With the extension of his initial question, it is obvious that Hiebert grouped his audience into two categories, according to their assumed worldviews (Western, and missional or biblical, although the contrast seems to be with an Indian worldview) and tried to give an answer to his question based on those two groups that he mentally projected with empirical

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reality. Paul Hiebert called the first group "the group or category with the bounded-set mentality or worldview", and the second group he labeled as "the group or category with the centered-set mentality or worldview" (1978:26-28).

Hiebert argues that most Westerners have a bounded set mentality, because many of their daily words (apples, oranges, pencils, and pens) refer to bounded set concepts, which he believes stem from Greek civilization (1978:26). Hiebert points out that in a bounded set mentality or worldview, objects that share some common characteristics are put together. For instance, fruits with characteristics such as from a rosaceous tree, eaten raw or cooked, usually red, yellow, or green, firm, fleshy, somewhat round, will be called apples (1978:26). Thus, with characteristics, such as uniformity and stationery the category apple is created and identified. Every apple in that category belongs to a set with clear boundaries–this is a bounded set (1978:26-27).

On the contrary, Hiebert points out, a centred set does not have clear boundaries. Rather, the set makes a clear separation between objects moving in and those moving out of the set (1978:28), so that the set is formed by defining a centre and the relationship of objects to that centre. Thus, the set is made up of all objects moving towards the centre (1978:27-28; 1983:423). But, "objects within the set are not categorically uniform, some may be near the center and others far from it, even though all are moving towards the center" (1978:28; 1983:423-424). This makes the set a centred set that has variation within a category (1978:28). To belong to the set, elements, although far from the centre, will have to be moving towards the centre. Hence, elements close to the centre, but not moving towards the centre, will be excluded from the set (1978:28).

Hiebert concludes his 1978 article by showing to his Western readers that the answer to his question "How much must Papayya 'know' about the Gospel to be converted?" is not as obvious as they might have thought. Hiebert implies in his answer that if they were thinking that Papayya would be considered a Christian or a convert if he knows and practices a certain number of doctrines, as determined by the board of the church in charge of his baptism, they are wrong, because they have defined a Christian from a bounded set approach or worldview that fits their Western view of the world, whereas in mission and church growth, a Christian is defined from a centred set approach, which is closer to the Hebraic view of reality (1978:29). However, Hiebert did not define what being a Christian means to a folk religionist like Papayya (with an Indian mind and view of life), and because he saw some limits in defining the category Christian from only two perspectives (bounded set and centred set), Paul Hiebert made notable distinctions in his 1994 and 2008 publications in order to address the issue of conversion in mission from a more constructive, pragmatic, and methodological perspective.

As a major issue within the world's major religions in general and Christian mission in particular, Paul Hiebert shows in his last two publications on the subject that the way one understands conversion or lives it depends on one's culture (1994:108; 2008:311). Therefore, taking into consideration different variants in world cultures, Paul Hiebert identifies not two, but four ways to answer the question "How much must Papayya 'know' about the Gospel to be converted?" But first, Hiebert reformulates his question.

Contrary to his approach with the initial question in 1978 where Hiebert used a rhetorical question that was difficult or impossible to answer with certainty (because the question was intended as a challenge), in his 1994 and 2008 publications, Hiebert uses a positive assertion

and a negative assertion that functions as a positive one in a sarcastic background[16]: "Can a nonliterate peasant become a Christian after hearing the gospel only once?" (1994:107; 2008:9). While Hiebert sees in his question an obvious truth that calls for a positive answer or a rhetorical affirmation, answering the question himself with "Our answer can only be yes" (1994:108; 2008:9), this researcher believes Hiebert's intention was to invite his readers in general, and his Western readers in particular, to dialogue. At the same time, his indication that Papayya is a "nonliterate peasant", is ironic and demonstrates his goal to create doubt in his readers' mind so that his answer is not viewed as an unorthodox evangelical answer, but an invitation to his readers to argue about the rationality and irrationality of his question and its answer. Thus, Hiebert shows that classical expectations from evangelicals in the case of proof of conversion from a folk religionist like Papayya, namely demonstrate a minimum Bible knowledge and live a good life (1994:108; 2008:314), will not be realistic, because, argues Hiebert, Papayya "cannot pass even the simplest tests of Bible knowledge or theology" (1994:108; 2008:314). At the same time, Hiebert assures his evangelical readers that he is aware that to accept Papayya as a Christian without any sign of conversion (changes in behaviour and rituals, giving up alcohol, tobacco, and gambling, etc.) is advocating cheap grace, syncretism, and nominal church members (1994:108; 2008:314). Hence, with the dilemma in the mind of his readers, Paul Hiebert is now ready to present his suggested approach to the issue of conversion among folk religionists.

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[16]Paul Hiebert had a good understanding of the use of algorithmic logic and Greek philosophy's rhetoric. He identifies this usage in the style of Systematic theology while comparing it with Biblical and Missional theologies in his 2000 article *Spiritual warfare and worldview* (2000:166-177).

Paul Hiebert's four ways to view conversion or the category 'Christian'

Building on his 1978 article, Paul Hiebert expands his understanding of category formation and moves from two initial categories to four. Hiebert argues that the two initial categories: bounded set and centred set are part of the four combinations that could be obtained (bounded set, centred set, intrinsic fuzzy set, and extrinsic fuzzy set) if one combines the characteristics of categories which may have either well-formed sets with sharp boundaries (an element either belongs to the set or does not) or fuzzy sets with fluid boundaries (element attributes vary along a continuum–tall people), where category membership is determined on either intrinsic properties such as male or female or extrinsic reference points such as siblings (Hiebert 1983:421-427; 1994:111-133; 2008:33-34; Yoder et al. 2009:178-180).

Although Hiebert's four ways to form categories, derived from his understanding of Georg Cantor's intrinsic well-formed set theory (1983:421-422, 1994:111), they are applied to how they affect our views of conversion, the church, and Christian mission (1983:425-427; 1994:110; 112-118). The following table summarizes Paul Hiebert's four ways to view conversion and how these affect our view of conversion and the category Christian in the mission field.

Table 8: Summary of Hiebert's four ways to view conversion or the category 'Christian'

Forms of Conversions	Characteristics of conversion	Implications for converts
INTRINSIC WELL-FORMED (BOUNDED) SET (Hiebert 1994:112-116; 2008:33-34, 186-189, 311-312)	1. To be an adherent of the set elements are expected to have an "existential change. 2. Elements of the set are to be "ontologically homogeneous" and physically static. 3. Adherents of the set are expected to have a visible and similar inherent required essential character in a group with a "clear boundary".	1. Are only converts elements that have passed the test of "orthodoxy and orthopraxy (right and same theology and behaviour) with the expectation that entry into the set be similar to previous conversion". This means a verbal affirmation of belief in a specific set of doctrines. As such, conversion is "a single dramatic" and "essential change all Christians must experience to be saved" (Hiebert 1994:115) 2. Each convert must exhibit a visible Christian-like character. "once a person is a Christian, he or she is 100 percent Christian" (1994:116; cf. 2008:311-112)
WELL-FORMED (CENTRED) SET (Hiebert 1983:421-427; 1994:122-127)	1. To be an adherent of the set, elements must relate to the "defined center" of the set which is the "reference point." 2. The sharp boundary of the set between members and non-members of the set is created by elements' relationship and allegiance to the central point of the set. 3. "Membership or entry into or exit from the set is not about distance but direction."	1. Each convert accepts and makes "Jesus Christ the centre and Lord of his/her life" ... A convert acquires knowledge about Jesus through the relationship he/she has with Him (Deut. 34:10; Judg. 2:10; John 17:3) and not through "a mental assent on biblical and historical facts about Jesus" (1994:125) 2. "There is no cheap nor costly grace". Conversion is both a "definite event" and "an ongoing process". As such, "a Christian is not a finished product the moment he or she is converted" (1994:127). Thus, each Christian is "expected to grow because each decision taken by a Christian… (Deut. 4:10; 1 Sam. 7:3; Isa. 55:7 Josh. 20:6; Judg. 21:1) leads him/her towards or away from Christ" (1994:127).

Forms of Conversions	Characteristics of conversion	Implications for converts
INTRINSIC FUZZY SET (Hiebert 1983:425-427; 1994:118-121; 2008:311)	1. No fixed conditions are expected of adherents who wish to be elements of the set. "Intrinsic nature defines membership in the set" 2. The set has "no sharp edges", "no *either-or*" reality for adherents of the set, "rather degrees of inclusion or a continuum of variability like most of life's matters" (1994:119). 3. Adherent of this set "may belong to two or more sets at the same time" (1994:119)	1. Conversion takes place after a cumulation of many decisions to follow Christ. Hence, conversion is "a gradual movement from outside to inside the set based on the gradual acquisition of the necessary beliefs and practices or on a series of small decisions and not a decisive event like in a well-formed set–conversion to Christianity will have "no point in the process where the person suddenly becomes a Christian" (1983:425; 1994:121; 2008:311). 2. Converts could be "half Christians, three-quarter Christians, etc. according to the amount of beliefs they affirm–Christians will be qualified in terms of degree which unfortunately could shift in moral judgement of "bad or good" or "false or true" (1994:121)
EXTRINSIC FUZZY SET (Hiebert 1994: 131-132; 2008:311)	1. "Membership in the set is based on elements' relationship among one another and/or a defined center with fuzzy boundaries". This means that "relationship within the set can move from one extreme to the other, from near to nonexistent, from being in to being outside the set" (1994:131) 2. There is "no sharp point transition" between adherents' entrance or exit of the set. "Degrees of membership and distance of members from the center qualify the differences in the strength of members' relationships" with the centre (1994:131).	1. The process of conversion has no beginning point and needs no "turning around and going in a new direction". As such, converts are people who relate to Christ and see him "as Lord, guru, philosopher or any other good man" who can show them the way and teach them the truth (1994:132). 2. Christians in this set are not different from non-Christians. "There are only degrees of being Christian because a person might make Christ the Lord of some areas of his/her life but not others. Thus, a faithful disciple of Christ is of the same value in the set as a casual follower, a person only interested in his teachings, or even a person indifferent or opposed to Christ" (1994:132).

Hiebert argues that out of the four ways to view conversion above, the "well-formed centred set" approach to conversion seems the most theologically balanced and culturally acceptable (1983:123-125; 1994:125-127). Firstly, because "a mental assent on biblical and historical facts about Jesus" is not the prerequisite before conversion, but an individual allegiance of each convert to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour with the expectation of growth in knowledge about Jesus through the relationship he/she has with Him" (Hiebert 1994:125). Secondly, the centred approach to conversion or mission solves the problem of cheap or costly grace, because conversion is both a definite event and an ongoing process. As such, "a Christian is not a finished product the moment he or she is converted" but, each Christian is expected to grow because each decision taken by a Christian leads him/her towards or away from Christ (1994:124, 127).

Hiebert rejects a bounded set approach to mission because it is too legalistic with its focus on boundary and purity of the set (1994:115). For instance, a convert in a bounded set church will be one who has passed the test of "orthodoxy and orthopraxy (right and same theology and behavior) with the expectation that entry into the set be similar to previous conversion" (Hiebert 1994:115). According to Hiebert, conversion in such Christian communities means a verbal affirmation of belief in a specific set of doctrines and a single dramatic and "essential change all Christians must experience to be saved" (1994:115). Hence, Hiebert contends that a bounded set approach to conversion, mission and church overlooks the work of the Holy Spirit and underestimate the dynamic relationship each member progressively has with the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (1983:427). However, Hiebert's biggest contention is against "a fuzzy set approach to conversion" because the approach "raises difficult theological questions" (2008:309-310). Through a series of questions, Hiebert expresses his concerns with

regard to "a fuzzy set approach to conversion" in these terms: "…Is there no moment of salvation?", "Can a person serve Hindu gods and Christ at the same time?" (2008:310).

Hiebert's third seminal concept on centred set theory connects his two first concepts mentioned above: the flaw of the excluded middle, and missional theology. Likewise, Hiebert's centred set theory connects his two other concepts discussed in the next section: critical contextualization and worldview legacy. This researcher believes the connection between Hiebert's missiological concepts is based on the centred-set theory, which is central in his third seminal concept. Because of the role conversion plays in mission, Hiebert's centred set theory becomes his central concept which is in relationship with his other four missiological ideas.

For instance, the connection between Hiebert's centred set theory and the flaw of the excluded middle, or missional theology is visible in the contrast Hiebert points to between the American and Indian views of life (Figure 2, Hiebert 1967:254-255; 1978:26; 1994:109). While Americans or Westerners with their two-tiered view of life consider conversion in terms of a bounded set, that is, a Christian is someone with specific characteristics in a defined group, the Indian continuum three-tiered view of existence, on the other hand, will consider conversion from a fuzzy set perspective, that is, a Christian is anyone who makes a new allegiance to Christ even though that person keeps his/her previous allegiances to other deities. Such understanding of conversion is conformed to the daily relationship people in folk religion have with the middle zone (Hiebert 1967:254-255; 1978:26; 1994:109). Here, not only Hiebert's centred set theory is in dialogue with the excluded middle, but it is explicitly related to Hiebert's missional theology. With the case of Papayya, Hiebert questions if validating the conversion of a folk religionist such as Papayya who "cannot pass even the simplest tests of Bible knowledge or theology" is not "opening the door to 'cheap grace,' syncretism, and a nominal church?"

(2008:314). Hiebert's response to the above questions, includes his concept of missional theology. Hiebert observes that:

> Evangelism involves both a point of decision and a process of growth. We would recognize that this is true, not only for young believers, but also young churches in new cultural contexts. Consequently, we would encourage young churches to do their own theologizing based on the Scripture, while sharing with them the theological insights gained by the church down through history and around the world (1994:130).

Hiebert's writings on set theory and its related concepts have been generally welcomed and appreciated among missionaries and missiologists where conversion in a Christian life is a determinant factor in mission (Yoder et al. 2009:182). Some missiologists saw Hiebert's contribution as practical, while others described it as "a conceptual breakthrough", a "breath of fresh missiological air", to end the old static categories that were inadequate for dynamic cross-cultural conversions and put an expiration to missionaries' decades old practice and tendency "to adopt the bounded-set approach to conversion" (Hesselgrave 1979:235; Gilliland 1998:112; Whiteman 2006:56-57 cited in Yoder et al. 2009:182-183).

Just as many missionaries and missiologists accepted Hiebert's ideas with open arms, a few theologians and biblical scholars took great positive interest in Hiebert's early articulation of set theory for cross-cultural conversions (Volf & Volf 1997:66; Johnston 1997:26; Smith 2001:36 ff.; Grenz & Franke 2001:8 ff.; Olson 2007 cited in Yoder et al. 2009:183-184). But, contrary to missiologists, some theologians engaged, warned, and disagreed with one another (Yoder et al. 2009:184). While some were concerned with the death of orthodoxy among centred-set theologians (Johnson 1997), others contrasted traditionalists and reformists, with the former being bounded set oriented and the latter centred set advocates–a theological tension which propagated conservatism and post-conservatism thinking (Olson 1998, 2007:60; Grenz & Franke 2001:8 ff. cited in Yoder et al. 2009:183-184). Thus, unlike missiologists, theologians

had polemically charged evaluations of the various usages that could be applied to Hiebert's set theory. Even Carson, who qualified Hiebert's model of set theory as "clear with a lot of sense", contended that Hiebert was "caricaturizing the Western model" and "idealizing the third world model" (Carson 1979:228 cited in Yoder et al. 2009:183, 186). Unfortunately, as argued by Yoder and his co-authors, theologians such as David Clark, who asserted that "categories without clear boundaries are impossible" (2003:223, 227), did not fully understand Lofti Zadeh's fuzzy set logic (Yoder et al. 2009:186).

While this researcher agrees that Hiebert's set theory could lead or have led to various applications and interpretations of conversion in mission or evangelism methods (Carson 1979; Clark 2003; Grenz & Franke 2001; Johnson 1997; Olson 1998, 2007 cited in Yoder 2009:183-184; Hollinghurst 2010; Prempeh 2016), he also concurs with Yoder and others that Hiebert's overall conclusion on set theory, as indicated above, was balanced with sufficient guards against its misuse. As such, this researcher contends that Hiebert is not responsible for the incorrect methods used by some Christian denominations based on a particular interpretation of his bounded set theory (Prempeh 2016:309). Firstly, Hiebert does not promote the bounded set approach to mission (1994:115). Secondly, Hiebert's criticisms of bounded set (1983:425; 1994:115) are suggestions for improvement and adaptation of the model. Bauer (2007:73-74), for instance, suggests "a new model that combines the strengths of both approaches." Bauer (2014:71) describes such an approach as a funnel–a pipe or tube often used to guide liquid or anything into a container with a small opening because it is wide at the upper part and narrow at the bottom.

According to Bauer, such an approach makes mission biblical and practical in the sense that the initial approaches to folk religion such as folk Islam are those of a centred set approach

and the final perspectives of the approach are those of a bounded set approach (2007:74-75).

Arguing from a denominational perspective, Bauer, who was first writing for a Seventh-day Adventist audience, contends that such an approach preserves specific denominational traditions and identity (2007:75). Bauer asserts that in his suggested model, it functions as a funnel, "as people move toward the spout there is a narrowing and movement towards the center or even movement towards a bounded set in the center of the centered set" (2014:71). Bauer's suggestion is based on three postulations:

1   Frost and Hirsch (2003 cited in Bauer 2014:73) point out that a bounded set is the contrary of a centred set which is "soft at the edges" and "hard at the center".

2   On the other hand, Hjalmarson (2005 cited in Bauer 2014:74) argues that people should only be introduced to Christian "core beliefs and practices" as they move toward the centre.

3   Similarly, Darrell Guder (1998:208 cited in Bauer 2014:74) advocates that a missional community has at its centre a bounded set of beliefs and practices. Bauer's suggested model could be further investigated. It has the merit of not demonizing the bounded set as always bad, while the centred set is considered as always good (2014:75). Consequently, Yoder and others recommend "a careful analysis" of Hiebert's theory before its various usages (Yoder et al. 2009:185).

Yoder and others contend that "many who repeat the core ideas" of Hiebert's set theory "learned them second-hand from others, such as Wimber or McLaren, rather than by directly reading Hiebert's careful articulation of the theory" (Yoder et al. 2009:186). Hence, some "authors sometimes do not appear to have understood Hiebert accurately or fully" (2009;186).

For instance, Steve Hollinghurst concurs and criticizes some forms of evangelisms in some Christian circles based on the bounded set principle. Hollinghurst argues that "The

bounded set approach has unfortunate consequences that are contributing to the crisis in

evangelism. It contains an inbuilt Christendom assumption that focuses on getting people to

church rather than getting the church out into the world" (2010:234). In Hollinghurst's view,

Christians have "turned the notion of sudden conversion into a model of entry into the church"

(2010:233). Therefore, Hollinghurst points out that:

> The quality of evangelism is judged by the numbers who make a commitment;
> and as many evangelists are funded by giving, it makes sense to give money to
> support the evangelists with the most commitments. Since most of those who
> have sudden conversions were raised in church, if you want a successful
> evangelistic ministry in the bounded set model the implication is clear: don't
> waste time on those without church backgrounds. This is, of course, not
> explicitly realized by those operating in this model, but the law of following
> numbers of conversions ties the two together, leading to apparent evangelistic
> failure if the numbers of people raised in church falls. This failure may not be
> in the gifting of the evangelist, likely to lose his or her funding, but in the
> model, they are expected to work within (Hollinghurst 2010:234).

Unfortunately, despite his fair points above, Hollinghurst is only arguing from second-

hand sources. Hollinghurst does not cite Paul Hiebert in any of his arguments. Yoder and others

concluded their article with this insightful thought with regard to the use of Hiebert's set theory

concept in such terms:

> Paul Hieber's treatment of set theory as applied to the category Christian and
> to the task of Christian mission has been influential, and merits continued
> reflection and assessment by pastors, theologians, and missiologists–with the
> goal of wise ministry oriented towards reaching our world for Christ (Yoder et
> al. 2009:187).

2.5.2.4.   Paul G. Hiebert: Critical contextualization models (1984-1999)

Paul Hiebert's concept of critical contextualization has been, among others, the favourite

model of theoretical framework for missiology PhD students since 2000 (Whiteman cited in

Priest 2009:173). When he used the term critical contextualization for the first time in 1984

(Hiebert 1984:290), Paul Hiebert was theorizing a process he had studied and empirically

experienced to some extent as a missionary and Christian anthropologist in India. However, Paul Hiebert credits Jacob Loewen and John Goertz for their inspirational works and the insights he acquired from them on the topic in his 1984 article (1984:295). He continues to acknowledge Jacob Loewen and John Geertz[17] in subsequent publications as two people who have greatly impacted his own thinking and writings on the concept of critical contextualization (1987:109; 1994:88). Thus, Paul Hiebert built his critical contextualization concept on insights gained from his discussions with Jacob Loewen and John Geertz on the process of indigenization as they practiced it in the young Wanana church in Panama (Hiebert 1984:295; Neufeldt 2008 for a biography of Jacob Loewen[18] and an idea of Loewen publications that Paul Hiebert might have consulted or discussed with him prior to his 1984 article).

The limits and problems associated with previous missiological concepts, such as adaptation or accommodation, indigenization, inculturation or contextualization, convinced Paul Hiebert to suggest critical contextualization as a way forward–a new missiological theory which could change and redirect missionary practices in the field (1984:289; 1985:186; 1987:109; 1994:75-76). As adaptation or accommodation are interchangeable terms (Bosch [1991], 2011:441; Moreau 2000:34), so are contextualization and inculturation. The former is

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[17] The difference in John's last names in Paul Hiebert's 1984 and 1987 does not go unnoticed. While Hiebert credits John 'Goertz' in 1984, it is John 'Geertz' who is credited in 1987. It appears that the 1984 article contained a typographical error since John's last name is 'Geertz' in Paul Hiebert's 1987 and 1994 publications. But, it is possible that two Johns (Goertz and Geertz) have been directly or indirectly involved with Jacob Loewen's work among the Indians in Panama. (Toews 1993:279; Steffen & Bjoraker 2020:283).

[18] Jacob Loewen's publications, which might have influenced Paul Hiebert, could be the 1965. A Mennonite encounter with the 'innermost' of the Lengua Indians. *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 39:40–67; 1965. Mennonites, Chaco Indians, and the Lengua Spirit World. *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 39:280–306.; 1969. *Myth and mission: should a missionary study tribal myths?* 1975. *Culture and human values: Christian intervention in anthropological perspective;* etc. Paul Hiebert intensely references Jacob Loewen's 1975 *Culture and human values* (1985:95, 208, 210, 269, 272; 1987:109; 1994:88). But he does not quote John Geertz in any of his publications; rather, he references Clifford Geertz (Hiebert 1985:24, 48, 205; 1994:25, 45, 66, etc.).

preferred by protestant missiologists and the latter by Catholics (Hunsberger 2000:31-32). These five terms belong to the same cluster of ideas linked to cross-cultural mission strategies with the objective being to avoid syncretism (Moreau 2000:34). Two related concepts in this cluster are translatability and identification (2000:34).

A. Brief historical background before critical contextualization (1583-1983)

Adaptation or accommodation

The terms adaptation and accommodation can be used interchangeably and have typically been used more in Catholic circles than among Protestants (Bosch [1991], 2011:441; Moreau 2000:34). As technical terms within the history of mission in the Roman Catholic Church, adaptation or accommodation identify a series of specific missiological experiments initiated by two of the most notable Jesuits in the history of Catholic mission in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries–Matteo Ricci in China from 1583 until his death in 1610 and Roberto de Nobili in South India from 1605 until his death in 1656 (Hunsberger 2000:31). Adaptation or accommodation is the missionary practice of familiarizing or lodging "the rituals, practices, and styles of the missionary's sending church to those of the recipient culture" (2000:31). The basic idea behind the term adaptation is "that of changing the form of Christian theological ideas and practice (i.e., adaptation of the liturgy in high church contexts) so that they can be understood in cultural contexts different from that of the communicator" (Moreau 2000:34). Thus, adaptation or accommodation have as their foundation "the reality of culture's role in human reasoning and actions and the resulting culture-embeddedness of religious ideas, even though theological truths are transcultural" (2000:34). The terms indicate "what are generally conscious processes of adaptation, done with the willingness to adopt some of the forms of the receiving culture and at times to leave aside some of the prior Christian church's customs

considered to be an impediment to embracing Christian faith in the receiving culture" (Hunsberger 2000:31).

Ricci and Nobili based their works on the *Propaganda Fide* (the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith founded in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV), and a policy statement of 1659, which advised missionaries "not to force people to change their customs, as long as these were not opposed to religion or morality" (Bosch [1991], 2011:441). But they "tried to move beyond the kernel-husk model in their accommodation of the faith to the peoples of India and China" ([1991], 2011:441). Ricci's efforts to accommodate or lodge the veneration of Confucius and some Chinese ancestors among people closely associated with the imperial palace in the Christian faith created what was known in Christian mission as the "Rites Controversy" ([1991], 2011:441). For Matteo Ricci, writes Conn, Chinese's homage to Confucius and to the ancestors was "a ritual expression of gratitude not inimical to the Christian faith" (Conn 2000:481). Consequently, Ricci "found in Confucius the natural theology, the *preparatio evangelica*, of China as his theological training had given him this for the West in Aristotle" (Allen 1960:39 cited in Conn 2000:481).

Roberto de Nobili, in South India, went as far as adopting the lifestyle and practices of a holy man of the Brahman caste (practices such as eating meat or wearing leather shoes and not requiring converts to break with caste rules except where directly idolatrous) in order to become as Indian as possible (2000:481). Both Ricci and De Nobili were censured in their practice of accommodation by Papal bulls respectively in 1742 and 1744 (Bosch [1991], 2011:441).

Indigenization

Coined in the mid-1800s in Protestant mission circles, the term indigenization expresses and describes "the 'translatability' of the universal Christian faith into the forms and symbols of particular cultures of the world." This means that a church must be local within its own setting and not resemble or replicate Western patterns (Conn 2000:481). Conn writes:

> Indigenization provided the freedom for the Greek translators of the Hebrew Old Testament (the Septuagint) to take a word like theos from the idolatrous world of polytheism and use it to describe the only Creator of heaven and earth, the God (theos) and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ…The same process of indigenization allowed freedom for the emerging churches of the world to wrestle with infusing traditional cultural and social practices with new Christian meaning. Patterns of worship and music, of initiation, marriage, and funeral rites, even of church structure and leadership could be adapted or transformed by the gospel (Conn 2000:481).

Thus, indigenization as a process asks at least six questions:

1   How can the church be a universal, global Christian community and also a particular community, shaped within its own culture and society?

2   How can the gospel flower be planted in new soil without also planting the foreign flower pot?

3   How do the churches keep the balance between freedom to develop on their path and allegiance to the transcultural gospel uniting all the churches?

4   What should be the relation of a Christian church to its non-Christian past?

5   When does indigenization in the name of Christian liberty slip into over-indigenization or syncretism?

6   When does hesitation over indigenization slip into legalism and traditionalism? (Conn 2000:481).

Contextualization

While Bosch and Moreau place the origins of the term *contextualization* in the early 1970s, Pocock et al. and Bacon point out that it originated in the 1972 *Ministry and Context report* by the WCC (Bacon 2016:213; Bosch [1991', 2011:433; Moreau 2000:34; Pocock et al. 2005:322). When Shoki Coe first used the term contextualization, he meant:

> All that is implied in the familiar term indigenization, yet seek to press beyond for a more dynamic concept which is open to change and which is also future-oriented… Contextuality…is that critical assessment of what makes the context significant in the light of the Missio Dei. It is the missiological discernment of the signs of the times, seeing where God is at work, and calling us to participate in it (Coe 1976:21–22).

Later described as "the capacity to respond meaningfully to the gospel within the framework of one's situation" (Gilliland 2000:215), contextualization or contextual theology, as new terms, resulted from the consultation held in Bossey, Switzerland, in August 1971 (Gilliland 2000:215). The concept of contextualization as an expected result of the multiple turns in mission thinking that had taken place during the twentieth century was intended to go beyond the previous and traditional terms, such as adaptation or accommodation and indigenization (Kinsler 1978 cited in Pocock et al. 2005:322). According to Bosch, one's "entire context comes into play when we interpret a biblical text. One therefore has to concede that all theology (or sociology, political theory, etc.) is, by its very nature, contextual" (Bosch [1991], 2011:415). Thus, the terms contextualization or contextual theology represent "a paradigm shift in theological thinking" (Frostin 1988:1–26 cited in Bosch [1991], 2011:415). But, because "there is no single or broadly accepted definition of contextualization," the goal of contextualization possibly best defines what the concept means–"that goal is to enable, insofar as it is humanly possible, an understanding of what it means that Jesus Christ, the Word, is

authentically experienced in each and every human situation" (Gilliland 2000:225). Gilliland further writes:

> This means the WORLDVIEW of that people provides a framework for communication, the questions, and needs of that people are a guide to the emphasis of the message, and the cultural gifts of that people become the medium of expression…Contextualization in mission is the effort made by a particular church to experience the gospel for its own life in light of the Word of God. In the process of contextualization, the church, through the Holy Spirit, continually challenges, incorporates, and transforms elements of the culture to bring them under the lordship of Christ (Gilliland 2000:225).

Thus, the decade of the 1970s gave birth to at least six ways or models of contextualization with their differences, but also their several common features, based on distinct epistemological assumptions and philosophical viewpoints about truth (Gilliland 2000:226). Those six contextualization models are: 1) Adaptation model; 2) Anthropological model; 3) Critical model; 4) Semiotic model; 5) Synthetic model; and 6) Transcendental model (Gilliland 2000:227). According to Gilliland, while models that are based on "accepted teachings of the church and the Bible" will be welcomed by evangelicals, other models founded or "more centered on the human experience" cannot be accepted by evangelicals or Christians whose teachings and practices are rooted in the Scriptures–these Christians profess the *Sola and Tota Scriptura* principle (Gilliland 2000:227; emphasis Bade).

However, while David Bosch sees the ambiguities of contextualization in the fact that there is no "clean break with the past and continuity with one's theological and ecclesial ancestry" (Bosch [1991], 2011:417-418), Gilliland identifies a built-in risk in the concept–"the human situation and the culture of peoples so dominate the inquiry that God's revelation through the Bible will be diminished" (2000:227). These are some of the limits and problems of

contextualization already identified by Paul Hiebert; limits and problems which led him to suggest the concept critical contextualization (1984, 1987, 1994, 1999).

B. Paul Hiebert's critical contextualization: historical background

In a panoramic analysis Paul Hiebert identified and depicted the areas where Christian mission failed before and during the era of contextualization as mission policy and strategy. According to Paul Hiebert the eras before and during the contextualization theory and practice are two eras during which the Christian mission movement has failed in terms of dealing with what he called "the most troublesome questions facing missionaries", the question of "what should people do with their past customs when they become Christians?" (1984:288; 1985:183, 187; 1987:106; 1994:80, 89). While Paul Hiebert admits that each of these two eras has its strengths and weaknesses, he points out that the second era, which was supposed to solve the problems of the first era, had very little satisfaction. Paul Hiebert called the first era the era of non-contextualization and dates the era from 1800 to 1950 (1987:104) or 1850-1950 (1994:70). But, as indicated above, this era could even begin around 1582 if the Catholic mission with Matteo Ricci beginning his accommodation concepts in China is included (apparently, in this instance, Paul Hiebert is only dating Protestant mission). As such, this period of non-contextualization is also termed for Protestant mission (researcher's assumption) the era of total rejection of the old ways–the old customs of "drums, songs, dramas, dances, body decorations, certain types of dress and food, marriage customs and funeral rites" (1984:287). These old ways, notes Hiebert, were condemned by missionary practitioners of that era because they were seen as "directly or indirectly related to traditional religions" (folk religion) which were believed to be pagan (1984:287-288). Paul Hiebert points out that this first era was influenced by colonialism, cultural evolution theory, the triumph of science, monoculturalism,

monoreligionism, and ethnocentrism (Hiebert 1987:104-106). Thus, the era of non-contextualization could simply be labeled as the period of blind refusal to change mission approaches and mentality–everything was seen from the perspective of Western civilization and Christianity (1987:106). In this context, missionaries in the non-contextualization era believed that Western civilization and Christianity "had shown themselves to be technologically, historically, and intellectually superior to other cultures" (1987:104). The obvious and counterintuitive negative results of this era on Christian mission condemned Christianity to appear foreign. This foreignness of the Christian message in many non-Western cultures became a barrier to the advance of the gospel. Consequently, while in some cases new converts' old customs "went underground" in their public life and emerged in syncretistic forms in their private lives, in other cases, new converts exhibited "undesirable reactionary behavior" (Paun 1975:208 cited in Hiebert 1984:288; 1985:184, 186-187; 1987:106; 1994:80, 89).

The era of contextualization/uncritical contextualization, the second era of Christian mission identified and described by Paul Hiebert, arose initially as a solution to the problems of the previous era. This era is also known as the era of total acceptance of the old customs (Paul Hiebert does not provide any timeline for this period, so, the researcher decided to situate the period for this era more or less between 1970 and 1984 (but believes that the concept has been in experimentation without bearing a name between 1950 and 1970, especially 1960-1970 after the majority of the Third World countries gained their independence (Loewen 1965, 1969), and particularly after Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council in 1962 to be "an aggiornamento (updating) for the Catholic Church" (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:249-280). It was during this era that most of the theories (indigenization, localization) tailored by protestant missiologists for specific cultures, theories which were initially developed in the eighteenth and

nineteenth century by missionary strategists such as Henry Venn (1725–1797), Rufus Anderson (1796–1880) and others, became known to the public (Nicholls 2016:215).

Therefore, the era of uncritical contextualization arose after the end of colonialism (Hiebert 1987:108) and the "rise of new approaches to anthropology known as structural functionalism and ethnoscience", which some have called the anthropological turn or the shift towards context toward the human subject because "knowledge could not be separated from the knowing subject" (Bacon 2016:213). There were at least three benefits of this era of acceptance of old ways (Hiebert 1984:289):1) No more foreignness of the gospel; 2) No more Western ethnocentrism; and 3) The priesthood of all believers is affirmed–which meant that "Christians in each country, culture, and people group" had the right to make "their own decisions regarding the adaptation of the gospel into their particular cultural context and social setting" (1984:289). But, as Hiebert observed, some of the negative aspects of this era were too treacherous and even perilous for the future of Christian mission. Eight negative aspects of uncritical contextualization are found in Paul Hiebert's texts:

1   The weakening of the gospel–an unacceptable consequence–as Hiebert puts it, "even contextualized, the gospel must remain prophetic and judge every aspect of evil in cultures and lives" (1987:108).

2   The denial of absolutes and of truth was unconveyable because it "runs counter to the core Christian claims about the truth of the gospel and the uniqueness of Christ" (Hiebert 1987:108).

3   Having no checks against biblical and theological distortion were dangerous.

4   The separation between form and meaning implicit in contextualization or uncritical contextualization blinds missionaries to "the nature of most tribal and peasant societies in which form and meaning are inextricably linked" (Mary Douglas 1970, cited in Hiebert 1987:108).

5   It is not possible to ignore the emotive and volitional dimensions of the gospel as it is done in uncritical contextualization which places emphasis on the accurate communication of meaning (Hiebert 1987:108).

6   Missionaries cannot ignore that to respond to or believe the gospel message is not only and simply to "give mental assent to something; it is to act upon it in life" in a "dynamic-equivalent" (Kraft 1979 cited in Hiebert 1987:108).

7   The *a*historical nature of most discussions on contextualization is not acceptable because "contemporary cultural contexts are taken seriously, but historical contexts are largely ignored" (Hiebert 1987:108).

8   More extreme forms of uncritical contextualization provide no means for working toward the unity of churches in different cultures because there will be "no comparison between their theologies, and no common foundations of faith" (1987:108).

Unfortunately, as listed above, contextualization was not the miracle solution to adaptation/accommodation or indigenization as many thought it would be (Hesselgrave & Rommen, 1989, 2000:199-200; Moreau 2012:103-117; Taber 1978; Taber 1991:160; Yamamori & Taber 1975). Thus, confronted with the problems listed above and the growing sense of dissatisfaction with some meanings, methods, and models associated with mission policies and strategies during the noncontextualization and the contextualization eras, Paul Hiebert called for critical contextualization as a way forward. Building on his understanding of critical realism which affirms that knowledge is both objective and subjective by opposition to

instrumentalism[19] and relativism[20] (which both reject the concept of absolute truth) in postmodernism (Barbour 1974; Huston Smith 1982:16; Hiebert 1985a cited in Hiebert 1987:109), Hiebert's understating of critical realism was to be the foundation of his critical contextualization concept. For instance, one important principle Paul Hiebert took from critical realism was the importance of metatheoretical models (Laudin 1977; Hofstadter 1980 cited in Hiebert 1987:109). Paul Hiebert points out that one can arrive at a metatheoretical model, that is, a model that is composed of many complementary theories, and these theories are tested in real life (1987:109). Hiebert argues that if theories are limited in the information they convey, the information itself being conveyed may be true through reality testing the theories (1987:109).

Hence, continues Hiebert, this reality testing may show that "theories are not subjective, relative, and arbitrary" (1987:109); rather, points out Hiebert, they are like complementary maps with specific functions (1987:109). Consequently, in critical realism, theories and paradigms are not incommensurable "(this means that they can be judged by the same standards because they have common norms of measurement)", and as such theories can be compared and their

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[19] Also called pragmatism, instrumentalism is presented by Paul Hiebert as the epistemological approach or position with the claim that though the external world is real we cannot know if our knowledge of it is true, but if it 'does the job' we can use it because "science is a Rorschach response that makes no ontological claims to truth" (Paul Hiebert's table of taxonomy of 6 epistemological positions in his 1985 article Epistemological foundations for science and theology, *Theological Students Fellowship*, 8(4):5–10. (Hiebert 1985b:6)).

[20] Relativism is for Paul Hiebert an epistemological position not recommended for Evangelical Christians. Quoting Peter Berger 1970, Sukenick 1976 and Marvin Harris 1980, Hiebert (1985:7) endorses their positions against relativism as respectively listed below: "Relativism denies any concept of truth, and in the end relativizes relativity itself, rendering it meaningless" (Berger 1970:40-42). "All versions of "reality" are of the nature of fiction. There's your story and my story, there's the journalist's story and the historian's story, there's the philosopher's story and the scientist's story... Our common world is only a description…reality is imagined (Sukenick 1976:113). "Relativism destroys science as science" (Harris 1980:45).

meanings translated from one theory to another (Laudin 1977; Hofstadter 1980 cited in Hiebert 1987:109).

Paul Hiebert's critical realism (his epistemological stand) and critical contextualization have the same two foundations: interdependency and integration of *emic* (insider) and *etic* (outsider) models. Paul Hiebert uses these two foundations in his four-step critical contextualization model. The goal for Hiebert is to use critical contextualization to answer the question he has called "the most troublesome question facing missionaries", the question of "what should people do with their past customs when they become Christians?" (1984:288; 1985:183, 187; 1987:106; 1994:80, 89). Hiebert rephrases the question and asks: "what does one do with traditional cultural beliefs and practices?" (Hiebert 1987:109). No matter how the question is phrased, the meaning of the question remains the same. The question shows explicitly that, for Paul Hiebert, past customs and traditional cultural beliefs and practices, which are elements of folk religion, are and should be the key concern of missionaries. And, as this study has defined folk religion in Chapter 1 by two key characteristics: The beliefs and practices of the majority people in a community, and the function to satisfy daily issues with those beliefs and practices–with folk religion being for me the religious beliefs and traditional practices observed from generation to generation among the majority or the common people in any geographical region in the world that are believed to address daily problems related to protection, healing and success in every aspect of human life (see Chapter 1), this study argues that the four-step approach of Paul Hiebert's critical contextualization, as suggested since 1984, deals with folk religion. These four steps in critical contextualization evolved and matured in Paul Hiebert's writings from 1984 untill 1999. Hence, this study is articulated around the model

presented by Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou in 1999 (see Chapter 1). The summaries of the two

early models of Hiebert's critical contextualization are:

1   Gather information about the old.

2   Study biblical teachings about the event.

3   Evaluate the old in the light of biblical teachings.

4   Create a new contextualized Christian practice (Hiebert 1984:290); and the

second:

1   Exegesis of the culture.

2   Exegesis of the scripture and the hermeneutical bridge.

3   Critical response.

4   New contextualized practices (Hiebert 1987:109-110).

POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO OLD BELIEFS, RITUALS, STORIES SONGS, CUSTOMS, ART, MUSIC, ETC.

1) DENIAL OF THE OLD (Rejection of Contextualization)

   a. The gospel is foreign   ➔   It is rejected
   b. The old goes underground   ➔   Syncretism

2) UNCRITICAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE OLD   ➔   SYNCRETISM

3) DEALING WITH THE OLD (Critical contextualization)
   a. Gather information about the old
   b. Study biblical teachings about the event
   c. Evaluate the old in the light of biblical teachings.
   d. Create a new contextualized Christian practice.

Figure 3: Paul Hiebert early understanding of critical contextualization
(Hiebert 1984:290)
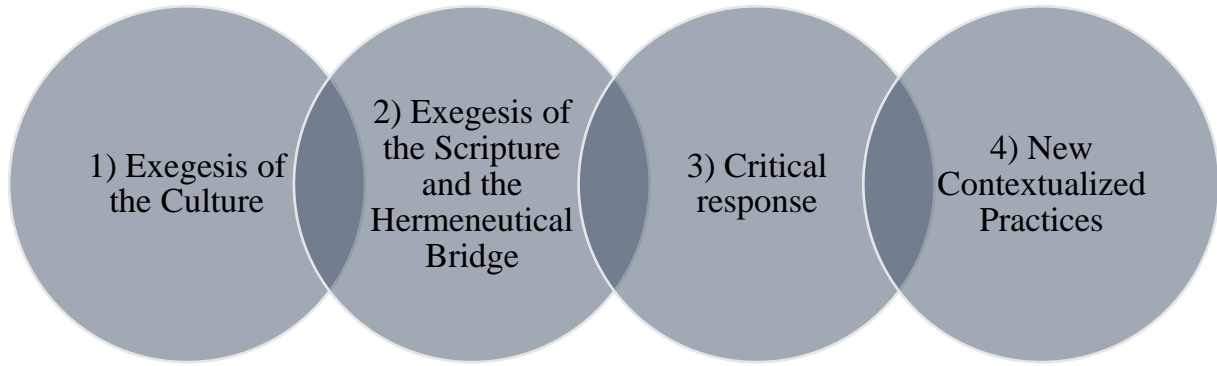
Figure 4: Paul Hiebert's further understanding of critical contextualization
(Hiebert 1987:109-110)

From these early models, one can identify the progress in Paul Hiebert's understanding of folk religion and how to minister to folk religionists. In his 1984 model of critical contextualization, Paul Hiebert defined critical contextualization as dealing with old beliefs–rituals, customs (stories, songs, arts), etc. All these elements of the recipient religion are the beliefs and practices of the people in any unreached culture or people group. In the 1987 model, Hiebert replaces the expression *to deal with*, with a more scientific term *to exegete*, a term from the Greek word *exegeomai* meaning to lead out or explain, interpret, or describe, which "has come to refer to the act and process of determining the meaning of a text, particularly a biblical text" (Moreau 2000:348). But used here, exegesis of the culture means the phenomenological study of the culture–the *uncritical* gathering and analyzing of the recipient culture's traditional beliefs and customs associated with the question at hand (Hiebert 1987:109). Thus, through his critical contextualization concept, Paul Hiebert made studying and understanding the religion of the recipient culture (folk religion) the basis and the beginning of his mission strategy.

2.5.2.5.   Paul G. Hiebert: Legacy of worldview (1978, 1989-2008)

The term *worldview* first appears in Hiebert 1978[21]. It was while writing the foreword for Marguerite C. Kraft's book *Worldview and the communication of the gospel* (1978) that Hiebert records his first ideas about worldview. Marguerite Kraft, a former missionary, explained how to communicate the gospel to the Kamwe of Nigeria in a way that they can understand and accept it, translating the gospel into local forms known and recognizable by the Kamwe people. Certainly, written from her missionary experience among the Kamwe people in Nigeria, Marguerite Kraft's 1978 *Worldview and the communication of the gospel* is, according to Hiebert, more than a case study of the Kamwe of Nigeria. Hiebert argues that Marguerite Kraft's theoretical framework, her use of anthropological notions and principles linked to missiology theories is "a model that can be used in other mission contexts" (Hiebert 1978:xii). In the book, Kraft develops her understanding of the role of worldview in mission in the section on "worldview and their effects on communication" (Kraft 1978:98-115). There Kraft defines the worldview of a person or a society as "the central governing set of conceptions and

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[21] Hiebert did not refer to the concept of 'worldview' anywhere in his PhD dissertation completed in 1967 and published in 1971. This curious omission puzzles me. There was literature available on the topic of 'worldview' in the 1950s and 1960s (Loewen 1965). Missionaries and anthropologist cooperate in research. *Practical anthropology* 12(4):158-90; Louis J. Luzbetak 1963. Toward an applied missionary anthropology. *Practical anthropology* 10(5):199-208 cited in Moreau 2009:223; Gordon H. Clark. 1951. *A Christian view of men and things: An introduction to philosophy;* Kluckhohn, Florence R., and Fred L. Strodtbeck. 1961. *Variations in value orientations;* Nakamura, Hajime and Philip Wiener (eds). 1964. *Ways of thinking of Eastern peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan*, to name but a few). Some of these sources emphasised India where Hiebert lived and served as a missionary. Nakamura discusses specific aspects of Indian and Japanese worldviews. Nakamura argues that while in Indian worldview "the universe or world and the social order remain eternal", "personal life is nothing but one of a succession of lives existing", whereas, 'Pessimism' is another worldview with less precise forms in Japan (Nakamura 1964:81, 370).

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck for instance, considered in 1961 the term 'worldview' as "a more recently formulated concept" in comparison to other socio-anthropological expressions referring to cultural identity or social image such as "conscious canons of choice" (Benedict), "configurations" (C. Kluckhohn), "culture themes" (Opler), "core culture" (Thompson), "basic personality type" (Kardiner & Linton) etc. (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961:2).

presuppositions" determining or characterizing every aspect of the person or the society's life (Kraft 1978:4). In his foreword, Hiebert summarizes Marguerite Kraft's undersigning of worldview for communicating the gospel in these terms: "at the deepest level in missions the Gospel must be translated into a new worldview if the church is to become truly indigenous" (Hiebert 1978:xi).

When Paul Hiebert articulates his thinking on worldview (Hiebert 1985), he is greatly influenced by the Krafts (Charles and Marguerite), and particularly Charles Kraft (1979). Twice, Hiebert cites Charles Kraft 1979 in *Anthropological insight for missionary* (1985:48, 163). Paul Hiebert even writes the foreword to the twenty-fifth-anniversary edition (2005) of Charles Kraft's *Christianity in culture*. In 1979, Charles Kraft defines worldview as conceptualizations formed by designed perceptions of reality of "what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible, and impossible" in any given culture (Kraft 1979:53; Dayton & Fraser 1990:109; Kraft, C, 2005a:43). Charles Kraft writes:

> The worldview is the central systematization of conceptions of reality to which the members of the society assent (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the very heart of culture, touching, interacting with, and strongly influencing every other aspect of the culture…. A worldview is seen as lying at the heart of every cultural entity (whether a culture, subculture, academic discipline, social class, religious, political, or economic organization, or any similar grouping with a distinct value system). The worldview of a cultural entity is seen as both the repository and the patterning in terms of which people generate the conceptual models through which they perceive and interact with reality. (Kraft, C. 2005a:43).

Thus, Hiebert's contribution to the Christian understanding of the concept of worldview is much appreciated. Before his 2008 book *Transforming worldview: An anthropological understanding of how people change* was awarded book of the year in the global/missions category by *Christianity Today* in 2008 (Moreau 2009:229), Hiebert had already published at

least seven academic articles with titles explicitly on the topic of worldview from 1990 to 2004 (*Spiritual warfare and worldview* (2004), *Transforming worldview* (2002), *Spiritual warfare and worldview* (*Evangelical Review of Theology*, 2000), *Spiritual warfare and worldview* (*Global Missiology*, 2000), *Spiritual warfare and worldviews* (*Direction,* 2000), *Spiritual warfare and worldviews* (*Occasional Bulletin of the EMS*, 2000), *An anthropologist looks at worldviews–the invisible worlds in which we live* (1998), *Conversion and worldview transformation* (*IJFM*, 1997), *Worldview* (1990), etc.). There are other articles by Hiebert that do not have worldview as the main focus, but which still address the topic (Hiebert 1989a, 1989b, 1992, 2006; Moreau 2009:223). Consequently, Hiebert left a fascinating legacy from his decades of writing on at least nine worldview topics: conversion; epistemology; folk religions; logics; myth;the powers; spiritual warfare; symbolism; and syncretism (Moreau 2009:222). Hence, Moreau contends that Hiebert's contribution on worldview analysis for mission is yet to be fully modelled (Moreau 2009:231). However, Paul Hiebert did not coin or introduce missiologists to the concept of worldview[22] as was the case with his other four seminal concepts (the flaw of the excluded middle, critical contextualization, bounded vs centred set theory, and self-theologizing); Hiebert's legacy on worldview is one voice among others (Moreau 2009:223). Hence, Scott Moreau points out that Hiebert's approach to worldview (a focused analytic tool to be used wisely) is a more important legacy than his understanding of worldview (Moreau 2009:231).

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[22] *Worldview: The history of a concept*, 2002, by David K. Naugle is cited by Paul Hiebert (2008:354), for his "excellent history" of the concept of Worldview in Western philosophy, and qualified by Arthur F. Holmes (2002) in the forward of the book as a "thorough study" with no existing comparison in the English language. In *Worldview: The history of a concept,* David Naugle traces the history of the term 'worldview' through two hundred years of German philosophy and epistemology (Homes 2002). The word "Weltanschauung" 1868 (William James), from *Welt* "world" + *Anschauung* "perception" (*Online Etymology Dictionary* at https://www.etymonline.com/word/weltanschauung Accessed January 29, 2020).

For a brief etymology, the English word worldview is derived from the German term Weltanschauung (Harrington, Marshall & Müller 2006:685; Harris 2016:258; Hiebert 2008:13; Mcelhanon 2000:1032; Naugle 2002:5-6; Scorgie 2016:637). Naugle argues that there is almost universal recognition that Immanuel Kant (a notable Prussian philosopher) coined the word Weltanschauung in his work *Critique of judgment* published in 1790 (2002:5-6). Naugle points out that the term was used in Kant's "paragraph that accents the power of the perception of the human mind" (2002:58). According to Naugle, John Calvin (1509-64), the French reformer from Geneva with his well-articulated theology, influenced two of the main headwaters of the worldview tradition among evangelical Protestants: the first of the two, who, in the middle of the late nineteenth century, introduced the vocabulary of worldview into the current vernacular of Reformed Christian thought, was James Orr (1844-1913), a Scottish Presbyterian theologian, apologist, minister, and educator; and the second, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), a Dutch neo-Calvinist theologian and statesman (Naugle 2002:5). Naugle writes:

> A steady stream of pioneering disciples, including Gordon Clark, Carl Henry, Herman Dooyeweerd, and Francis Schaeffer, have stood in their wake, deliberately raising consciousness among thoughtful believers about the importance of a complete biblical vision of life (Naugle 2002:6).

But, as Moreau remarks, although Christians across a variety of academic disciplines[23] have often used worldview as a key for understanding culture, a fundamental problem remains with the concept of worldview–the "lack of precision about worldview" understanding, which is seen in the disagreements in worldview study frameworks developed by Kraft and Hiebert (Nishioka 1998 cited in Moreau 2009:230). Hiebert himself admits that the study of worldview

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[23] Scott Moreau in *Paul G. Hiebert's legacy of worldview*, 2009, points out that the study of worldview through philosophy as did Naugle (2002), through education with Thiessen (2007), theology in Wright (2007), and psychology in Blanton (2008), for cultural investigation has not received the support of Christian anthropologists such as Howell (2006) and Priest (2009a; 2009b) (Moreau 2009:230).

is fascinating, because it can give many insights, but at the same time it is frustrating, because worldview is an ambiguous word that can create much "confusion and misunderstanding" (2008:13-14). Hiebert defends that "there is no single definition agreed upon by all" (2008:11). DeWitt asserts that although the term worldview'has been in use fairly widely for over 100 years, "it is not a term that carries a standard definition" (2018:7). Table 9 presents an attempt to group some of these different and divergent definitions on worldview.

Table 9: A selection of worldview definitions

YEARS	AUTHORS & SOURCES	WORLDVIEW DEFINITION
1978	Marguerite C. Kraft. 1978. *Worldview and the communication of the gospel*, p. 4.	"the central governing set of conceptions and presuppositions" determining or characterizing every aspect of the person or the society's life"
1979	Charles H. Kraft. 1979. *Christianity in culture: a study in dynamic biblical theologizing in cross-cultural perspective,* p. 53,	"what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible, and impossible" "the central systematization of conceptions of reality to which the members of the society assent (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system".
1990	Paul G. Hiebert. 1990. In D*ictionary of pastoral care and counseling,* edited by Rodney J. Hunter.	"the most basic and comprehensive concepts, values, and unstated assumptions about the nature of reality shared by people in a culture. It is the way they characteristically interpret the universe of human experience"
1992	R.H. Nash, *Worldviews in conflict: choosing christianity in a world of ideas,* p. 16; Ken A. Mcelhanon. 2000. "Worldview" in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions,* edited by Scott A. Moreau, p. 1032.	"a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality/"
2006	Austin Harrington, Barbara L. Marshall, and Hans-Peter Müller, eds. 2006. *Encyclopedia of social theory*, p. 685.	"the total set of beliefs, values and basic background assumptions held in common by a group of people or culture, either self-consciously (as in an ideology, discourse or paradigm) or unconsciously (as intuition, faith or myth)"
2008	Paul G. Hiebert. 2008. *Transforming Worldviews: An anthropological understanding of how people change, pp. 15, 84.*	"the fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people makes about the nature of things, and which they use to order their lives" "the most fundamental and encompassing view of reality shared by a people in a common culture. It is their mental picture of reality that "makes sense" of the world around them" (2008:84).
2012	Stanley H. Skreslet. 2012. *Comprehending mission: The Questions Methods, Themes, problems, and prospects of mission*, p. 54.	"the distinctive outlook of a social group concerning its most deeply held common values, notions of proper behavior, and shared symbols of meaning"

Based on the above definitions of worldview, the working definition of worldview for this study was a combination of key insights from other definitions. This definition considers three major areas. Firstly, a vocabulary emphasis with the superlative word most used by Hiebert (1990, 2008; Skreslet 2012). Secondly the implication of human anatomy and physiology–our conscious or unconscious memory (Charles Kraft 1979, 2008; Nash 1992; Harrington et al. 2006). Lastly, a holistic approach to one's human, cultural, and social nature–cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions (Hiebert 2008). Thus, a worldview in this researcher's assessment is the most fundamental and encompassing set of deeply held cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions, symbols, beliefs, and values that consciously or unconsciously govern every aspect of a person or a society's life.

In 2006, in a concurring definition, Harrington, Marshall and Müller (2006:685) defined worldview from a sociological perspective as "the total set of beliefs, values and basic background assumptions held in common by a group of people or culture, either self-consciously (as in an ideology, discourse or paradigm) or unconsciously (as intuition, faith or myth)". Interestingly, Harrington and his colleagues note:

> Discussion of world-views in twentieth-century social theory has been animated by three kinds of concerns: (1) anxieties about cultural difference and relativism; (2) an ideological concern to convert others to one's world-view (most notably by the world religions and ideological sects of social and political movements); (3) and attempts to preserve the free agency and creativity of humans and culture over and against structural logics and systems…In the sociology of religion, there have been attempts to differentiate world-view from ideology, church-sect-mysticism (after Troeltsch), enculturation and belief... Today, the world-religions, Americanism, anti-Americanism, and the globalization of the world-system all appear as contenders to replace the world-views that previously dominated 'the age of ideologies' as Samuel Huntingdon (1996) has controversially stated (Harrington, et al. 2006:685).

The three concerns mentioned above by Harrington and his co-authors have also been Hiebert's concerns. But Hiebert has been more explicit on the first two: "anxieties about cultural difference and relativism" and "an ideological concern to convert others to one's world-view". In his latest and most comprehensive work on worldview (Hiebert 2008. *Transforming worldviews*), Hiebert addresses issues of relativism at different levels and in different forms– cultural relativism, ethnic relativism, cognitive relativism, moral relativism and utilitarianism, religious relativism, and total relativism (2008:161, 199, 212-214, 273, 342).

According to Hiebert, relativism became more and more prominent because of the crisis between modernity and post-modernity (2008:211-214). Hiebert argues that, as a result of the sharp transformation that occurs every few hundred years in Western history, this major shift from one major worldview to another, what Hiebert called a divide (2008:211), leads a given society to rearrange itself–"its worldview; its basic values; its social and political structure; its arts; its key institutions" (2008:211). Therefore, while the modern era or the Enlightenment project (make the world's diverse peoples see things in the same rational way) could be put historically between the eighteenth century and the 1930s, the term postmodern came into use in the 1940s (2008:211).

Scholars from both worldviews (modern and postmodern) engaged in sharp intellectual critics using the "hermeneutics of suspicion" approach (2008:214-215, 227, 345-346). Postmodernism challenges modernity's claims of superiority and better knowledge than traditional, aboriginal, or primitive worldviews (Giddens 1990 cited in Hiebert 2008:161; cf. 213-214), and the opposition, supporters of modern theory, "attack postmodern relativism, irrationalism, and nihilism" (Best & Kellner 1991:284-285 cited in Hiebert 2008:215-216). Hiebert defends that postmodernism rejects at least six concepts considered hubris and

fallacious from modernity: grand theories; metanarratives; universalism; totalitarianism; rationalism; and apodictic truth (Hiebert 2008:214). Consequently, concludes Hiebert, postmodernism affirms the worth of all cultures and emphasizes cultural pluralism, inclusivism, tolerance, and cognitive and moral relativism (2008:214, 342).

It is important to note at this point that mission's most important challenge in the twenty-first century is not transforming traditional worldviews but mainly guarding against the influence of the postmodern worldview on mission in the context of globalization. Hiebert writes:

> The search for the truth–universal and suprahistorical truth–has given way to an emphasis on the creation of personal theologies tailored to the specific needs of each individual, theologies based as much on feelings and values as on reasoning. In missions, this development has led to calls for radical contextualization in which the gospel is severed from its objective-specific, historical foundations, and evangelism and cultural transformation are seen as forms of imperialism and oppression (Hiebert 2008:273).

Hence, as mentioned earlier, conversion is another major topic for Hiebert. Unlike the course for modern missions set by the seventeenth-century New England Puritan missionaries (preach the gospel so that Native Americans would be converted and receive personal salvation), the focus on the mission of the church in the twenty-first century, according to Hiebert, should not be to judge, govern, control, or bring people to salvation through conversion (the affirmation of a particular set of doctrines [orthodoxy] or practices [orthopraxy]), but to three things: worship God; have fellowship with one another; and bear a corporate and cosmic witness to what it knows and believes of the gospel to the lost world–the poor, the hungry, and the oppressed–by speaking, acting, loving, redeeming, suffering (2008:195, 280-285, 299, 316, 332-333). Hiebert points out that the church witness should be "prophetic witness in the public sphere of politics, economics, and culture as well as in the private world of intimate personal

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relationships" (2008:299); this means, according to Hiebert, that Christian witnesses must be authentic to the gospel and "exemplify the transformation to which everyone is called" (2008:316). The result, concludes Hiebert, is that mission is an invitation to a whole new life, a new worldview of "love, joy, peace, gentleness, and witness", not simply some modifications of their old lives (2008:332). However, Hiebert warns that such holistic new life is achievable if the conversion of those witnessing and those being witnessed is done at three levels: behaviour; beliefs; and the worldview that underlies these (Hiebert 2008:11).

Building on the foundation of predecessor Christian anthropologists such as David J. Hesselgrave (1978, 1991) and Charles H. Kraft (1979, 1996), argues Mcelhanon, Paul Hiebert's understanding of worldview touches both traditions in the evangelical understanding of worldview: "the philosophical/theological and the cultural/societal" (Mcelhanon 2000:1033). Mcelhanon, citing Nash (1992:16) who defines worldview from a theological perspective as "a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality", points out that Nash's definition of worldview is a definition that satisfies the two substantially different traditions among evangelicals in the concept and application of worldview understanding (2000:1032).

Hiebert's latest[24] definition of worldview seems to this researcher to be integrating those two evangelical traditions of understanding worldview. In *Transforming worldview* (2008),

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[24] Earlier formulation or definition of/on worldview by Hiebert are seen in Hiebert 1985 and 1990. While in *Anthropological insights for missionaries* (1985), Hiebert addresses two world-view functions: 1) "worldview provides cognitive foundations on which to build systems of explanation and supply rational justification for belief in these systems" (Geertz 1972:169 cited in Hiebert 1985:48) talks about a model or map of reality that structures our perceptions of reality; 2) "worldview offers emotional security during crises of drought, illness, and death". As such, Hiebert argues that world-view assumptions are most "evident at births, initiations, marriages, funerals, harvest celebrations, and other rituals people use to recognize and renew order in life and nature" (Hiebert 1985;48), in the *Dictionary of pastoral care and counseling*. 1990, edited by Rodney J. Hunter, Hiebert defines worldview as "the most basic and comprehensive concepts, values, and unstated assumptions about the nature of reality shared by people in culture. It is the way they characteristically interpret

Hiebert begins his definition of worldview from a cultural/societal perspective. Hence, worldview for Hiebert in this context is "the fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people makes about the nature of things, and which they use to order their lives" (2008:15). As such, Hiebert points out, "worldviews are what people in a community take as given realities, the maps they have of reality that they use for living" (2008 15). In this study, Hiebert is touching the "theoretical framework of anthropology" (2008:15). As he reflects on worldview from the philosophical/theological perspective, Hiebert adjusts his definition to include some philosophical perspectives. Worldview in such context includes "the most fundamental and encompassing view of reality shared by a people in a common culture. It is their mental picture of reality that 'makes sense' of the world around them" (2008:84). Here, Hiebert sees worldview as mental maps which synchronically meld together "ethos, cosmology, and root metaphors" and diachronically present an understanding of larger metanarrative(s) through shared stories of the cosmos–"cosmogonies and root myths" (Moreau 2009:224). For this reason, Hiebert's study of worldview emphasizes cultural systems and not social systems–with "embeddedness in personal and spiritual systems" (2008:80-87 cited in Moreau 2009:229). Time and a focus as a missiologist will not allow this researcher to discuss Hiebert's insights into the origins of worldview from his anthropological background. However, it is important to note that while Hiebert mentions and credits many of his secular colleague anthropologists[25],

the universe of human experience" (http://hiebertglobalcenter.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/95.-1990.-Worldview.pdf 2 June 2020)

[25] The concept of worldview in anthropology originated from the study of "culture" with Franz Boas and his disciple A.L. Kroeber (Hiebert 2008:15). Hiebert mentions Mary Douglas, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, Robert Redfield who, according to Hiebert, in 1968, made "a major contribution to our understanding of worldviews" (2008:18). But, for most of the anthropologist mentioned, Hiebert however, identified weaknesses and limitations in their works. As an illustration, Hiebert contends that "Redfield's model has its limitations because it focuses on the cognitive dimensions of cultures and has no place for feelings and values" Hiebert 2008:19).

he found some weaknesses and limits to most of the models they proposed. According to Hiebert, their models view cultures as "mechanistic systems in which change is bad, while stasis and sharp boundaries are good" (Hiebert 2008:23).

Consequently, Hiebert draws his reader's attention to what worldview is and what it is not. Hiebert says, for instance, that worldviews are not foundations on which cultures are built and initiators of new worlds, but they are rather mental constructs embedded in cultures, invisible to external observers and that worldviews are keepers of tradition (2008:33). Thus, Hiebert expects worldview to be analyzed in three dimensions: *cognitive*–beliefs level, where there is existence, being, power(s), causality (types of logic); *affective*–feelings level; and lastly, *evaluative*–moral and values level (Hiebert 2008:15; Parsons & Shils 1952 cited in Hiebert 2008:25-26; 80, 291, 312; cf. Moreau 2009:226-227).

Therefore, argues Hiebert, there is a devastating danger to approach worldview analysis from a reductionist perspective, a mistake that science and theology have made in the past (2008:72). Hiebert argues that "in exegeting humans, it is important that we take a system-of-systems approach that avoids reductionism and stratigraphic approaches to the study of humans and also avoids the denial of spiritual realities" (2008:79). Hence, worldviews have to be studied not epiphenomenally (as the accidental end product of a long chain of events), but in human contexts–that is in the "biological, cultural, personal, physical, psychological, social", and spiritual systems of people (2008:79-88, 285 cf. Moreau 2009:228; see Table 10 and Figure 5).

Table 10: Outline of Hiebert's model for worldview analysis
(Adapted from Hiebert 2008:335)

A. Synchronic: "looks at the structure of reality (worldview, ethos, cosmology, root metaphors)"	**B. Diachronic**: "looks at the cosmic story (metanarrative, cosmogony, root myths)"
•"Cognitive themes and counterthemes" •"Affective themes and counterthemes" •"Evaluative themes and counterthemes" •"Root metaphors" •"Epistemologial foundations"	•Stories •Dramatic themes •Progression

Figure 5: Hiebert's initial model of Worldview as a 'culture onion'
(Source: Hiebert 1985:45)

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Unfortunately, Hiebert's worldview study has some limitations as well. As Scott Moreau states, Hiebert's approach does not escape the first of the three problems he identifies in the contemporary discussion on worldview analyses, namely focus on cognitive dimensions; prioritization of sight/view over hearing/sound; and application without distinction to individuals and cultures (Hiebert 2008:15; Moreau 2009:230).

This researcher agrees with Moreau on his point above. Paul Hiebert, like many others, was struggling with what Charles Kraft calls "two mutually incompatible perspectives" (Kraft 1996:24). Kraft admits the practice in his own experience and writings. In the case of Hiebert, he introduces his study on worldview transformation as a "theoretical framework of anthropology" (Hiebert 2008:15). As such, Hiebert's study is not, at first look, different from the philosophical root of worldview that focused on cognitive dimensions of cultures and which did not deal with the affective and moral dimensions–three equally important dimensions of being human in Hiebert's own view (2008:15). This influence of the philosophical approach to the study of things on Hiebert is further visible in his conclusion on worldview study (2008:11-12, 32, 69, 315, 319). There, Hiebert argues that worldviews change in two major ways: firstly, when there are new information and people grow in awareness of new realities, and secondly, when life crises or special events in life call for radical shifts–paradigm shifts (2008:316). Hiebert calls the former normal change because of the influence of conscious beliefs and practices over time (2008:319), and the latter, Hiebert refers to abnormal or forced change–because it calls for a "radical reorganization in the internal configurations of the worldview" (2008:319).

Thus, in Hiebert's view, worldview transformation occurs, firstly, with the acquisition of new information–the emphasis on cognitive dimension identified by Hiebert as the first

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problem in secular discussions on worldview analyses (Hiebert 2008:15-19). Kraft

acknowledges holding sometimes "two mutually incompatible perspectives"–what Kraft terms:

"an unconscious repudiation of the position I am arguing for" (1996:24). Hence, Kraft

apologizes to his readers for often switching back and forth between a rejected and defended

theory or concept at the same time (1996:24).

Thus, Charles Kraft holds a slightly different view from Hiebert's approach to

worldview analysis. Kraft claims that Hiebert's "combination of structure and people" to use

"people terminology" with structures such as culture and worldview is confusing (1996:58).

Kraft argues that the three dimensions Hiebert "points to are people things, not

culture/worldview things" (1996:58). However, Kraft admits that "the dimensions Hiebert

points to are indeed there in real life as people conduct their lives" (1996:58). As such, Kraft

reconciles their two approaches in his suggestion of a two-step approaches with his approach as

the first step and Hiebert's approach as the second step (1996:58). Consequently, Kraft

summarizes the two approaches in these terms: "people, following worldview guidelines,

function cognitively, affectively, and evaluatively." (Kraft 1996:58).

This study contends that Hiebert's approach to worldview analysis in three dimensions

with people terminology such as cognitive, affective, and evaluative or beliefs level, feeling

level, and moral level (Hiebert 2008:15) is rightly applied. If a structure has human

characteristics, such structure could as well benefit from human terminology. Kraft (1996:45)

lists, among the features of culture, adaptability and consciousness–two other people

terminologies. For instance, Kraft writes:

> Cultural patterns show great adaptation to the geographical environment. That's why cultures in the tropics differ from those in snowy countries. If you're in a tropical area where you can grow food all year round, the cultural patterns show adaptation to that particular circumstance (Kraft 1996:45).

However, Hiebert's model for worldview transformation combines synchronic and diachronic analyses–"synchronic looks at the structure of reality, while diachronic looks at the cosmic story" (Hiebert 2008:335). In other words, Hiebert's approach to worldview transformation looks balanced. A synchronic and diachronic understanding of worldview themes and stories is essential (Hiebert 2008:28). Hiebert argues that it is possible to "focus on one or the other, but we need to keep both in mind to understand the worlds in which people live" (2008:28). This means that Hiebert's approach goes beyond cognitive transmission of information.

Nonetheless, Kraft (2008) concurs with Hiebert on these two ways to reach worldview transformation. Both the cognitive and the active/dynamic aspects of culture need to be addressed in the process of worldview change. Nevertheless, Kraft sees this process of transforming cultures and worldviews as possible in three ways. Firstly, as an imperfect or deficient learning process through generations. Secondly, as a constant test of existing models in relation to live experiences; and finally, as facing "a conflicting model of, or approach to, some aspect of reality" (Kraft [1979], 2005:196; 1996:22; 2008:429-430). Kraft's last two reasons to worldview change mentioned above are not different from Hiebert's two motives for worldview transformation. Firstly, Hiebert and Kraft both discuss the acquisition of new information or exposure to new perspectives with "some lack of fit" in "the experiences of previous generations" (Hiebert 20008:316; Kraft 1996:21-22). Secondly, Kraft and Hiebert both identify the role of a "conflicting model of, or approach to, some aspect of reality". What Hiebert calls life crises or special events in life that call for radical shifts–paradigm shifts (Hiebert

2008:316; Kuhn 1970; Barbour 1974; Kraft 1979a, 1989 cited in Kraft 1996:23). Kraft further argues that when people's model to face life situations, such as "illness, breakdown of interpersonal relationships, oppression by spirits, personal or group misfortune" fail, they are under great "pressure for change" in their mental grid and more likely to undergo a paradigm shift (1996:22-23). The next chapters develop this assumption in more detail.

Hiebert argues that "in exegeting humans, it is important that we take a system-of-systems approach that avoids reductionism and stratigraphic approaches to the study of humans and also avoids the denial of spiritual realities" (2008:79). Hence, according to Hiebert, worldviews have to be studied not epiphenomenally (as the accidental end product of a long chain of events), but in human contexts–that is in the biological, cultural, personal, physical, psychological, social, and spiritual systems of people (2008:79-88, 285 cf. Moreau 2009:228).

Hiebert also points out that three factors can precipitate normal worldview transformation, namely contradictions in social life–what Hiebert termed surface contradictions; life's dilemmas; and new experiences (2009:316). For Hiebert, these three factors could be associated with three other concepts proven useful in worldview transformation: examining worldview; exposing one worldview to other worldviews; and creating living rituals (2008:319-322).

Hiebert's legacy on worldview is a conceptual tool of a meta-model that needs viability through further studies (Moreau 2009:231-232). Through a systems-approach, Hiebert has demonstrated that human life and experience could be studied through his means of analysis while avoiding reductionism. Because transforming worldviews is at the heart of mission, missionaries, whether seeking to lead to holistic conversion or people movement, need to test if Hiebert's meta-model accords with scriptural perspectives and experiment with Hiebert's

proposed model in their mission context even though there are strong debates around the possibility of a "Unified Field Theory" of understanding human behaviour (Moreau 2009:232).

2.6.   Conclusion

This chapter presented a brief view of Paul G. Hiebert, the Christian anthropologist, missiologist, and third generation Mennonite missionary to India. From his strong Anabaptist-Mennonite Christian family background to his excellent academic training in anthropology and theology, Paul Hiebert left a great legacy to Christians of all denominations in the field of missiology.

Hiebert's five seminal concepts studied in this chapter in chronological order are:

1. Paul G. Hiebert: The flaw of the excluded middle (1967, 1971, 1982)
2. Paul G. Hiebert: Self-theology, global theology, missional theology (1973)
3. Paul G. Hiebert: Bounded, centered, and fuzzy set theory (1978-2008)
4. Paul G. Hiebert: Critical contextualization models (1984-1999)
5. Paul G. Hiebert: Legacy of worldview (1989-2008)

It is interesting to note that the first four seminal ideas not only led to worldview transformation, but could also represent the steps to achievement. Because the ultimate goal of Hiebert's seminal concepts is holistic conversion and the control of all its complexity in the mission field, it is obvious that, from the flaw of the excluded middle to worldview transformation, the focus of Hiebert's mission was folk religion. As a reminder, the two main characteristics of folk religion are: Beliefs and practices of the majority people in a community; and the function to satisfy daily issues (protection, healing, and success in every aspect of human life). Thus, all five of Hiebert's seminal concepts deal with folk religion, and, as Barnes notes, Hiebert's seminal ideas "are all interwoven" (Barnes 2011:127). Barnes argues that the

interconnectivity of Hiebert's seminal ideas "demonstrates the holistic way with which Hiebert

looked at missiology, anthropology, and, indeed, the world" (2011:127).

Chapter 3: A phenomenological analysis of the Dendi religion

3.1. Introduction

This chapter uses a systems approach to describe the role religion plays in the lives of the Dendi people. A system view of religion examines the role of religion in each system of human life–cultural, social, biophysical, psychological, and spiritual (Hiebert et al. 1999:35). Hiebert et al. call such approach to religion "a system of systems approach to religion" (1999:35). For this study, the approach is limited to the Dendi religion discussing two basic systems, namely cultural and social systems. However, when necessary, the interaction of these two systems is discussed briefly regarding their interaction with the biophysical and the spiritual systems.

David Bosch and Charles Kraft rightly understood the importance of such an all-embracing approach. For instance, Bosch points out that, for the gospel to remain Good News in all cultures, it must become, under acceptable flexibility, a cultural phenomenon, while considering the meaning of systems already present in that culture (Geffré 1982:482; cf. Schreiter 1985:12f cited in Bosch [1991], 2011:447). Kraft defends a similar view when referring to Kroeber and Kluckhohn's summary on culture systems. He asserts that culture systems have two characteristics: they may be considered as products of action, and they may be considered as conditioning elements of further action (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952:357 cited in Kraft, C 2005:38; Kraft, C 1979, 1996).

Based on the above understanding, religion is firstly depicted as a key element in the Dendi culture–for the Dendi people, religion is not only a social system that touches every area of their lives, but also a spiritual reality and a personal scheme for daily living (Bello 2001; Bello 2005;

Bello, Giannotti & Lalleman 2016; Bello & Giannotti 2017). Secondly, through a phenomenological study of the Dendi religion, the Dendi's main beliefs, rites, and practices as they currently exist in the Dendi culture are discussed, without passing judgment (Hiebert 1987:109-110; cf. Hiebert et al. 1999:36-37, 93-94). This approach is known as phenomenological, because it does not only focus on a description of an individual consciousness and experience of a particular cultural or religious phenomenon such as birth, marriage, death, funerals, etc. (Johnson & Christensen 2014; Costa, Reis & Moreira 2019:256-257), but because it describes the Dendi religious practices in general, as the Dendi consciously or unconsciously display them without doing any ontological evaluation of their beliefs and practices (Hiebert et al. 1999:36-37, 93-94). In other words, a phenomenological study of religion focuses on describing and narrating religious beliefs and practices without the interference of preconceptions or learned feelings an individual has about a phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen 2014:444-449)[26]. Then, using organic analogy and analysis (Hiebert 1982:44-47; 1987:1999), the researcher endeavours to understand how Dendi religious beliefs and practices answer the four fundamental questions that folk religions pursue (Hiebert et al. 1999:94):

1 How do people find meaning in life on earth, and how do they explain death?
2 How do people get a good life, and how do they deal with misfortune?
3 How do people seek to discern the unknown in order to plan their lives?
4 How do people maintain a moral order, and how do they deal with disorder and sin?

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[26]Interpretative phenomenological analysis or IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009 cited in Johnson & Christensen 2014:447) contrasts with traditional or classical phenomenology in the sense that it is critical and evaluative (Johnson & Christensen. 2014. *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches*. (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 447-448).

The phenomenological study of the Dendi religion presented is intended to give an outsider such as the researcher an *etic* view of the Dendi culture and religion. This informed view of the Dendi culture and religion is capital for any conclusions that might be drawn for a mission strategy. Although this *etic* view of the Dendi culture and religion cannot be compared to an *emic* (an insider) worldview of the Dendi culture (Hiebert et al. 1999:23), this understanding of the historical context and the reality of spiritual beings and powers in the Dendi religion prevents conclusions and mission strategies with reductionism bias. In order to give a theologically sound and missiologically relevant and balanced response to the Dendi religion in the next chapters, the phenomenological study of the Dendi religion alerts the researcher to linear causality in analysing and interpreting the Dendi religion (cf. Hiebert et al. 1999:12-13).

The chapter concludes with a critical examination of Hiebert et al.'s assumptions on the relationship between shared beliefs and a harmonious community life. According to Hiebert and his colleagues "without shared beliefs, communication and community life are impossible" (Hiebert et al. 1999:36). These authors assume that communication and life in a traditional or indigenous community will not be possible if members of that particular community do not have the same religious beliefs (1999:36). Their main arguments are that there is unity when the beliefs are the same in a community, and that there is community focus when the beliefs are homogeneous (1999:36). The researcher contends that Hiebert et al.'s assumption overlooks to some extent the reality of communication and community life in many societies with divergent beliefs. In line with Bowman and Valk (2012:1), Hiebert et al.'s implied assumption that traditional societies have homogeneity of belief and praxis is challenged.

3.2.   Dendi religion

As pointed out in Chapter 2, religion is a key component of many cultures. This is true for the Dendi people. Religion for the Dendi affects every aspect of their daily life. It consists in part of two belief systems made up of many interacting dimensions. These religious elements which figure in everyday Dendi life are based on beliefs in God (Allah), his faithful angels, *Iblis* (Satan), *jinn*, gods and goddesses, sky spirits, water sprits, earth spirits, ancestors, God's messenger, God's holy books, humans' mediums, healers, animals, plants, and forces, such as God's will (predestination), magic, witchcraft, etc. All these elements interact in a system of fundamental values and allegiances. Based on Clifford Geertz's 1979 definition, which Hiebert et al. summarize, religion has three aspects covering human existence: concepts of a general order of existence; powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods; and motivations (Geertz 1979:79–80 cited in Hiebert et al. 1999:31). Hiebert et al. call these three interacting dimensions in human religion ideas or beliefs, feelings, and values (1999:31).

According to Hiebert and others, religion is not compartmentalized in most cultures (1999:32). As such, they promote a holistic view of religion in order to consider the dynamic of human realities (1999:32). They refer to a holistic view of religion as a study of religion from a macro system perspective. Hiebert et al. point out that religion, as a macro system, is made up of all the micro systems, such as physical, biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual systems that are involved in human religion (1999:31). With regret, Hiebert and his colleagues explain that most of the time, these micro systems have been studied separately by theologians and philosophers (systems of belief and doctrine), psychologists (inner motivations, conversions, emotions, beliefs, and actions of specific persons), sociologists (beliefs and practices at the social, economic, political, and legal dimensions of human relationships),

cultural anthropologists (rituals and practices associated with systems of beliefs, symbols, behaviours, and worldviews), geographers, biologists, and other natural scientists (religious practices associated with time, space, geography, and human biology), and finally historians (religious changes with time) (Hiebert et al. 1999:31-33). Consequently, they assert that the study of religion through a stratigraphic method (Geertz 1965:97 cited in Hiebert et al. 1999:31), or reductionism approaches have either fragmented human realities or failed to look at religion as a whole system with multifaceted aspects in individuals' lives (1999:32).

Thus, Hiebert et al. suggest that religion should be studied from a systems approach. For them, this approach "avoids the problems of reductionism and linear causality" (1999:34). In other words, Hiebert and his colleagues argue that a systems approach to religion helps an outsider (with his or her *etic* view) understand that an individual's concern in the physical or biological is not merely limited to physical or biological causes, but also psychological, social, and cultural causes. Indeed, in most cases, the spiritual system is involved in the physical, the biological, the psychological, the social and the cultural systems in many religions (1999:33). Hiebert et al. write: "The first step in applying a system of systems approach to religion is to examine how it operates in each of the human systems: spiritual, cultural, social, psychological, and biophysical" (1999:35).

Based on this systems approach to studying religion, the next section addresses two micro systems out of the six mentioned above–the cultural and social nature of the Dendi religion. It focuses mainly on the interaction between Dendi religious displays in their cultural and social systems. Time and space constraints limit an analysis of other systems with dynamics such as individual spirituality in relationship with the community's spiritual life, but aspects

such as the influence of spiritual struggles on physical illness, psychological anxiety, and social tensions are briefly discussed.

3.2.1.   History of the Dendi's two religious belief system

Before their conversion to Islam, the Songhay ancestors of the Dendi people practiced African Traditional Religion–ATR[27](Adeleke 1996; Bierschenk & De Sardan 1998:107; Gosselain & Smolderen 2013:5; Page & Davis 2005:117). Mbiti argues that ATR should be in plural, that is African traditional religions, because, he asserts, "there are about one thousand African peoples (tribes), and each has its own religious system" (1969:1). Mbiti points out that:

> These religions are a reality which calls for academic scrutiny and which must be reckoned with in modern fields of life like economics, politics, education, and Christian or Muslim work. To ignore these traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices can only lead to a lack of understanding African behaviour and problems. Religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned (Mbiti 1969:1).

In the history of the Songhay empire, the Songhay king Za Kossoi of Gao[28] converted to the Islamic faith as early as 1009 or 1010 (Davidson 1959:97; Niane 1984:123). As monarch of the Songhay Empire, Za Kossoi promoted Islamic culture and lifestyle and influenced the conversion of many of his subjects to Islam (Adjeran 2018:21; De Souza 2014:103, 228). But Islam was mostly superficial for the Songhay people as it still is currently for their Dendi descendants. Although their new religion repressed their old religious and customary

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[27] African Traditional Religion (ATR) "is a living religion which is written in the lives of the people." (Mbiti 1991:131). Mbiti defines ATR as "the African Religion which has grown out of the African soil", to mean that the African religion was not imported or "brought in from the outside" (1975:9). Hence, notes Mbiti, African Religion is called "African Traditional Religion, to distinguish it from any other type of religion, since there are other religions in Africa" (1975:9).

[28]Gao is the former Songhay empire capital in Mali, West Africa. It is located on the Niger River at the southern tip of the Sahara Desert. The city of Gao was founded as either a fishing centre in the seventh century or by Berber traders engaged in the Gold trade. (Page & Davis, Jr. 2005. *Encyclopedia of African history and culture,* vol. I, xxxiv; Shillington (ed.) 2005. *Encyclopedia of African History* vol 1 A–G: 1412).

manifestations and brought about profound changes in the habits of the Dendi, "Islam merely introduced new elements to their culture and left the underlying framework of custom and tradition virtually untouched" (Bierschenk & De Sardan 1998:107; Gosselain & Smolderen 2013; Joshua Project 2016). Divination, idol worship, and other aspects of the Dendi pre-Islamic traditional religion are noticeable in Dendi communities and in the daily life of many Dendi in some places, while relegated to household practices in others (Bierschenk & De Sardan 1998:107; Gosselain & Smolderen 2013:5, 109).

The first section below focusses on the imported religion of the Dendi people, the Sunni Maliki Islam beliefs and practices. The second section describes the Dendi traditional religious beliefs and practices which resist the imported religion and remain at the core of the Dendi worldview and which influences the Dendi practice of Islam.

3.2.1.1. Dendi and Sunni Maliki branch of the Islam belief system

Sunni Ali or Sunni Ali Ber, often called Ali the Great or Sunni Ali Kolon (r.c. 1464–1492), was a member of the Sunni[29] Muslims' ruling dynasty in Gao (Page & David 2005:11; Aderinto 2008:366). He is considered the monarch who expanded the kingdom of Gao into the powerful Songhai Empire during the second half of the 15th century. However, Ali the Great was not regarded as a fervent Muslim by the ulama and the Islamic clergy of Timbuktu (Page & David 2005:131).

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[29]According to the Pew Research Center's 2011 publication, by 2030 Sunni Muslims will still be an overwhelming majority of Muslims worldwide–87- 90% (The future global Muslim population projections for 2010-2030,18.Available at https://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-sunni-and-shia/)

In the Republic of Benin, the majority of the Dendi practice Sunni Islam, which is the Islam practiced by 85% of Muslims in the world (Bengio & Litvak 2011; Campo 2009:xxv; Kneib 2004:82). However, some Shiite (also spelled Shi'a or Shia[30]) communities exist among the Dendi people (Yiğit 2015). The Shia Muslims in the Republic of Benin, according to Yiğit, are originally business men from Lebanon–a country where Shia Islam is practiced by approximately 45-55% of the Muslim population (Pew Research Center 2009:10). Unfortunately, sources on Benin's Shia Muslim population[31] are discordant. While the Pew Research Center points out that Shia Muslims in Benin comprise less than 1% of Benin's Muslim population (Pew Research Center 2009:39), the international non-governmental organization (INGO) Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly[32] estimates that Shia Muslims in Benin form about 12% of the nation's population (Ahl al-Bayt 2020). From the statistics of the Humanitarian and Social Research Center (INSAMER[33]), the Pew Forum's figures seem more

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[30]The word *Shia* (the form usde in the rest of the study) is the Arabic term for party or faction (Campo. 2009. *Encyclopedia of Islam*: 623). Campo argues that, from the Arabic word *shia,* modern scholars of Islamic studies have coined the term shiism to describe more than one significant Islamic sectarian traditions and movements after the death of Muhammad in 632 (623). Thus, the term *shia* was first used with reference to the supporters of Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661) as *shiat Ali* (the party of Ali). As the nephew and son in-law of Muhammad, Ali was married to his cousin, the prophet's daughter Fatima. Ali's descendants were considered the legitimate successors to the prophet upon his sudden death (Wehrey 2017. *Beyond Sunni and Shia: The roots of sectarianism in a changing Middle East,* 106; Bengio & Litvak 2011. *The Sunna and Shi'a in History*: *Division and ecumenism in the Muslim Middle East*: 18).

[31]A Pew Research Center report on the size and distribution of the world Muslim population of October 2009: *Mapping the Global Muslim Population*: 39. Available at: https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2009/10/Muslimpopulation.pdf. [Accessed 6 May 2019].

[32]Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly is a Shiite international non-governmental organization (INGO) that was "established by a group of Shiite elites under the supervision of the great Islamic authority of the Shiites in 1990 to identify, organize, educate and support the followers of Ahl al-Bayt" (Ahlulbayt (A.S.) World Assembly, Statistics of Shiites of Benin, September 2020. Available at: http://www.ahl-ul-bayt.org/en/world-shia-demographic/item/statistics-of-shiites-in-benin). (Accessed 6 May 2019). Ahlulbayt (A.S.) World Assembly for instance gives these demographics**:** Country population: 8,400,000; Shiite population: 1,000,000; Approximate percentage of Shiites in relation to the country's population: 12% (ibid).

[33] Humanitarian and Social Research Center (INSAMER)–a hub conducting and promoting critical and relevant research on key humanitarian, social and political issues. Available at https://insamer.com/en/beninese-muslims_1102.html [Accessed 6 May 2019].

realistic. INSAMER asserts that the Shiite community in the Republic of Benin is about 0.5%

of the country's Muslim population (Yiğit 2015). Whatever the reading, those figures have no

real significance in this study, but they do show that the Islamic faith and its *umma* or *ummah*[34]*,*

often presented as an ideal and unified community of all believers, has not been spared from

sectarianism[35].

Hirji argues that the conflict over the leadership of the ummah was a central issue in the

first civil war between Muslims from 656 to 661 (Hirji 2010:15). According to Hirji, "the war

forged and solidified the initial main cleavages amongst the believers, and framed the identities

of groups who came to be referred to as 'Sunnis', 'Shi'is' and Kharijis[36]" (2010:15). In contrast,

Khan identifies the three major sects of Islam as the Sunni, the Shia and the Salafi[37]. The

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[34] The *ummah* (the spelling to be used in this study) is one of the key concepts in Islam which represents the totality of the people who are Muslims in the world (Nasr 2003. *Islam: Religion, history, and civilization,* 15). Nasr points out that the Islamic *ummah* is bound by three things: 1) unanimity to the Quranic message of Divine Oneness and Sovereignty; 2) acceptance of messenger ship of prophet Muhammad; and 3) reception of the Divine Law *(al- Sharī'ah)*. (Nasr 2003:15)

[35] In the Qur'an, God warned against divisions: "And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves…" (surah 3:103, Qur'an translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali); and surah 6:159: "As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did" (Qur'an translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali). However, "soon after the death of the prophet in 632", Muslims quarreled over the question of leadership of the *ummah* (Hirji (ed.), 2010. *Diversity and pluralism in Islam: Historical and contemporary discourses amongst Muslims*, 15). About 200 years later, intra-Muslim divisions appear as a distinctive issue in the *hadiths*. A distinctive genre of *hadith* known as the *hadiths al-tafriqa* (hadith concerning the traditions on divisions) emerged (Hirji 2010:7). The *hadith* reports the prophet saying that his ummah will divide into 73 sects just like the Christians divided into 72 sects and the Jews into 71 sects (*firqa*) (Mottahedeh, 2010. *Pluralism and Islamic traditions of sectarian divisions* in *diversity and pluralism in Islam: Historical and contemporary discourses amongst Muslims,*. (edited by Zulfikar Hirji), 32). Mottahedeh asserts in his case study that *hadiths* al-tafriqa are found in four of the six so-called 'canonical' Sunni collections of *hadith*: 1) Ibn Majah (d. 887); 2) Abu Da'ud al-Sijistani (d. 889); 3) al-Tirmidhi (d. 892); and 4) al- Nisa'i (d. 915).

[36]The *Kharijis* are an extremist Islamic sect which claims to be distinct from Sunni and Shia Islam (see Juan E. Campo. 2009. *Encyclopedia of Islam,* p. 323). Hirji (2010:188) points out that Ali, the designated caliph was murdered by the Kharijis because he agreed to arbitrate with Mu' awiya. Consequently, the Kharijis rejected hereditary claims of leadership (caliphate) and "held that leadership of the community be determined through election" (189).

[37]According to Campo (2009:3, 601) Salafists combine "rational" and "literal" studies of Islam and the Quran as promoted by Abd al-Qadir one of the forefront Islamic reformers who sought to understand Islam in light

divisions within Islam, which are contrary to the teachings of the Qur'an (Hiro 2018:8), are based on the fact that Sunnis and Shias, the two major Islamic traditions, differ from each other in doctrine, ritual, law, theology, and religious organization (2018:ix).

The majority Sunni Dendi Muslims identify with the Maliki Sunni Islam and its Islamic traditions or school of laws, "which is dominant in North Africa and West Africa" (Esposito 1999:90; Page 2005:115). [The second of the four prominent Sunni schools of law is Shafii Sunni Islam, which is "dominant in East Africa and the neighboring Arabian Peninsula" (Page & Davis 2005:115). The other two Sunni schools of Islamic law are the Hanafis and the Hanbalis (Christie 2014:9-10)]. Commenting on the conversion of West African local rulers in a missionary agenda of conversion of West African empires by Sunni Muslim clerics who joined the traders, Page and Davis write:

> …The jihads of the 17th century in West Africa were directed against unbelievers and had the added result of extending Muslim political power; the later jihads of the 18th and 19th centuries were true reformist movements aimed at restoring the full and pure practice of Maliki Sunni doctrine among West African Muslims whose practice of the faith had become syncretistic, or mingled with the "pagan" beliefs and rituals of traditional religion. (Page & Davis 2005:87).

Many kings of the Songhay Empire converted to Sunni Maliki Islam. But, as Page and Davis note, in "many West African societies, Islam and traditional beliefs initially existed side by side" (2005:117) and as such, the Dendi kings, like their ancestral kings of the Songhay empire and other local West African kings, professed to be Muslims while continuing their

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of modernity and the supremacy of science which have brought many changes. Salafism (al-Salafiyya) from the Arabic word *salaf*—the pious or righteous ancestors of the Islamic *ummah,* considers "these ancestors to be the early century Muslims among the companions prophet Muhammad (until 712), Muslims after them (the *tabiin*) in the second generation (until 796), and more generations after then in the third (until 855). Thus, Salafism refers to "a cluster of different Sunni renewal and reform movements and ideologies in contemporary Islam" (Campo 2009:601).

traditional way of life. Most kings were warriors who drank alcohol. They were "titular heads of the traditional religion" and they could not risk alienating their followers and losing their authority if their "practice of Islam was too strict" (2005:117). For instance, as Page and Davis assert, "Mansa Musa I (r. 1312–c. 1337) of Mali and Askia Muhammad Touré (r. 1493–1538) of Songhai, both of whom were fervent believers, could not wrest their societies from their pre-Islamic traditions" (Page & Davis 2005:117). Consequently, Islam and Songhay beliefs have coexisted peacefully, with each side of religious beliefs and traditions dominating at different times, depending on the religious inclinations of the king.

3.2.1.1.1.   *Five pillars and six articles of faith of orthodox Islam*

Cognitive facets of orthodox Islam are crucial elements of most Muslims' professed beliefs. On the intellectual level, these articles of faith make up Muslims' deep views and practices. These articles of faith are the categories they use in public and in private to organize their experiences, the logic with which they think, and the realities they are convinced are true for Muslims universally.

Five pillars of Sunni Islam (arkan al-Iman)

Sunnism represents orthodoxy in Islam (Ansary 2009:xviii; Aslan 2005:179; Denny 2016:104-105). As such, the Maliki branch of Sunni Islam as orthodox Islam has a straightforward system of belief and practice. At its core is the basic creed of Islam found in the Qur'an, surah 57, the Iron–the declaration that there is only one God and that Muhammad is his messenger (Hexham 2011:419). This core belief in orthodox Islam–absolute monotheism (*tawhid*), the oneness of God–is included in the *Shahada* or *Shuhadah* (the act of bearing witness), the first of the five pillars or tenets of Islam (*arkan al-Islam)*: *shahada; salat* (prayer); *zakat* (almsgiving); *sawm* (fasting); and *hajj* (pilgrimage). This profession of absolute

monotheism is also the first of the six articles of faith addressed later in this study. The *shahada* could also be called *al-Shahdara* (the two witnessings), with the first witnessing, "There is no god but Allah", and the second witnessing, "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" (Cornell 1999:77).

In Islamic custom, the other four of Islam's five pillars, although formalized rituals in Sunni Islam, are forms of worship required "of all Muslims in order to attain salvation" (Campo 2009:xxiii). Though the "Five Pillars are not given in any formal way in the Qur'an", Muslims believe that Muhammad stipulated them (Riddell & Cotterell 2003:45). The five pillars of Islam which are systematically "presented for the first time in the Hadith of Gabriel, are relatively simple" and easy to learn for any new Muslim (Cornell 1999:77-78).

Salat for instance is part of the daily life of any Muslim. As such, *salat* can be accomplished alone in homes, at working places, in the street, on the road while traveling, etc. "In order to be ready to pray", Muslims "must be ritually pure, requiring ablution of the hands, arms, face, and feet (*wudu*), or a full bath (*ghusl*) after menses or sexual relations" (Q 5:6, 9; cited in Campo 2009:557). Doing *salat* requires prostration (Q 48:29). The 'place of prostration' in the mosque is *masjid*, the niche (*mihrab*) is the place for the direction of prayer (*qibla*), and the pulpit (*minbar*) for Friday sermons (*Juma*). Attendance at *salat* for Muslims is considered especially meritorious (Campo 2009:557-558). Traditionally, *salat* for Muslims occurs with separation between men and women, with women generally praying behind men, to one side, in the balcony or in another separate space (2009:558). Consequently, assert Riddell and Cotterell (2003:49), "the observance of the Five Pillars is what marks Muslims different from non-Muslims, rather than a pattern of belief."

In the *hadith*, *salat* is depicted as "the quintessential act of submission to God and the main proof of Islam" (Cornell 1999:77). For the prophet Muhammad, prayer is important and the proof [of Islam]" (Jami al-Tirmidhi cited in Cornell 1999:77). Thus, prayer is important and central in Islam because "the performance of al-Salat forces the human body to respond to the reality that has first been acknowledged by the heart and the tongue in the *Shahadah*" (1999:77). This means that *al-salat*–the five daily prayers, is the distinctive mark of Islam and could not be compared to the other pillars (alms giving, fasting, and pilgrimage), which are also present in other religions. Many of the Muslim articles of faith are shared by the two other monotheist religions–Judaism and Christianity. Hence, like Jews and Christians, Muslims also believe "in human mortality, followed by resurrection", judgement, "and reward or punishment in the afterlife" based on the Judeo-Christian "linear view of history from creation" to judgment day, which overlap "by cyclical celebrations of weekly and seasonal holy days" (Campo 2009:xxv).

Table 11 summarizes the theology and the traditional liturgy around the five pillars of Islam (Ansary 2009:91-92; Campo 2009:242, 557; Christie 2014:xxxv, 9-10; Clarke 2006:7; Hexham 2011:404-405; Riddell & Cotterell 2003:45-47).

Table 11: The five pillars of Sunni Islam

Shahada	This is the profession of faith (witnessing), a sacred action touching the two foundational tenets of Islam, namely belief in one god, and in Muhammad as the prophet of God. Recitation of the shahada in Arabic is repeated during the five daily prayers. It is also expected to be recited by a dying person or by someone else on his or her behalf.
Salat	Daily liturgical prayers offered five times a day at fixed hours: *Fajr* (dawn), *Dhuhr* (after midday), *Asr* (afternoon), *Maghrib* (sunset), *Isha* (nighttime). The quintessential ritualized gestures for prayer are the prostrations "(*suju*d) in which the believer: 1) bows from a standing position; 2) kneels; 3) leans forward touching forehead to the ground; 4) looks to left and right; and 5) touches the ear. Salat is "announced by the call to prayer (*adhan*) by the muezzin (Q 50:39–41) and done facing the direction of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca–the Qibla (Q 2:144–50).
Sawm	Fasting during daylight hours in the month of Ramadan–the month in which the revelations first came to Muhammad. During daylight hours no food is eaten and nothing is drunk.
Zakat	Giving of alms to the poor. In addition to zakat, which carries no merit since it is obligatory, there is the possibility of giving additionally to the poor, sadaqa (righteousness). It is believed that there is merit to be acquired through sadaqa giving, merit to be set against the giver's sins (Riddell & Cotterell 2003).
Hajj	The hajj is the greater pilgrimage to Mecca expected of every Muslim once in a lifetime. The hajj concludes with Id al-Adha, the festival of completion celebrated by Muslims throughout the world, not merely by those who have completed the pilgrimage. A sheep, a goat or even a camel is slaughtered and the meat shared with the poor and neighbors.

The six articles of Sunni Islam faith (Iman)

In Surah 4:136 of the Qur'an, five of the six Sunni Muslims' articles of faith are listed as

1. belief in God;

2. belief in his angels;

3. belief in his messengers;

4. belief in his books; and

5. belief in the Day of Judgment.

This Quranic verse reads as follows:

> O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and the scripture which He sent to those before (him). Any who denieth Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgment, hath gone far, far astray (Qur'an 4:136, translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali).

The books or scriptures revealed to God's messengers or prophets mentioned in the verse above function as the foundation for creed, worship, ethics, and the ummah identity. The following section briefly describes the above beliefs and other creedal principles of the Sunni Muslim belief system not listed in the surah above.

1. Belief in one true God, and there is no other

Muslims believe that God's *oneness* is of primary importance. God is unique, and has no equal; he has no division, and it's *shirk,* an unforgivable sin or blasphemy, *kabirah,* to credit anyone to God's status (Emrullah, Hâdimî & Işık 2014:9-11, 52, 110; Medearis 2008:191; Ott et al. 2010:301; Rizvi 2004:256; Surah 17:111; 19:35;). Allah, however, according to Muslims' belief, is almost unknowable and unapproachable, but best known through his ninety-nine wonderful names (Bukhari, *Sahih*, IX, XCIII, chap. 11, no. 489, 363 cited in Riddell & Cotterell 2003:47).

2. Belief in angels

Muslims believe angels are invisible servants of God who reveal his will, most notably to the prophets (Campo 2009:254; Riddell & Cotterell 2003). According to the Qur'an, the greatest of the angels is the archangel *Jibreel* (Gabriel), the angel of revelation who transmitted God's disclosures to prophet Muhammad (Surah 2:97-98), and supported him with other angels (Surah 66:4). Another well-known faithful angel mentioned in the Qur'an, is Michael (Surah 2:98). Angels are all created from fire (Qur'an 7:12), a status that led *Ibliss* (Satan), full of pride

and jealousy, to rebel when asked to bow down before Adam, who was created from clay and mud (Surah 7:11-12). For this reason, not only will all men be judged in the day of judgment, but all created beings will face judgment together: "the faithful and the unbelievers, men and *djinn*, angels and demons" (Surah 6:128-130; 19:68, 85; 20:102; 34:40 cited in Neusner, Chilton & Graham 2002:303-304).

Angels like *Izra'il*, *Israfil, Malik, Munkar* and *Nakir*, have special responsibilities, with the two latter angels (*Munkar* and *Nakir)* interrogating the dead in the grave, and the three former angels respectively responsible for drawing out the souls of the dying (*Izra'il)*, sounding the trumpet on the Last Day–the Day of Judgment (*Israfil*), and guarding hell and administering corresponding punishments there (*Malik*) (Campo 2009:240-241, 251; Riddell 2013:405).

Iblis (Satan)

As seen above, Satan, called *Iblis* in Islamic literature, full of pride and jealousy, refused to obey God's command to bow down before Adam. Satan's disobedience, arrogance, and pride cost him his place in paradise (Surah 7:13-14). But, Satan, the tempter, the deceiver and the enemy of humans, promised angrily to lie and mislead men and women who will be on the straight path to paradise (Surah 7:16). Satan said: "Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: Nor wilt thou find, in most of them, gratitude (for thy mercies)" (Surah 7:17). As such, one of the nine essential rites during the *hajj* (pilgrimage at Mecca) is "to throw stones at the three places where, according to Muslim tradition", Ibrahim (Abraham) "repelled Satan with stones for trying to persuade him to disobey God", and where Satan also tried to tempt the Prophet Ismail (Campo 2009:605; Cornell 1999:85).

Iblis or Satan, the rebellious angel (Surah 38:73-76) or a *jinn*, is moreover associated in Islam with defilement caused by divination, gambling, pork, and wine, which lead people to violence, idolatry, and neglect of prayer (Q 5:91–92; Q 18:50 cited in Campo 2009:604-605). Consequently, "Muslims are cognizant of Satan's existence in their ritual life" when they use recital prayers which begin with formulas such as "I seek refuge in God from the reviled Satan" (2009:605).

Jinn

Jinn or *jinni* are invisible lesser spirits with human qualities, such as limited knowledge and moral agency "to either submit to God and become Muslims, or slander and disobey him" and become *shayatin* (satans), and be controlled by special amulets (O'Donnell & Campo 2009:402). Hence, *jinn* are "capable of both good and evil. Known to Arabs before the Islamic era as a kind of nature spirit or minor deity" (2009:402), *jinn* are often mentioned in the Qur'an "which even has a chapter about them that bears their name"–Surah 72, called *al-Jinni*. In Surah 15:26-27, their nature is exposed. God says: "We created the human being from clay, from molded mud. And the jinn We created before, from piercing fire". O'Donnell and Campo argue that "poets and seers were believed to have magical powers in part" because they were possessed by or had special relations with *jinn* (2009:402). Thus, Muhammad's early "opponents accused him of being possessed" by *jinn* "rather than being in communion with the one God" (Ansary 2009:19; Kottak 2011:303; Mirza 2012:23; O'Donnell a&nd Campo 2009:402; Page & Davis 2005:192).

3. Belief in God's prophets or messengers

These are men called by God to be his mouthpieces in order to influence history. In Islam, prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and messengerhood (*risala*)–bringing a new scriptural revelation–in Islam, are male-only functions (O'Connor 2009:460). In the Qur'an, there is a developed interpretation of God's dealing with successive males through a series of his chosen messengers (sing. *rasūl,* "apostle, emissary, messenger, envoy") or prophets (sing. *nabī),* from Adam to Muhammad (Neusner et al. 2002:240-241). According to the Qur'an, the way to inherit a blessed eternity is to pay heed to God and his messengers, and their books (Surah 87:16-19). Such sacred books include the "scrolls of old, the scrolls of Abraham and Moses" and others (S. 87:16-19 cited in Neusner et al, 2002:240-241, 307). Neusner, Chilton and Graham write:

> His guidance has come from a long line of chosen messengers or prophets, beginning with Adam and extending down to His final messenger and prophet, Muhammad ibn Abdullah of the Arab tribe of Quraysh. God sent revelations to many of these chosen guides, whether the Torah to Moses, the Psalms to David, the Gospel to Jesus, or the Qur'an ("Reciting") to Muhammad. The last is the final "book" or "scripture" (kitāb), the culminating revelation from the Lord, His explicit and perfect word addressed to humankind. (Neusner et al. 2002:96).

Muslims see Muhammad (and Muhammad himself asserts this claim) as the last, the "seal of the prophets", in a sequence of prophets who were God's apostles to mankind (Holt, Lambton & Lewis 1970:xii). Muhammad ibn Abdullah's life is considered a prophetic career and the scripture he brought as divine scripture–the Qur'an–which marks "God's last attempt to set forth 'the straightway', the path to salvation, the way that God would have human beings walk as His obedient servants and worshippers" (Neusner et al. 2002:27-28.). However, other prophets such as *Isa* (Jesus), are exalted in the Qur'an. *Isa* (Jesus) for instance is presented as

the prophet born of a virgin with no sin and with the holiest life (Surah 4:171)–what a great insight/bridge for Christian mission.

4. Belief in God's Holy Books

Throughout history, nations have had their prophets and their holy books. Muslims believe all these holy books originated from the preserved tablets in heaven (Holden 2018). The Qur'an invites believers in these terms: "Say, "We believe in God, and in what was revealed to us; and in what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Patriarchs; and in what was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit."" (Surah 3:84). Hence, Muslims are required to believe in Allah's revealed books, which begin with the pages of Abraham (*Suhuf Ibrahim*), to include the Torah of Moses (*al-Tawrat*), the Psalms of David (*al-Zabur*), the Evangel of Jesus (*al-Injil*), and the Qur'an (Cornell 1999:88). Holden points out that "though the Tawrat (Torah), Zabur (Psalms), Injil (Gospel), and Qur'an compose 4 of the 104 divisions of the "eternal tablet" revealed by Allah throughout history, according to Muslims the only uncorrupted revelation, which possesses highest authority, is the Qur'an" (Holden 2018:588). Consequently, the doctrine of *Tahrif*, the Islamic doctrine of corruption, explains that the disparities between the texts of the four Christian gospels and the message of the Qur'an did not exist in the original gospel writings. Jewish and Christian editors distorted the original texts and included reports of Jesus being called the Son of God, and Jesus being crucified and resurrected (Drouhard 2018:242). So, Muslims are required to exercise faith in the original copies of the five divine books sent by God to humanity:

> The *Suhuf (*Abraham's original scrolls)
> The *Tawrat*, (the original Torah, or the Pentateuch of Moses)
> The *Zabur*, (the original Psalms of David)

The *Injil*, (the original Gospels of Jesus)

The *Qur'an*

According to the verse of abrogation[38] (Surah 13:39), all later verses supersede earlier ones. The doctrine of abrogation (*naskh*) in Islam views an interpretation of the Qur'an "wherein God sent down a later revelation to supersede and abrogate the authority of the earlier narrative" (O'Connor 2009:344), an Islamic principle generally and globally accepted "that is rooted in the Qur'an" (Pink 2016:769), which implicitly includes other religious books and teachings prior to the Qur'an–"abrogation of the Pentateuch and the Hebrew Bible" for instance (Schmidtke 2016:175). Al-Muḥāsibī emphasizes that the doctrine of abrogation "repeals only the command, not the speech itself, and does not reflect a change in the mind of God, but that He had from eternity intended this abrogation to occur at some point in time" (Van Ess 1997:203-5 cited in Ramli 2016:221).

Yet not all Muslims are comfortable with the doctrine of abrogation. Some have suggested that it is the invention of Muslim scholars who went astray or of the enemies of Islam (Hexham 2011:424). Johanna Pink for instance points out that:

> Shāh Walī Allāh's concern with the integrity and perfection of the Qurʾānic text has a certain apologetic angle. Among other things, this is reflected in his scepticism towards the doctrine of abrogation (naskh). Based on al-Suyūṭī's method, but employing it much more radically, he tried to eliminate as many instances of abrogation as possible by harmonizing apparent differences between legal verses instead. Thus, he reduced the number of–according to

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[38] For further readings on the doctrine of abrogation see Irving Hexham (2011)."The doctrine of abrogation" in *Understanding world religions*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan: 424; A. Muhammad. "The lie of abrogation: The biggest lie against the Qur'an" at David Bukay, Peace or Jihad? Abrogation in Islam," *Middle East Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (Fall 2007):3–11. Available at http://www.submission.org/abrogation.html, cited in Hexham 2011:424; Chapter 6 of *The Oxford handbook of Islamic theology,* edited by Sabine Schmidtke, that deals with issues of abrogation and quotes, among others. *K. al-Arbaʿīn* (1:127, § 3) and *K. al-Maʿālim fī uṣūl al-fiqh* (1:140–4, §§ 70–88).

him–real abrogations to five, as compared to al-Suyūṭī's nineteen (Baljon 1977; Jalbani 1967:5–28 cited in Pink 2016:769*)*

The *Hadith*

There are six 'official' canonical Sunni collections of *hadith* (Ansary 2009:94-96; Campo 2009:279; Drouhard 2018:211; Mottahedeh 2010:32). They are as follows:

1   Sahih of al-Bukhari (AH 194–256 [810–870 CE])
2   Ṣaḥiḥ of Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjaj (AH 202–261 [817–875 CE])
3   Kitab al-sunan of Abu Da ud/Dawood al-Sijistani (AH 202–275 [817–889 CE])
4   Kitab al-sunan of Abu ʿIsa Muḥammad al-Tirmidhi (died AH 279 [892 CE])
5   Kitab al-sunan of Abu ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Nasaʾi (AH 216–303 [830–915 CE])
6   Kitab al-sunan of Abu ʿAbd Allah ibn Majah (AH 210–273 [824–886 CE])

(Ansary 2009:94-96\; Campo 2009:279).

A *hadith* (Arabic: speech, report, narrative) is the body of oral tradition pertaining to the teachings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. It "is a short report, story, or tradition about what" Prophet Muhammad said or did or did not say or do (Drouhard 2018:211; Campo 2009:278). Campo asserts that the word *hadith* also refers to the body of collection of thousands of *hadith* "collected into books during the ninth and tenth centuries" (Campo 2009:78). According to Drouhard, Muslims believe that "Muhammad's words and actions were Allah working through him" (2018:211). Hence, for Muslims, the *hadith* have become, through history, complementary to the Qur'an as part of revealed truth; an authentic code of actions approved of, or disapproved of, by Muhammad (Campo 2009:78). As such, stresses Campo, the *hadith* are used to "govern Islamic law, religious practice, belief, and everyday life" (2009:78). Muslim scholars worldwide compiled "sifted collections of hadith grouped under specific topics, which functioned as organized statements" of lslamic "doctrine and as reference works on Islamic living" (Ansary 2009:94-96).

The 'science of *hadith*' started in late Umayyad times and matured in the Abassid era. It became an elaborate discipline about "eight decades after Mohammed's death" (Ansary 2009:96). From *isnad* analysis to critical biography and historiography, considerable efforts were made to sift authentic accounts from spurious ones (Silverstein 2010:89-91). Generally, a *hadith* is composed of two parts: the *isnad*–a chain of transmitters, and the *matn*–a statement or story about something Muhammad said or did (Ansary 2009:34; Campo 2009:278). The most important part of the *hadith* is the *isnad*, the chain of transmission. Ansary argues that the authenticity of a *hadith* was of great importance in the Muslim community. Hence, the chain of transmission was nailed down and every link was tested for veracity (Ansary 2009:95). As a result, the chain of transmission had to extend to "one of Muhammad's close companions, and the closer the companion the more sound the hadith" (2009:95). For instance, an example of chain of transmission goes like this: "al-Tabari heard it from 'x', who heard it from 'y', who heard it from 'z', who was an eyewitness to the event" (Silverstein 2010:89). Drouhard (2018:211) mentions that out of the science of *hadith* three major classifications of emerged: *qawl* (what Muhammad taught); *fi'l* (what he did); and *taqrir* that of which he approved (that of which he approved).

5. Belief in the Day of Judgment

For Muslims there is inevitably "a Last Day, a Day of Reckoning, a Day of Resurrection, a Day of Upraising, more generally referred to as The Hour, *Al-Sa'a*" (Riddell & Cotterell 2003:48). The Qur'an says none but the Lord knows the hour, the appointed time, the day of reckoning and of reward (Surah 7:187; 20:15; 31:34; 33:63; 79:42-46). Families who remained faithful in faith will be reunited to eat fruits and meat and anything they shall desire (Surah 52:21-22). Riddell and Cotterell write:

At that Hour there will be a general resurrection, and the books will be brought out, individual books recording the lives of every individual. For those whose good deeds have outweighed their bad deeds, their books will be given to them in their right hands; but for those whose evil deeds outweigh their good deeds, the books will be given in their left hands (Riddell & Cotterell 2003:48-49).

The Qur'an mentions apocalyptic signs that will appear prior to the Day of Judgment. These eschatological features–sky will be like molten brass, the moon will split, mountains will be like wool, Gog and Magog's eyes stare in horror and woe, a beast comes from the earth to face unbelievers, etc. (Surah 21:96–97; 27:82; 54:1-3; 70:6–7)–not only reveal that the end is near, but serve as a warning from God since He will send no more messenger (Surah 21:1, 54:1- 3). According to the Qur'an, the appearance of Jesus, one of the most important prophets of Islam eschatology, will put an end to the reign of the antichrist (Iskander 2009:46), will be the ultimate sign of the end: "And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment). Therefore, have no doubt about the (Hour), but you follow Me. This is a Straight Path" (Surah 43:61; Hafiz Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation).

Accordingly, the antichrist (Arabic: *al-dajjal,* or *al-masih,* the deceiver,) is a well-known figure for Muslims and expected to "arrive at the End of Times" (Iskander 2009:46). However, Iskander points out that ideas about the *dajjal* (the deceiver) come more from al-Bukhari, Muslim *hadith*, and other Sunni canonical *hadith*, than from the Qur'an (2009:46). Iskander summarizes the antichrist's appearance and descriptions in these terms:

The dajjal is variously described as being red-complexioned, one-eyed (or blind in one eye), and short (or sometimes enormously large), with bowed legs and curly hair. The name Unbeliever will be written on his forehead. It is said that he will perform miracles, attracting many whose faith is weak. However, true, believing Muslims will not succumb. He will reign for 40 years (or 40 days) before he succeeds in destroying Muslims. Ultimately, the Antichrist will be slain by Jesus (Iskander 2009:46).

6. Belief in predestination

This article of faith for Muslims affirms that God is supreme and all-powerful with a final and absolute will in human affairs. The Qur'an declares that "All things are from Allah either good or evil, being saved or being lost" (Surah 4:78; 9:51; 14:4; 35:8). Surah 74:31 for instance reads: "Allah leave to stray whom He pleaseth, and guide whom He pleaseth: and none can know the forces of thy Lord, except He and this is no other than a warning to mankind" (Hafiz Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation). Thus, Muslims understand fate to be predetermined by God, and therefore his will is ultimate and supreme (Medearis 2008:44). Medearis argues that because of the predominance of this article of faith in Islam, "the philosophy of fatalism has become widespread and pervasive among Muslims, who frequently mention *muqaddar*, or, as we would say in English, 'It's been decided'" (2008:44). Campo (2009:228) suggests that, "opposed to pure accident or chance", fate in Muslims' understanding determines "in advance what happens in the world, particularly to human beings". As such, asserts Campo, Muslims equate fate "with the idea of fortune or destiny in this world and in the afterlife" (2009:228). Therefore, the concept of freely choosing one's own fate seems to fly in the face of God's supremacy (Medearis 2008:38-45). Consequently, some Muslims believe that events in life have been ordained for every creature. But not all Muslims have this fatalistic worldview which observes that people try in vain to change predetermined events of his or her life (Riddell & Cotterell 2003:47). In history, Muslim theologians have been divided on "the question of free will and predestination, between the absolute omnipotence of God" and the accountability of people (Riddell & Cotterell 2003:47).

The determinists or fatalists on one hand, supported by the common Arabic expression 'In sha Allah' (If God wills it so), often said by people when planning for the future, argue with

Qur'anic verses (Surah 6:2; 39:42; 40:68) that belief in human free will limits an omnipotent and omniscient God. The non-fatalists on the other hand, with leaders such as al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 728) from the Qadariyya school (the party favouring human self-determination), advocate that to deny free will to humans implicitly means that God cannot judge human accountability on the Day of Judgment if people are righteous or sinful by fate rather than by choice (Surah 2:253, 256; 10:99-100; 18:29–30;41:40; Campo 2009:228-229; Riddell & Cotterell 2003:47-49).

7. Belief in paradise and hell

Although beliefs in paradise and hell are not among orthodox Islam's six articles of faith, conviction in a "heavenly paradise for the righteous" together with belief in a fiery hell, "a place of punishment for wrongdoers in the afterlife", are among Muslims closely related to the last two beliefs of the six articles of faith. According to the Qur'an, the resurrection begins at the sound of the trumpet or trumpets which awake the dead (Surah 78:18; 79:6-14).

Hell is feared as an awful place reserved for infidels and disobedient *jinn* (Surah 4:55; 8:36; 55:43-44), while heavenly paradise is desired and lived for. These two beliefs help Muslims focus their attention on their faith and performing their religious obligations (Campo 2009:240). Fire, in Arabic *al-nar* or *jahannam* (*Gehenna*: a term used by both Jews and Christians to designate hell), is composed of seven levels, with each level described by a distinctive name, such as abyss, blaze, and furnace (2009:240). According to Campo, Muslims believe that wrongdoers are "assigned to the level that suited the degree of their sinfulness" (2009:240). In hell, infidels and any creature cast into hell fire will have no rest and no peace (Surah 2:206; 38:27; 44:43-46), and they will "wear clothing of fire, drink scalding water, and eat poisonous fruit" like devils' heads (Q 37:62–68; 22:19–21 cited in Campo 2009:240-241).

William C. Chittick (2008:676) outstandingly summarizes the reality of hell fire in the Qur'an as such:

> The infidels' share of the next world is "the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones" (II, 24 etc.). Its chastisement is "tremendous" (II, 7 etc.), "painful" (II, 10 etc.), "the most terrible" (II, 85 etc.), "humbling" (II, 90 etc.), "lasting" (V, 37 etc.), "evil" (VI, 157 etc.), and "harsh" (XXIV, 17 etc.). The infidels will encounter "the curse of God, the angels, and men, altogether" (II, 206 etc.), "an evil cradling" (II, 206 etc.), "an evil homecoming" (II, 126 etc.), drinks of "boiling water" (VI, 79 etc.) and "oozing pus" (XIV, 16), "garments of fire" (XXII, 19), "hooked iron rods" (XXII, 21), "fetters and chains on their necks" (XL, 71), "burning winds and boiling water and the shadow of a smoking blaze" (LVI, 42–43), "fetters, and a furnace, and food that chokes" (LXXIII, 12–13), and "a threefold shadow, unshading and giving no relief against the flames" (LXXVII, 30–32). "When they are cast, coupled in fetters, into a narrow place of the Fire, they will call out there for destruction. 'Call not out today for one destruction—call for many!'" (XXV, 13–14). (Chittick 2008:676).

Paradise is the ultimate reward for Muslims. There, the righteous will have security and an indescribable joyful life (Riddell & Cotterell 2003:48-49). According to Nasr "the language of the Qur'an, especially in dealing with eschatological realities, is concrete and symbolic, not abstract, or descriptive in the ordinary sense, which would in any case be impossible when one is dealing with realities our earthly imaginations cannot grasp" (Nasr 2002:26). For instance, Surah 56:21–24 or 44:51-57 reveals that:

> 51. As for the righteous, they will be in a secure place. 52. Amidst gardens and springs. 53. Dressed in silk and brocade, facing one another. 54. So it is, and We will wed them to lovely companions. 55. They will call therein for every kind of fruit, in peace and security. 56. Therein they will not taste death, beyond the first death; and He will protect them from the torment of Hell. 57. A favor from your Lord. That is the supreme salvation (Surah 44:51-57).

Nasr argues that the sensuous description of the delights of paradise in the Qur'an may not be understood by non-Muslims (Nasr 2002:26). According to Nasr, the description of the delights in paradise are simply a "sublimation of earthly joys and pleasures. In reality every joy

and delight here below, especially sexuality, which is sacred for Islam, is the reflection of a paradisal prototype, not vice versa" (2002:26). Once again, William C. Chittick (2008:675), in my view, gives a satisfactory summary of the Qur'an's perspective of the delights of paradise:

> Among its delights will be "gardens underneath which rivers flow" (II, 25 etc.), "purified spouses" (II, 25 etc.), "God's good pleasure" (III, 15 etc.), "a shelter of plenteous shade" (IV, 57), "forgiveness and a generous provision" (VIII, 4 etc.), "palaces" (XXV, 10), "goodly dwelling places" (IX, 27 etc.), "couches set face to face" (XV, 47 etc.), "abundant fruits" (XXXVIII, 51 etc.), "maidens restraining their glances" (XXXVII, 48 etc.), "wide-eyed houris" (XLIV, 54 etc.), "immortal youths, going round about them with goblets, ewers, and a cup from a spring" (LVI, 17–18), "platters of gold" (XLIII, 71), and "all that your souls desire" (XLI, 31 etc.). (Chittick 2008:675).

3.2.1.1.2. *Dendi and folk Sunni Islam: the Tidjaniyya order of Sufism*

As pointed out in chapters 1 and 2, and also in the section above, Islam among people with pre-Islamic animist backgrounds such as the Dendi people, is mostly superficial (Bierschenk & De Sardan 1998:107; Gosselain & Smolderen 2013; Joshua Project 2016). In the case of the Dendi people, elements from Sufi folklore appear to resonate with their basic traditional religion's framework of custom and tradition. The Tidjaniyya sect or order of Sufism (also spelled Tijaniyya or Tidjaniya), is a well-known Sufi group in West Africa. The Tidjaniyya order is among the main Sufi orders in Senegal (Hirji 2010:139), in Benin (Yiğit 2015), and among the Dendi (oral convention). Corry, for instance, points out that Sufi orders, such as the *Tijaniyya* and the *Qadiriyya* in West Africa, popularized the Islamic faith by "creating a synthesis between African cultural practices and Islamic principles" (Cory 2009:709).

For many cultures where Islam is a new religion, the orthodox Islam belief system described earlier has its limitations. As Riddell and Cotterell put it, many Muslims found that recognized orthodox beliefs and practices lack a more practical system for dealing with the

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realities of daily life (2003:45-57). For such Muslims, Riddell and Cotterell comment, orthodox beliefs and practices have their boundaries, and some of their restrictions are found irksome (2003:45). Ansary, for instance, points out that such disappointments with the new religion existed already among Arabs at the beginning of Islam. According to Ansary, Sufism[39] developed in the Middle East during the seventh century, almost from the start of Islam, because some people wanted palpable experiences of the presence of God which they could feel "right now, right down here" (Ansary 2009:107). These unsatisfied new Muslims asked if the new revelation from God was only a set of rules with no transformational and transcendental power (2007:107). Nasr concedes that "Sufism became organized in orders usually named after their founders" during the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Nasr 2002:64). Nasr lists Sufi orders from the older ones to the newest ones: *Rifā'iyyah, Qādiriyyah, Shādhiliyyah, Khalwatiyyah,* the *Mawlawiyyah, Chishtiyyah, Naqshbandiyyah,* and *Ni'matullahiyyah* (2002:64). According to Nasr, although "some of the orders have died out over time", all Sufi orders "rely on the continuity of the 'initiatic' chain, or silsilah, which goes back to the Prophet" (Nasr 2002:64). Thus, Nasr points out that Sufism, like the Shar'icah, has its roots in the Qur'an and prophetic practice and offers the inner and esoteric dimensions of Islam (2000:115). Nevertheless, "while some scholars consider Sufism to have non-Islamic roots, most modern historians attribute its development to ascetic Muslim sects" (Page & Davis 2005:274; Nasr 2000:115).

Mclaughlin observes how the Algerian Ahmad al-Tijani (d.1815), "the founder of the *Tijaniyya* Sufi order", was initiated into three different Sufi orders: the *Qadiriyya*, the *Nasiriyya*,

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[39] The term *Sufism* (Arabic: *tasawwuf*) refers to the mysticism of Islam and emphasizes personal interaction with God etymologically derived from *sufi* (one who wears a woolen robe or *suf*), because it is believed wearing wool was part of early ascetic practices to symbolize rejection of the world (Brown & Flores. 2007. *Historical dictionary of medieval philosophy and theology.* Lanham, ND: Scarecrow: 268; Nichols, Mather and Schmidt. 2006. *Encyclopedic dictionary of cults, sects, and world religions.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

and the *Tayyibiyya* brotherhoods in Fez, Morocco, where he lived for several years (2005:896). Ahmad al-Tijani was also initiated into the *Khalwatiyya* order while in Cairo (2005:896). According to Mclaughlin, Ahmad al-Tijani consciously created his own brotherhood and forbade his followers from having affiliations with other brotherhoods besides his (2005:896). Mclaughlin further asserts that the *Tijaniyya* order of Sufism created by Ahmad al-Tijani found "its greatest success in Saharan and Sub-Saharan West Africa beginning in the mid-nineteenth century" (2005:896). For many orthodox Muslims, Sufism "had come to mean folklore, superstitions, shrines, amulets, remedies, spells, and the veneration of Sufi saints alleged to possess supernatural abilities" (Ansary 2009:182). Page and Davis note that different Sufi orders' beliefs and practices make up the substance of the Islam practiced in Africa, but, they also note that scholars do not agree as to whether Sufism's influence in Africa "was radical, conservative, political, or religious" (2005:116).

3.2.1.2.   Dendi traditional religion belief system: organic and mechanical

3.2.1.2.1. *Organic representations*

The Dendi traditional religion refers to a pantheon of spirits that forms a true spiritual society such as the pantheon of Greek gods (Bello 2001:37; Bello & Giannotti 2017:25). In this organic analogy (Hiebert et al. 1999:46), these gods and goddesses relate to each other in multifaceted relationships. In Dendi mythology, *Sidi koy* or *Sidkoye*–God,–the invisible one, the lord of heaven and hearth, has three *foleys*[40]–children or titans: *Harakoy* or *Harakoye*, the

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[40] *Foley* or *Holey*, the Dendi term difficult to translate, refers to spirit entities of the invisible world which possess and control the body of people during trances. These people, being possessed, are generally initiated to become intermediaries between the sprits and the community (Bello 2001. *Les enfants de Hara Koye: Les Dendi Mamar Hâma du Fleuve Niger*. Polonceau, Benin: URACA.

goddess of water; *Béné koy* or *Yabilam*, the god of the sky; and *Marou*, the god of the earth and fire (Bello 2001:37). The *foleys* are mobile and dispersed spirts or deities unlike the *Torou* or *Toorou,* which are known as territorial gods and goddesses (2001:37). This pantheon of local deities and divinities have protective and punitive functions in an invisible organization similar to human societies with complex hierarchical families and relationships (2001:37). As Hiebert et al. note, beings and forces in the unseen world which include "spirits, ghosts, ancestors, demons, and earthly gods and goddesses who live in trees, rivers, hills, and villages", play a central part in the lives of the folk religionists (1999:48). Therefore, observe Hiebert and his colleagues, it is with prayer, sacrifice, and divination that angry or neglected ancestors or spirits who can injure or kill the living are appeased for their favour and blessings (1999:48).

The *zima*[41] in the Dendi traditional religion is anybody with therapeutic traditional knowledge who also serves as priest of the *foley* cult and who translates the language of the spirits to humans and organizes the possession troops for the different Dendi traditional religious ceremonies (Bello 2001:37; Gosselain 2018; Gosselain & Smolderen 2014). As such, the *zima* variously combines spirit possession, healing, ritual divination, magic and ecstatic prayers (Butler 2004; Turner 2004). For traditional ceremonies involving the community, the *zima* always performs with the presence of a musical band. The *goguié*, a violinist, is the chief musician. The *goguié* or the genealogist of the *foleys* is a special musician who plays the music of the spirit the *zima* wants to summon. He does this by singing attributes and power of the spirit the same way griots sing about kings' accomplishments and powers in human societies (Bello

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[41] *Zimas*, in spite of their increasing disapproval from orthodox Muslims, are men or women of any social group recognized as "ritual and spiritual specialists who work variously as healers, clairvoyants, spirit mediums, possession and trance experts, and sorcerers" (Stoller 1989:37 cited in Noah Butler. (2004). *Zarma spirit mediums (Niger)* in M. Walker and E Fridman (eds). (2004). *Shamanism: An encyclopedia of world beliefs, practices, and culture*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc: 954-957).

2001:37). Figure 6 presents a hierarchical representation of the Dendi pantheon from Bello's different publications. This is not an adaptation from an existing graphic. As such it is an *etic* view. The researcher concedes that an *emic* representation of the Dendi pantheon could be different. Nevertheless, as Moussa Maman Bello, the Dendi expert, points out, the relationships and hierarchy among the gods and goddesses in the Dendi pantheon are complex, mythical and intellectually or rationally unavailable (Bello 2001:48).
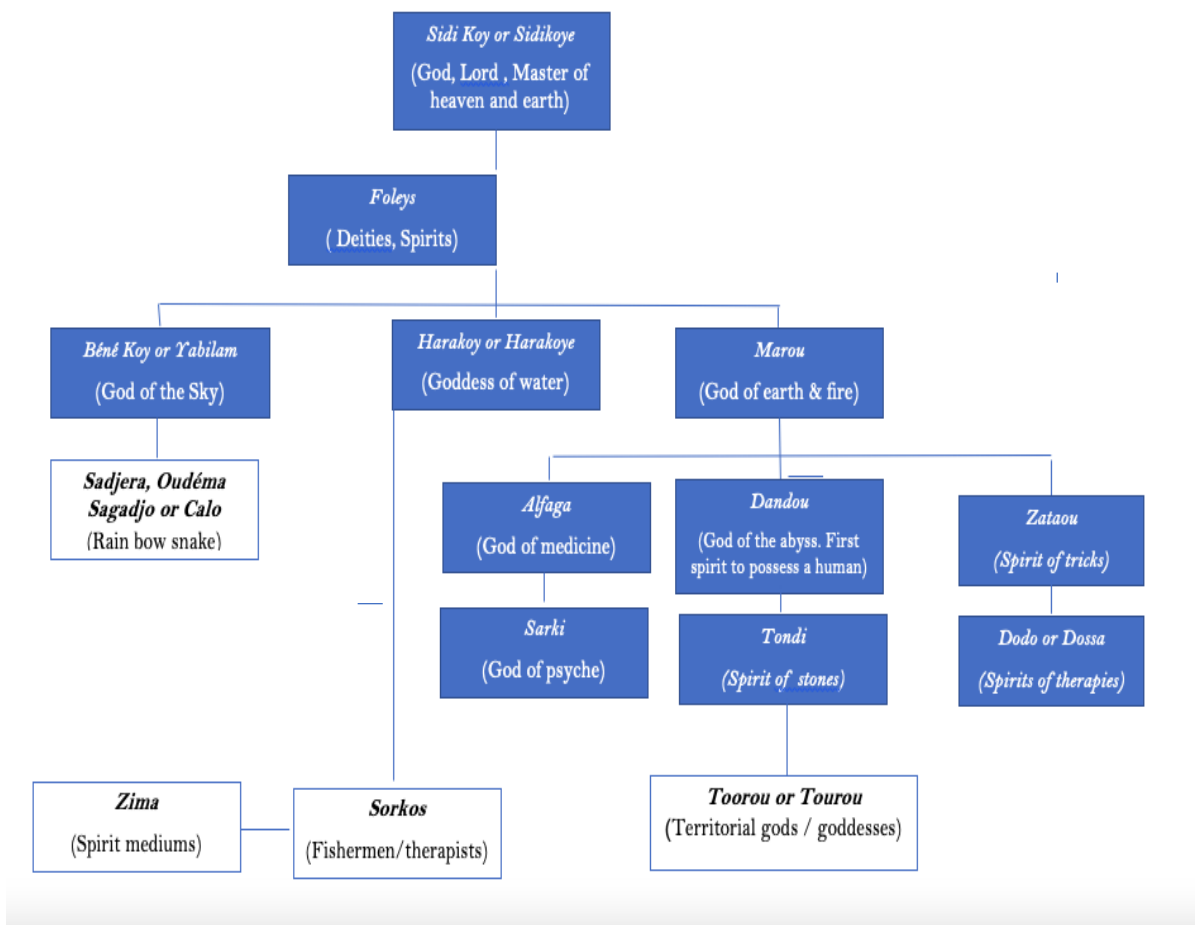
Figure 6: Dendi pantheon of gods, goddesses and spirits

3.2.1.2.2. *Mechanic representations*

The Dendi traditional religion also uses inanimate or mechanical entities (impersonal forces or impersonal laws of nature) which are essentially deterministic and amoral–that is they are neither good nor evil, which means they do not sin, because they can be used for both (Adeleke 1996; Bello et al. 2016; Bello & Giannotti 2017; cf. Hiebert et al. 1999:47-48). These mechanical entities are elements of nature, such as wind, thunder and lightning, rain, trees, rocks, rivers, etc. Hiebert and his colleagues point out that "it is how humans, spirits, and gods use them that is good or evil" (Hiebert et al. 1999:48). For instance, among the Dendi, *Dongo*– the mighty god with three features: fire, thunder, and lightning–could be bidden by an angry person to strike his enemy (this belief is also found in many other African cultures) with lightning through witchcraft (Asante & Mazama 2009:663; Bello & Giannotti 2017:15, 137; Page & Davis 2005:60, 87, 226; Lugira, 2009:58).

3.2.1.3. Dendi traditional religion: cognitive, affective and evaluative

3.2.1.3.1. *Cognitive elements in Dendi traditional religion*

The Dendi belief system is rooted in the West African Songhay traditional worldview which provides the cognitive, aesthetic, and moral rules for the Dendi people (Adeleke 1996; Bello et al. 2016; Bello & Giannotti 2017). As descendants of the Songhay people of Mali, the Dendi, who were initially fishermen, also known as *Sorkos[42]*, who descended the Niger River further and further downstream, are recognized throughout West Africa for their expertise in treating mental illnesses (Bello & Giannotti 2017). Inseparable from the river, which maintains

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[42] *Sorko* refers not only to the Dendi fishermen but also to their religious and therapeutic role due to their special connection with the spirits of the invisible world (Bello, Giannotti & Lalleman. 2016. *Les secrets des rois Dendi*. Available at http://uraca-basiliade.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Le-secret-des-rois-Dendi.pdf)**.**

their proximity to the spirits of the invisible world and especially the spirit of water, the mother goddess *Harakoye,* the *Sorkos* have a special place at the junction of religion and healing practices.

Another lineage with religious heritage for the Dendi people is their linkage to the mythical warrior and ruler Askia[43] Mohamed or Askia Muhammad Touré (r. 1493-1538), whose nickname was Maamar (Bello et al. 2016:5; Gosselain 2012; Page & Davis 2005).

The Dendi perpetuation of the ancestral rituals of transmission of royal power, which, according to tradition, is granted to the king being crowned–the *laboukoye* (chief of the land)–by the lion, the royal protective totem and emblem (Bello et al. 2016:5), goes back to the fervent believer Askia Mohamed Touré's decision not to wrest his people from their pre-Islamic traditions (Page & Davis 2005). For instance, Bello[44] (2016) narrates the ritual of Dendi kings'

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[43]*Askia* means king. Askia Muhammad Touré, often called "Askia the Great," or "Askia the fervent" ruled over the Songhai empire from 1493 to 1528 or 1538 according to some sources (Page & Davis, Jr. (eds). 2005. 2001. *Encyclopedia of African history and culture,* Volume I, Ancient Africa; Ackermann, Schroeder, Terry, Upshur. and Whitters (Eds.). 2008. *Encyclopedia of world history: The ancient world prehistoric eras to 600 C.E. Vol I).* According to the sources mentioned above, after the reign of Sunni Ali (r. 1464–1492), Askia Muhammad Touré deposed Ali's son Sunni Baru who reigned only 40 months (Page and Davis 2005:247; Aderinto 2008:366). Askia Muhammad Touré mandated al-Maghili with the mission of a counselor in ruling a largely non-Muslim population. He made no attempt to convert his non-Muslim subjects but rather appointed the Songhai chief priest as high officer in his government to gain the support of the rural Songhai people (Page & Davis 2005:9, 97, 113, 131, 132, 146, 149, 208, 247).

[44] Dr. Moussa Maman Bello was mayor of the town of Karimama from 2009 to 2020. Born in the fishers village of Bello-Tounga around Karimama in Benin, he studied medicine in Dakar, Senegal, before continuing his training in France. Descendant of a *sorko* grandfather (master of water spirits and goddesses) and father, a famous traditional Muslim healer, Dr. Bello is one of the experts of the Dendi possession ritual. Dr. Bello combines his psychiatric services in Parisian hospitals with his traditional healing practices. Moussa Maman Bello is the referent of some two thousand traditional healers in northern Benin (URACA 2016. Available at https://uraca-basiliade.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Uraca_cahier12.pdf). Dr. Bello's experience as ethno-psychiatrist and traditional practitioner is an example which shows that traditional African therapies can be complementary to Western medicine (Kristof-Lardet 2001. Available at. https://uraca-basiliade.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Art14.pdf). Bello's coauthored book, Moussa M. Bello and Agnes Giannotti 2017 *Renaître en pays dendi, couvade et possession au nord Bénin,* invites readers to a therapeutic rebirth ritual, among the Dendi. This Dendi convent ritual is called *Danfou,* literally "put in the hut" (Perma Nord Benin Available at https://www.permanordbenin.com/evenements [Accessed September 2019].

enthronement in the Karimama dynasty, in the Alibori province in Northern Benin where he

was born. Here is a summary of Bello's account:

Each king chooses his potential successor. But after the death of the king, the appointment of his successor is decided by the council of wise men who can override the wishes of the deceased king. The council of wise men follows the general principle of primogeniture, that is, the oldest son among direct descendants of the deceased king must be enthroned. But in case of physical or any incapacity of the appointed successor the council can decide to choose another descendant in the deceased king's line.

To become king, the chosen successor must participate in enthronement rituals in which the powers and secrets of Dendi kings will be transmitted to him. To do this, he is put in a convent for seven days, in a closed hut where only close friends have the opportunity to see him. All of the community's family heads meet with the future king every evening around a wood fire with purifying smoke to keep him company.

The king's shaving ritual takes place on the eighth day on a woven brand-new mat. Prepared for the occasion, the mat is spiritually equipped to ward off negative influences and protect the future new king. Seated on the new mat during the shaving ritual, the future king is kept hidden under a mosquito net. Once the shaving is completed, a turban is put on the head of the future king and he receives a new gown and a new saber. This is a second birth into a new status close to divine status: the birth of a king who becomes the *Bana Fou boro*. The new king's old clothes are burned and buried where the king will be buried when he dies.

(Bello. 2016:5-9. *Les secrets des rois Dendi*. Available at https://uraca-basiliade.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Le-secret-des-rois-Dendi.pdf; "the secrets of the Dendi kings"(own translation); Bello 2001:7; *Les enfants de Hara koye: Les dendi Mamar Hâma du fleuve Niger.* Available at https://uraca-basiliade.org/wp-ontent/uploads/2016/12/Uraca_Cycledendi_DendisFleuveNiger.pdf)

This account of Dendi kings' enthronement with rituals and symbols, such as: the seven

days in the convent; the seating on the spiritually prepared mat; the shaving on the 8th day; the

new gown and new saber; the burning of the old clothes; and the transmission of the powers

and secrets of the Dendi kings, etc. communicates cognitive information. Hiebert et al. call such

cultural rituals and symbols, (where power and social, cultural, individual, and spiritual realities

are integrated at a deep cultural level), multivocal rituals (1999:290). Although such rituals are not open to the common people, but reserved to a group of initiated men who understand these sacred symbols and the ritual around them, for the Dendi, the enthronement of their king, who then becomes the titular head of the traditional religion for the entire community (Page & Davis 2005:117), gives expression to the Dendi people's worldview. This mental picture of the ritual or cultural drama makes visible the worldview underlying their cultural understandings of reality (the cognitive dimension) and communicates fundamental beliefs (Hiebert et al. 1999:293).

3.2.1.3.2. *Affective and evaluative elements in the Dendi traditional religion*

Hiebert et al. state that dominant cultural symbols are powerful because they condense "deep cognitive, affective, and evaluative themes in a single symbol" (1999:238). Hiebert and his colleagues (1999:247) point out that sacred signs, when integrated, give expression to a people's worldview with the three dimensions of religion involved–the cognitive, the affective, and the evaluative. In the case of the Dendi kings' enthronement ritual, the dimensions of religion include

1 the mental picture the community has of the way the ritual is done in reality (the *cognitive* dimension);

2 the decision of the king's council for the good of the community, the support of the family heads to the future king during his convent period (the *affective* dimension); and

3 the community's acceptance of the new king, his moral values, and his authority to reign and govern his people with the mystical support of the kings' totem or charm– the lion (the *evaluative* dimensions).

The music and dance that follow the king's enthronement in Dendi culture, as part of the local cultural expressive elements in the sacred ritual of the king's enthronement, show the

community's affective responses (loyalty and respect) to the event (Dan 2017). In a typical Dendi village, although Islam is the official religion, every traditional ceremony begins with the song of *Dandou Hourou Fama*, the first spirit to have taken possession of a human body (Bello & Giannotti 2017:62). A prayer of blessing for the king and the community is generally performed by the central *Iman* (the central mosque leader of the Muslim community), but major Dendi traditional practices are always respected (Dan 2017). This affective response of the community is important, because "rituals give expression to people's deepest feelings–of sorrow, tenderness, loyalty, and respect–and help them deal with fears and anxieties" (Hiebert et al. 1999:293).

On the evaluative level, a king's enthronement is an important event in the Dendi culture. The success of the ceremony lays the foundation for judgment and morality and shows the maturity of a community (Dan 2017).

3.2.2. Dendi and the central concerns of folk religion

Hiebert et al. argue that there are four central questions people seek to answer in their daily life:

1 How do people find meaning in life on earth, and how do they explain death?;
2 How do people try to get a good life, and how do they deal with misfortune?"
3 How do people seek to discern the unknown in order to plan their lives?"
4 How do people maintain a moral order, and how do they deal with disorder and sin? (Hiebert et al. 1999:94).

These central questions, according to Hiebert et al., "have to do with the deepest human concerns, namely, the need to find ontological meaning in life" (Hiebert et al. 1999:74).

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As mentioned earlier, the Dendi worldview first and foremost has traditional elements of the Dendi animistic heritage. The second belief system supporting the Dendi worldview is that of the *Tidjaniyya* folk Islam. Hiebert and his colleagues point out that the religious beliefs and practices among the people function with a different belief system (1999:74). According to them, people ask different questions, examine different realities, and use different methods totally in contrast with the highly philosophical and abstract questions and answers offered by formal religion (1999:74). Consequently, while the people deal with human synchronic[45] everyday problems, the theology of formal religions is concerned with human diachronic "ultimate reality, and issues of truth and logical consistency"; the meaning of life is searched by answering questions related to the origins, purpose, and destiny of the universe, of a people, and of individual persons (Hiebert et al. 1999:74).

Thus, from a synchronic explanation of human existence, the life cycle, for the Dendi people, is a sequence with at least five distinct phases. These five phases of life are also found in many other African societies and includes: birth, puberty, marriage, death, and rebirth or afterlife (Asante & Mazama 2009; Bello & Giannotti 2017; Bennett 1994; Holm & Bowker 1994; Kayongo-Male 1984; Lugira 2009; Sharot 2001; Taliaferro & Marty 2010). According to Bennett, these phases in life constitute what many cultures identify as 'rites of passage'–"rites surrounding birth, reception into the adult community, marriage, and death"–which, through symbols and rituals, express deep local convictions about the meaning of human existence (Bennett 1994:90).

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[45] The synchronic type of explanation focuses on 'who' humans are in terms of nature and structure of their being; by contrast, the diachronic type of explanation focuses on 'where' humans came from and where they are going (Hiebert et al. 1999:95). Thus, point out Hiebert and his colleagues, place is important in the diachronic approach to life (108), but the synchronic, abstract logic favored by the West often inhibits both the storytelling and the understanding of the story in folk cultures (278).

Bello and Giannotti (2017:10, 69-73) assert that, in Dendi traditional beliefs, spirits or deities such as *Toorey foula* (literally 'the hat of the spirits', the mask), a masquerade that comes out of his sacred hut once every thirty-three years–the period of one generation in Dendi culture worshiped in some Dendi villages, because they relieve humans of the weight of their existence, responding to incessant demands, and settling pointless quarrels. This same kind of worship applies to others spirits such as *Sadjera*, the rainbow snake, in charge of making the rain fall when asked to sprinkle dry land or during a severe dry season in order to save the crops, fill the rivers where other deities live etc. (Bello & Giannotti 2017:69-73). These deities or spirits expose lust and hope, memories of men's first ages, youth and old age, the dead and the living–all of human existence, of their being and becoming (2017:10).

3.2.2.1.   Life cycle and some rites of passage among the Dendi

3.2.2.1.1. *Birth for the Dendi people*

As it is in patrilineal societies, every Dendi person traces his lineage through his paternal side. Every Dendi family has a patriarch who transmits orally the beliefs and customs of the family linkage (Joshua Project 2016; Okatakyie 2017). The Dendi officially follow the birth rites recommended by the Maliki branch of Sunni Islam teachings. The rights of the child are clearly articulated in Sunni Maliki Islam (Al-Azhar University & UNICEF 2005)[46]. These rights, according to Sunni Muslims, include:

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[46] Al-Azhar University. 2005. *Children in Islam: Their care, upbringing and protection*. Al-Azhar University in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Cairo. Professor Ahmad El-Tayyib Head of Al-Azhar University argues that "this book has been able to sum up precisely and honestly Islam's legislation and rules applied to the upbringing and care of children, since the time they are formed in the wombs of their mothers until they reach the age of consent, and are able to shoulder their individual and collective responsibilities" (4).

1   The child's right before conception "to have a lineage and be the product of legitimate wedlock.

2   The child's right to be born without hereditary diseases.

3   The child's right to be welcomed upon his/her birth without discrimination of gender (male or female).

4   The child's right to a name that has an acceptable meaning–a name that is not objectionable, and that does not "cause psychological trauma by drawing ridicule or arousing curiosity and expressions of astonishment from others" (Al-Azhar University & UNICEF 2005:98).

5   The child's right to be breastfed by its mother "in a manner that should satisfy it physically, psychologically and emotionally" (Al-Azhar University & UNICEF 2005:18).

6   The child's right to be trained to perform religious duties.

7   The child's right to equal educational opportunities in a stable and loving environment, etc.

Although not an exhaustive list of children's rights, the selected list provided above helps to understand how Sunni Maliki Islam considers children. Thus, birth traditions among Sunni Maliki Muslims, or the prescribed manners (Sunna) of welcoming newborn baby Muslims include the following:

- **The *adhan***

    When a child is born, the "first tradition, or rite, surrounding the birth of the child, wherever the child is born, in the hospital or at home", is the whispering of the *shahddah* in the form of the *adhan* (the call to prayer uttered by the *muezzin* five times every day) first into the newborn baby's right ear, either by the child's father or the family's *imam* or any religious leader in the local community (Bennett 1994:94; Al

Areefee 2001:95; Campo 2009:12-13). About the *shahddah* and the *adhan* among Sunni

Muslims*,* Bennett and Campo respectively write:

> The adhan begins with the words known as the *takbfr*, 'God is
> Greater' (*Allahu Akbar*), repeated three times, then continues with the
> *shahddah* itself:
>
> I bear witness that there is no God but God,
> I bear witness that there is no God but God,
> I bear witness that Muhammad is the Apostle of God,
> I bear witness that Muhammad is the Apostle of God . . .
> Next, the invitation to pray:
> Come to prayers, come to prayers,
> Come to salvation, come to salvation [or 'come to the good']
> God is Greater, God is Greater. I bear witness that there is no God but
> God. (Bennett 1994:94)
> For Sunni Muslims, the following phrases are chanted (with minor
> variations in the number of repetitions):
> Allahu akbar (repeated four times) "God is great;"
> Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (repeated twice) "I witness that there is
> no god but God";
> Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasul Allah (repeated twice) "I witness
> that Muhammad is the prophet of God";
> Hayya ala s-salah (repeated twice) "Come to prayer;"
> Hayya ala l-falah (repeated twice) "Come to safety and prosperity;"
> As-salatu khayrun min an-nawm (repeated twice) "Prayer is better than
> sleep." (in the morning call to prayer)
> Allahu akbar (repeated twice) "God is great;"
> La ilaha illa Allah "There is no god but God."
> (Campo 2009:12-13)

Bennett (1994:94-95) asserts that the same ritual of whispering the *shahddah*

into the newborn baby's ears is performed in the child's left ear, this time in the form of

iqdmah[47] (the words used at the very beginning of prayer often spoken by the *imam*).

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[47]The practice of *Iqdmah* or *Iqaamah* is questioned as an authentic practiced from the Sunnah (see Yoosuf Ibn Abdullaah Al Areefee. 2001. *Manners of welcoming the newborn child in Islaam*. Birmingham, UK: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam: 31-32.). Al Areefee points out that "perhaps the correct practice - and Allaah knows best–is to give adhaan only, since the authentic hadeeth only refers to the adhaan" (2001:31). Al Areefee argues that the two *hadiths* reported by al-Baihaqee about i*qaamah* being given in the other ear are both weak as Ibnul- tha Qayyim says, and as such cannot be used as proof (2001:32). Al Areefee further points out that the Khaleefah 'Umar ibn 'Abdul Azeez is only reported practicing the adhan (2001:32).

According to Bennett, the *iqdmah* and the *adhan* are identical except that the former adds the words, "Prayers are now ready" (1994:95). Hence, Sunni Maliki Muslims believe that when the newborn child hears the *'Allahu'* of the *takbtr* unpon his or her arrival in this "world, the child becomes as Adam was" (Bennet 1994:95).

- **The *tahneek***

The *tahneek* is a ritual practiced by Sunni Muslims soon after birth. Sunni Maliki Muslims practice the *tahneek* preferably before the infant is fed (Al Areefee 2001:35). Al Areefee points out that 'tahneck' is "chewing[48] a date and then rubbing it upon the palate" (Al Areefee 2001:16; Bennett 2001:96). *Tahneek* can be performed both by the father or the mother of the child or any knowledgeable person whose supplication for blessings for the child could be accepted (Al Areefee 2001:35). According to Al Areefee, a dry or fresh date or anything sweet can be used to perform the *tahneek,* but if a date is used, chewing the date before it's use is not "essential before the tahneek" (2001:35).

- **The *aqiqah***

The *aqiqah* is the ritual sacrifice of "two sheep for a baby boy, and one for a baby girl". The meat is cooked and eaten with joy and festivities of gratitude to Allah by the newborn child's parents, family, friends, and the poor (Al Areefee 2001:52; Bennett 1994:96). Bennett points out that the "two sheep for a boy and one for a girl" is practiced according to inheritance rights in Islam: men receive two shares, women one (Bennett 1994:96). During the *aqiqah* ceremony organized on the seventh day, three

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[48]"Chewing the date before rubbing it in the baby's mouth" is mentioned in the *hadith* due to the blessing placed in the prophet's saliva who performed tahneek that way on a number of his companions' children (Al Areefee. 2001. *Manners of Welcoming the newborn child in Islaam,* 35-36).

other rituals are generally performed: the naming of the newborn child, the shaving of the baby, and the circumcision of the baby boy (Al Areefee 2001:38-74; Bennett 1994:95-96;).

o **Naming of the newborn child**

The naming[49] of a newborn child is an important responsibility for parents in Islam (Al Areefee 2001:38; Bennet 1994:97). Done during the *aqiqah*, the child's name is generally chosen by the parents before that day. "Recommended are the names of prophets" and names "consisting of two parts, the first of which is *abd* (slave) compounded with one of Allah's names are considered beautiful" (Al-Kaysi 1986:131 cited in Bennett 1994:97). Hence, "children should not be burdened with names that may cause embarrassment in later life", and as such, "names suggesting sorrow or war should be avoided" (1994:97). Referring to the naming practices in Islam, Al Areefee argues that:

> Islaam has given particular importance to this matter of naming and has laid down rulings, manners and limits which shows the great importance of names and the profound effect which they will have upon the personality of the child particularly when he is old enough to understand its meaning and what indications it carries. Since names are according to the meaning which they comprehend, the actions and conditions which they indicate inspire the person with strength or weakness, or honour or lowliness, or seriousness or frivolity (Al Areefee 2001:38).

The practice among the Dendi, notes Igué, is to use the Arab-Muslim anthroponomic system based on birth orders, the day or place of delivery, or Quranic verses to name their children (Igué 1998:49 cited in Adjeran 2018:21). This

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[49] See Al Areefee, Yoosuf Ibn Abdullaah. 2001. *Manners of welcoming the newborn child in Islaam.* , Birmingham, UK: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam: 38- 51 for details on scholars' discussion on when to name the child, who names the child, ruling for naming the miscarried fetus and the child dead before birth, prohibited names, and combining names and the *kunyah* of the prophet etc.

identification with Islam and Islamic culture has led the Dendi to abandon their anthroponomic systems and now use the Arab-Muslim anthroponomic classification in naming their children (Adjeran 2018:21).

o **The shaving of the newborn child**

The shaving of the child in the Dendi culture is also done during the *aqiqah* on the seventh day after birth according to Sunni Islam teachings and practices (oral tradition; cf. Al Areefee 2001:76-84; Bennett 1994:96`). Bennett asserts that the shaving of the baby's head is an ancient Arab custom, which symbolizes the cleansing of the baby from impurities and the dedication of the baby as an innocent *abd* (servant/slave), yet untarnished by rebellious thoughts or immoral behavior before God (1994:96). Al Areefee, on the other hand, contends that shaving the newborn baby's hair is part of "prescribed manners of welcoming the newborn child on the seventh day after the birth", on the day when the *aqiqah* is sacrificed (Al Areefee 2001:76). In his argument, Al Areefee points out that the prophet recommended the practice in these terms: "Every child is held in pledge for its Aqeeqah which is sacrificed for him on his seventh day, and he is named on it, and his head is shaved" (Ahmad, Aboo Dawood [E.T. 2/798/No. 2832] cited in Al Areefee 2001:76). Al Areefee further asserts that the shaving of the newborn baby from the prophet's saying is removing harm from the child (2001:76). Because of space some of the theological and ideological aspects of the baby shaving practice in Islam Al Areefee writes intensively[50] about are not discussed here.

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[50] See Al Areefee, Yoosuf Ibn Abdullaah. 2001. *Manners of welcoming the newborn child in Islaam*. Birmingham, UK: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam: 76-84 to see details on scholars' discussion on: *hadiths* on the topics, manners to be observed when shaving the hair, discussions on shaving baby boys and girls, arguments on place of shaving and after shaving, time of giving charity after shaving, and social benefits of charity after shaving, etc.

Dendi oral tradition narrates some syncretic practices surrounding the birth and the shaving of the newborn child. This dual aspect of Dendi life is portrayed in the summary of one of the stories heard related to child birth when living among the Dendi.

The mother of the newborn child receives the shaved hair of her child. The hair is rolled up into tiny balls and mixed with soapy water to make them solid. They are kept with the baby bathing tools and used as part of the baby's cosmetic products. They are placed in one of the child's mother's Jewry boxes near the umbilical cord which was a week earlier placed in a similar box.

After delivery, the placenta is generally placed in a calabash with cotton and a few grains of the plants cultivated in the area around it (grains like corn, rice, millet, sorghum etc.). The placenta and the elements in the calabash are all buried later in the child father's courtyard. The umbilical cord is kept to be used as medicine if the baby gets sick. The umbilical cord is put into water and after the infusion, such water is given to the newborn child to treat illnesses like stomachache.

(Dendi oral tradition).

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o *Circumcision of the newborn baby boy*

The Dendi practice of *Bangoui* (circumcision) or *khitān* (circumcision in Arabic) is similar to the rite most Muslim baby boys go through on the seventh day during the *aqiqah*. Bennett urges that the "Qur'an itself does not refer to circumcision but it does refer to the covenant" between God and Abraham "of which circumcision was the sign in surah 2:83" (1994:97). On this ground, points out Bennett, circumcision may not have any theological rationale but it is justified by many Muslims on health and hygiene grounds (1994:98). However, Bennett notes that Ishmael, Abraham "oldest son, was about thirteen when he was circumcised" (1994:98). Because "Muhammad is believed to be a descendant of Abraham", despite the practice of "an ancient tradition of circumcision in the thirteenth year" existed among the Arabs, Muslims trace their

practice of circumcision to Abraham (1994:98). Generally done during the *aqiqah* on the seventh day, families are allowed to circumcise their sons any time between the *aqiqah* and their thirteenth birthday (1994:98). Al Areefee explores that from the root *khatn* (cut off), *al khitān* (circumcision) could be applied to both boys and girls (Al Areefee 2001:16). But *Khafd*, Al Areefee further explains, is the term used to refer to the female circumcision (2001:16). Nevertheless, female circumcision is today considered as female genital mutilation (FGM)[51] and prosecuted by law in many countries (World Health Organization 2012).

A *taweez* in Arabic is an amulet generally in the form of "a black piece of string with a small pouch containing a prayer, which is tied around the baby's wrist or neck to protect the baby from ill health" or the evil eyes (Gatrad & Sheikh 2001:F6). Al-Suhaymi[52] debates that the root word for *taweez* '*ya'oothu*' means "to seek protection and refuge" (Al-Suhaymi 2017:19). And according to him, the Prophet never referred to amulets as *taweez,* rather, he used the word *tameemah'* in general, and at times, the names of specific types of *taweez*. However, Al-Suhaymi clearly points out that, like *tawakkul*, the practice of wearing or using *taweez* shift the user's trust and hope from Allah to the amulet and that is why the Qur'an and the prophet in the Sunnah prohibited

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[51] "Female genital mutilation (FGM) is internationally recognized as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, reflecting deep rooted inequality between the sexes. Since FGM is almost always carried out on minors, it is also a violation of the rights of children" (see World Health Organization 2012, pdf document "Understanding and addressing violence against women: Female genital mutilation" at: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77428/WHO_RHR_12.41_eng.pdf%202012;jsessionid=854B3E84DEFDE27C10DFAA1F1E6A8B0E?sequence=1)

[52] See Fahd Al-Suhaymi. 2017. *Taweez: Amulets in light of the Quran and Sunnah*. Darul Iman Muslim. In his book Al-Suhaymi gives valuable insights on pro and con of Muslim scholars' positions on *taweez* in general and Quranic *taweez* in particular. But Al-Suhaymi shows clearly that like *tawakkul*, the practice of wearing or using *taweez* shift the user's trust and hope from Allah to the amulet and that is why the Qur'an and the prophet in the Sunnah prohibited the use of any form of *taweez* (32-40, 61-65).

the use of any form of *taweez* (Al-Suhaymi 2017:32-40, 61-65). Others such as Al-Jaraisy 2001 and El-Ansary 2011, like Al-Suhaymi, also recognize the practice of *taweez* among Muslims. But they all agree that prophet Mahammad prohibited their usage because they are considered not permissible. Still others, such as Campo, write:

> Though some Muslim scholars and reformers have criticized the use of amulets and talismans, making and wearing them is a widespread practice in traditional and modern Islamic societies. They are known by various Arabic terms, the most common being hijab, hirz, tawiz, tamima, and tilsam. They can be simple objects, such as a bead, stone, piece of jewelry, relic from a holy place, or a drawing of an unusual animal or supernatural being. They often consist of pieces of paper with the NAMES OF GOD, angels, saints, and JINNIS written on them, or select passages from the QURAN, such as the last two chapters (Q 113 and 114), which are called the "protection- seeking ones," and the Throne Verse (Q 2:256)…More elaborate amulets and talismans combine these elements with drawings of squares containing magic numbers, astrological symbols, and letters. Such magical objects are placed in a cloth bag, leather pouch, or case made of gold or silver and worn on the body. Small copies of the entire Quran are also commonly used as amulets and talismans. People believe that amulets and talismans can help channel the power of blessing (baraka) to protect a child or valuable possessions, obtain a cure from a physical or mental illness, spark a love affair, facilitate conception and childbirth, induce trees to bear fruit, combat the evil eye, cast out evil spirits, or bring harm to an opponent… (Campo 2009:40-41).

The use of *taweez*, which are called '*gour*i' or '*tila Ize*', is popular among the Dendi. Those amulets and talismans are mostly visible when used for children. The Tidjaniyya are known to use them the most. Decalo observes that most Muslims in Benin belong to the Tidjaniyya order (1995:213). However, the researcher met Muslims in Kandi who dissociate themselves from the Tidjaniyya and do not consider them good Muslims. Asante and Mazama defend a similar opinion. They concede that "Sufi orders represent mystical, esoteric versions of Islam that are distinct from Sunni Islam" or the Islam some refer to as "orthodox" Islam (2009:204). They further emphasize:

West African Sufi Islam differs from Sunni Islam in that Sufism is based on a leader/disciple hierarchy. A second feature is the practice of remembrances (dhikr), collective ritual recitation of prayers, which foster group identity. Third, Sufi Islam is distinguished by excessive veneration of walis (awliya), that is, Sufis who are considered to have a special relationship to God. This veneration includes pilgrimages to their burial sites. A fourth feature is the most important in relation to the Dioula[53]. That is to say, West African Sufism is characterized by extreme rivalry between religious groups, and the two dominant Sufi groups are the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya. Usually, these groups stand in opposition to one another, and that opposition is sometimes violent (Asante & Mazama 2009:204).

3.2.2.1.2. *Puberty and marriage for the Dendi people*

For many Dendi children, puberty often marks the time when they take on more spiritual and social responsibilities. In Islam, at puberty, boys are expected to have their first *Jumu'ah* (Friday) prayers in the mosque, their first observance of the fast *(sawm)* during Ramadan, and, "stage by stage, their mastery of qur'anic recitation" (Bennett 1994:99). For Dendi girls, puberty marks the beginning of sexual reproductive capacity, and is therefore intimately linked with fertility and procreation, two major concerns of African religion (Asante & Mazama 2009:546). Among the Dendi, a special ceremony held mostly in villages for girls who have reached puberty is called the '*gossi* virginal ritual' (Bello 2001:22-24). But the ritual is not a virginity test ceremony for girls as the name of the ritual might imply. Rather, the ritual is a complex initiation ceremony for young Dendi girls (Bello 2001:22). According to Bello, there is a Songhai legend which prophesied that any girl of Songhai origin who had not gone through the *gossi* virginal ritual will never have a child, or she will have a physiologically deformed child if she gets pregnant (2001:22). Bello reports that the *gossi* virginal ritual is organized by the *gounou*–a person considered a specialist in *gossi* (2001:22). The *gounou* not only serves as

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[53]The Dyula (also spelled Dioula, Diula, and Jula) are "people of western Africa who speak a Mande language of the Nilo-Congo family". They are found in Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana and Guinea-Bissau and "are chiefly Muslims and have long been noted as commercial traders" (Page & Davis 2005).

master of ceremonies during the *gossi* but also as the person responsible to gather the girls and lead them to the *Sôllô,* an enclosure behind the village built for this purpose (2001:22). Through dance, prayer, litany quotes, and incantations etc., the *gounou* protects and defends the girls at the *gossi* ritual against sorcerers, witches, and evil spirits (2001:22-23). Bello points out that for many Dendi people the *gossi* virginal ritual of initiation for young girls is necessary because it brings hope of life to the initiated girls' families, and to the clan or tribe, so that as women the initiated girls perfect their function of procreation and allow their descendants to acquire in the invisible world "the power to be in all places, at all times, to return to the past, to manage the present or to prospect for the future" (2001:24). Thus, in traditional Dendi culture, marriage can only be talked about after the *gossi* virginal ritual has been performed. This rite of passage was very important in the past because traditionally, the choice of spouses was made by the religious master who consulted the oracles to see if the two future spouses were promised a harmonious cohabitation (Bello 2001:21).

In the 21st century, marriage among the Dendi people is only possible in most cases after the dowry has been accepted by the future bride's family (Akoto, Guingnido & Abutin 1991; Bello 2001; Benon 2020; Tilho 1910). But the dowry, although appreciated currently for a variety of reasons (a strong symbolic gift, a gesture of gratitude on the part of the groom's family, an ancestral practice once essential in the union of couples), retains its prestige and remains a mark of great consideration for the future wife in many African societies (Kpataclo 2012:8; Bayala 2012:34; Djigri 2017:3 cited in Benon 2020:158). Benon elaborates:

> More than a prerequisite, the dowry is of capital and undisputed importance to such an extent that the family of the groom and the bride engaged in this path would be scandalized at the idea of not adhering to this custom…. For the uninitiated, the dowry is a complex and very formal negotiation process between two families to reach a mutual understanding on the price that the

groom will have to pay in order to marry the bride. It can be seen as buying, selling, but there is nothing commercial about this custom. What makes the dowry so important for marriage in Africa is that it remains synonymous with the union of two families. Mutual respect and dignity remain present throughout the process, and the love between man and woman is broadened to include close and large family…. But once the price of the bride or the dowry is fixed, the negotiations are, in principle, over (Benon 2020:158, own translation).

Therefore, before celebrating the marriage, paying the dowry in the Dendi culture is the most important step (Benon 2020:159). The Dendi of Parakou[54] divide the dowry payment into two phases, the first of which is the pre-dowry or the public declaration of interest to the girl and her family. This phase, according to Benon, consists of the sharing of information on the future couple between the two families with the symbolic presentation of cola nuts and a maximum of 5000 FCFA (about $10) (Benon 2020:159). Benon further points out that, after this first phase, the acceptance of the remaining dowry is conditioned by the result of a morality and capacity inquiry into the future bridegroom's family (2020:159). In precolonial Dendi culture (and even currently among some Dendi families), the father of the bride was the most important decider. Generally, he does not welcome the young man favourably until he has obtained his daughter's consent (Tilho 1910:835). However, the father was allowed by Dendi traditions to use all means of persuasion, physical force included, to obtain his daughter's consent if he was already in favour of the young man's proposal and his daughter was not (2020:159). Since then, dowries and marriages are inseparable in the Republic of Benin and among the Dendi (Akoto et al. 1991:314).

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[54]Parakou, the third largest city in Benin in terms of population is one of the northern cities like Karimama, Malanville, Kandi, and Djougou, where the Dendi are mostly located. Although the Dendi in Parakou do not live in the determined geographic zone of the research, they historically migrated from the study area (Aboudou et al. 2003; De Sardan 2000).

Nevertheless, with the Dendi being heavily influenced by Islam, Islamic factors are expected to play important roles in their marriage practices. Dowry payments and others are regulated by Islamic laws. Thus, some Dendi not only consider the prophet's statement, "the best marriage is the easiest", but also that Islam "religious law has come to lighten the dowry and facilitate it, considering the interests of the future couple" (Sheikh, 2018 cited in Benon 2020:159). Therefore, because Sunni Islam teaches that marriage is expected for all Muslims and sex should only take place within marriage (Al-Haj 2015:61; Kausar 1999), Sunni Muslims do not expect any individual to take a vow of celibacy (Campo 2009:65). The prophet rejected and forbade the practice among his followers (Sunan ibn Mâjah Vol 3:1847, 1848; Sahih Muslim Bk 8: Number 3239). Prophet Muhammad said, "when a worshipper of God marries, he perfects half of his religion" (Robinson 1991:43 cited in Bennett 1994:103). But, forced marriages are not acceptable in the Qur'an and the *hadiths* (Qur'an 4:19; Ahmad, Hadith no. 2469). That is why a marriage contract is only valid for Sunni Muslim marriages when two men or "one man and two women" are witnesses (Bennet 1994:102).

Marriage for the Dendi could be monogamous or polygamous under strict rules of consanguinity (Qur'an 4:22-25 cited in Bennet 1994:101). The Qur'an allows a man to practice polygamy with the possibility of having up to four wives, provided that he can treat all four wives with equality in care and love (Qur'an 4:3). Still, most Dendi "men have only one wife due to economic reasons" (Joshua Project 2016). The repudiation of one's wife, borrowed from Islamic traditions, did not exist in Dendi culture and is still not welcomed among the Dendi people (Bello 2001:21). Hence, as part of those social and traditional practices, "Dendi nobles'

firstborn sons are pressured to marry their paternal uncle's daughter in order to maintain the

purity of the lineage" (Tilho 1910)–a type of endogamy[55] practiced in Arab Muslim societies.[56]

3.2.2.1.3.   *Death and afterlife for the Dendi*

Sunni "Muslims believe in life after death, the resurrection of the body, and a Day of

Reckoning" or Day of Judgment (Bennett 1994:106). These "extended doctrinal creeds bear

witness" to Muslims' deeply held convictions about the afterlife. For the Dendi, as for most

Muslims, death, as birth and the resurrection, rests in the hands of God (Surah 6:2; 30:40; 40:68;

Bennett 1994:107). Nasr (2008:32) writes that the emphasis and powerful eschatological

language of the last chapters of the Qur'an leave permanent imprints "on the minds and hearts

of all Muslims". According to Nasr, the everyday lives of Muslims are "intertwined with the

reality of death, the importance of remembering death at all times, and realizing that one's life

span is short in this world" (2008:32). As such, Muslims are aware of the subsequent "states

that the individual soul must" go through after death (Nasr 2008:32; 2006:180-181). These

theological considerations of death are ritualized in funerals. According to Campo (2009:250),

funerary rituals not only dispose of the dead but they also "provide the living with the

mechanism to alleviate their deep emotional feelings due to the loss of a loved one". Hence,

Campo argues that funerary rituals "are occasions when a society's beliefs about life and death

and the sacred and profane are most visible and when the bonds that hold people together as

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[55] Endogamy is marrying within one's own group or a certain group in opposition to exogamy which is marrying outside one's own group. These are two rules with the former restricting the choice of a marriage partner, and the latter which strongly encourages "the selection of certain people as highly desirable mates" (Ferraro & Andreatta. 2010, 2008. *Cultural anthropology: An applied perspective*. (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth: 212; Ember & Ember. 2015. *Cultural anthropology*. (14th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Pearson Education: 245.

[56] Some Muslim societies prefer parallel cousins' marriage (children of siblings of the same sex). But most first-cousin marriages are generally between cross-cousins who are children of siblings of the opposite sex (Ember & Ember. 2015. *Cultural anthropology*. (14th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Pearson Education, 246-247.

families and communities are affirmed and tested" (2009:250). Campo further points out that for Muslims, "*Fiqh* literature composed by experts in Islamic law (based on interpretations of" the Qur'an, the "Hadith, and the consensus of the Ulama)", sets formal funerary ritual "requirements and taboos for Muslims to observe" (2009:250). Campo lists these formal requirements and taboos as:

1   pronouncing the testimony of faith (*shahada*) prior to death and turning the dying person's face toward Mecca;

2   ritually washing and shrouding the corpse;

3   performing funeral prayers;

4   conducting the body to the cemetery;

5   burial of the corpse on its right side, with the face turned to mecca;

6   mourning; and

7   visiting the grave (Campo 2009:251; Bennett 1994:108-109).

In Muslims' local customs (a mixture of orthodox Islam religious traditions, and local cultural practices etc.), the funeral rite *(janazah)* begins with the funeral prayers at the mosque or elsewhere, after one of the canonical *salah* prayers is offered (Bennett 1994:108). Because "walking is recommended (unless the distance is too far)", relatives and friends walk to accompany the body or the coffin while reciting the *shahddah* en route (1994:108). Before the funeral commences, mourners recite the prayer known as the *Subhan* (1994:108). Bennett's additional insights suggest that Muslims are traditionally and preferably buried before sundown on the day they die (1994:108). According to Bennett, while Muslims are not supposed to be cremated, the cleansing of the corpse is expected immediately after death (1994:108). This cleansing is done by same sex relatives or friends of the deceased. They undress the corpse and wash it ritually, beginning with the right side and repeating the ritual cleansing three to five times–always an odd number of times (Bennett 1994:108). This ritual cleansing (making the

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body as clean as the soul for resurrection), known as *ghusl,* asserts Bennett, always precedes *salah.* But before the body is placed in the coffin or the tomb on the right side (so that when buried the face will lie in the direction of the *qiblah* (Makkah)), four general practices are carried out when possible:

1   bodily orifices are stopped with cotton wool;
2   a deceased female's hair is "plaited and placed behind her back";
3   the corpse is "perfumed with camphor"; and
4   a "white cloth is placed over the corpse" from head to toe (Bennett 1994:108).

Campos describes what happens next in these terms:

> The body is placed in the grave without a coffin, and extra room is left in the grave out of a belief that the deceased will be compelled to sit up and undergo an interrogation by two angels of death known as Munkar and Nakir. To prepare the dead for this interrogation, basic articles of faith are recited at the time of burial. This is called the talqin. People usually take turns throwing dirt into the grave, and they pronounce prayers on behalf of the deceased, especially the verse "From it [the earth] we created you, then we put you back into it, and from it we will bring you forth again" (Q 20:55). Other funerary prayers include the Fatiha (Q 1) and the chapter "Ya Sin" (Q 36) of the Quran as well as supplications drawn from the hadith and other religious texts. Once the grave is filled, it is leveled. The ulama have strongly disapproved of decorating the grave site or erecting a building over it. Nonetheless, many Muslim cemeteries have gravestones, mausoleums, mosques, and saint shrines. Indeed, some of the most impressive examples of Islamicate art and architecture are connected with housing and memorializing the dead (Campo 2009:251).

Similar to their newer Sunni Maliki Islamic faith, the Dendi traditional belief does not see physical death as the end of life, but as the transition from human physical life to spiritual life (Tilho 1910:840). In African societies, life and death are so closely linked that one cannot be conceived of without the other (Giddens 2006:26). Africans view the family connections continuing after death (Page & Davis 2005:85). In this form of security, the deceased looked

after the welfare of the living members who endeavor to provide the necessary offerings for the ancestors (2005:85). Before the influence of Islam in Dendi culture, animist priests were involved in mourning rituals. The animist priest who carried out the mourning and widowhood ceremonies received gifts such as cola nuts, porridge, a little money, some objects in kind, such as shoes, cups, bowls etc. that belonged to the deceased (Bello 2001:25). Conversely, this practice is now being prohibited with the dominant influence of Islam culture (2001:25). But the Dendi are so syncretistic and heavily influenced by their traditional religion that Gosselain and Smolderen, for instance, state the Dendi religion as an Islam tinged with animism[57] or an animism covered with professed Islam (2013:5). Thus, Islam has succeeded in making the Dendi bury their dead the same day in accordance with Islamic prescription, and forbidden the mourning of the dead for days before they are buried, as the Dendi did before the arrival of Islam (Bierschenk & De Sardan 1998:107). Nevertheless, for the Dendi, the dead are always present. The Dendi believe that the dead are reborn as children sent by the gods with a specific mission for their family or the community, generally to guide and help (Bello & Giannotti 2017:158). In the past, notables of the Dendi society were buried in their private huts (Tilho 1910:840). This practice carries the belief that the spirit of the deceased person will continue to live in a familiar environment (1910:840).

The Dendi inherited the worship of many gods, goddesses, and objects, with a special reverence to their ancestors from their Songhay forefathers (Adeleke 1996:28). The Songhay, as many other African societies, believed in communication between the dead and the living

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[57] It was E.B. Tylor who, toward the end of the 19th century, coined the word 'animism' from the Latin world *anima* (soul) while trying to understand the differences between European and African and South American worldviews (2013:64). Tylor's conclusion was obvious: Africans and South Americans where animists and spiritualistic while Europeans were 'naturalists' and materialistic (2013:64).

(1996:28). They believed that their ancestors helped them communicate and live in harmony with nature and the many sprits and gods in order to have peace, stability, good health, and prosperity (1996:28). But, in addition to the veneration of their ancestors, the Songhay consulted diviners and spiritualists who also helped them in to achieve the harmony they desired by interpreting spiritual forces (1996:28). In West Africa, as in many other African cultures, belief in the rebirth or return of human souls or persons to live again in some form after death (reincarnation) is one of the oldest and most widespread beliefs (Mbiti 1969:110, 195, 215; 1975:119-120; Taliaferro & Marty 2010:195). The process of development from birth to death, and from death "to becoming ancestors or entering some sort of life after death", has often been extended into spheres where "supernatural powers are often invoked to give authority or protection to those undergoing these changes" (Holm & Bowker 1994:1).

Referring to the spiritual and supernatural role of ancestors in the afterlife in the Dendi traditional belief, Bello and Giannotti (2017:67-68) assert that three entities are believed to merge during spirit-summoning rituals when the music of the spirits is played: the physical body of the person who will serve as medium for the spirits; the *foley*, spirit clothed with its attributes, intermediary between men and the divine; and the *Dan Kama Honidjé*, the ancestor who becomes a particle of divine light who has agreed to come and help his people again. According to Bello and Giannotti, the role of the ancestor is so capital that, during any divination through trance, the body in trance exhibits a particle of divine light, which is believed to be the manifestation of the ancestors (2017:67). Consequently, death and the afterlife are so intertwined for the Dendi that, as mentioned earlier, every Dendi traditional ceremony begins with the song of *Dandou Hourou Fama*, the first spirit in the long list of spirits in the Dendi pantheon to have taken possession of a human body (Bello & Giannotti 2017:61). For most

Dendi, who have this dominant traditional worldview even though they are 99% professed Muslims, the possibility of hearing voices of the worlds beyond and below, to communicate with the dead in the invisible world, to heal and see the future given to the *zimas*, is a cultural heritage available for use in times of need.

3.2.2.2.   Dealing with misfortune and the unknown for the Dendi

Why do evil and misfortune, such as accidents, illnesses, and "bad things, happen to good people?" "What caused a particular person or possession to suffer harm" at a certain time and at a certain place? Why are others "nearby in a similar situation unaffected?" In this section, two of the four questions that folk religion tries to answer are combined, namely How do people try to get a good life, and how do they deal with misfortune?, and the second, How do people seek to discern the unknown in order to plan their lives? (Hiebert et al. 1999:94). The researcher believes the two questions are very interdependent. Adversities make life miserable. Finding a way to avoid misfortune of all kind before it arrives is being able to prevent or influence the future yet to come–the unknown. As mentioned above, most Dendi believe that their ancestors help them live in harmony with nature and the many spirits and gods, in order to have peace, stability, good health, and prosperity (Adeleke 1996:28; Bello 2001). In contrast to this folk Islam belief**,** conservative Muslims (who adhere to the orthodox Islam belief system) believe that God is ultimately the one who determines when good or evil happens (see points on predestination addressed earlier). Any other belief could be considered as irrational superstition or animistic belief (Campo 2009:220-221). The Qur'an reminds Muslims that "there is no possibility of peace on earth without peace with God". Surah 48:4-5 for instance states:

> It is He Who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the Believers, that they
> may add faith to their faith;–for to Allah belong the Forces of the heavens and

the earth; and Allah is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom. That He may admit the men and women who believe, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein for aye, and remove their ills from them–and that is, in the sight of Allah, the highest achievement (for man) (Surah 48:4-5).

Rūmī Mathnawī, commenting on the Surah, warns Muslims in these terms: "If thou fleest with the hope of peace and comfort, from that side thou shalt be afflicted with misfortune. There is no treasure without wild beasts and traps, there is no peace except in the spiritual retreat of God" (Rūmī, Mathnawī II, v. 593 cited in Nasr 2002:221-222). So, the Qur'an points Muslims to God as their only source of peace, and without Him "there can be no peace on earth" whether one speaks of *sakīnah, pacem* or *shanti* (Nasr 2002:2021-2022). Hence, orthodox Islam asks Muslims to turn to God in times of crises, when facing the evil of envious people or even of nature (Surah 9:51; 113:1-5). Surah 114:1-6 reveals:

> Say: I seek refuge with the Lord and Cherisher of Mankind. The King (or Ruler) of Mankind. The Allah (for judge) of Mankind. From the mischief of the Whisperer (of Evil), who withdraws (after his whisper), (The same) who whispers into the hearts of Mankind. Among Jinn and among men (Surah 114:1-6).

Nonetheless, when misfortunes, such as droughts, strange storms, depleted soil, ruined crops, sudden death, mysterious sickness, and folly arise, many ordinary Muslims seek apotropaic powers in regard to their illness and misfortune (Campo 2009:220-221). The Dendi often go to *zimas* or other diviners (Bello 2001; Bello & Giannotti 2017). For the Dendi and other people with power-oriented worldviews, finding the cause of an affliction allows them to exercise control and take preventative measures or steps to deflect the evil or the misfortune, or at least minimize its effect over otherwise unpredictable events, even if the painful events cannot be completely eliminated (Campo 2009:220). The interpretation of misfortunes is crucial to "the reinforcement of family and community identity", and the peaceful continuance of family life.

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Diviners come with a range of special knowledge, from a thorough basis "in names, signs, and figures, along with their interpretative counterparts, such as proverbs, parables, or symbolic riddles, casting down and 'reading' of various objects, such as cowrie shells, divination stones, or gourds", numbers, palms reading, or reading signs in water etc. (Page & Davis 2005:73-74). In the domain of healing, divination could work like preventive medicine, because "foretelling impending illnesses and diagnosing their underlying causes" provides the sick person and his or her family with a sense of progress in the healing process of the ill person (2005:74). However, Africans generally consult diviners for information of what kind of offerings to give to the gods and what rituals the individuals or villages have to perform to hear revelation from the spirit world (Adeleke 1996:28-29; Giddens 2006:39-40).

Today, the Dendi still have a good number of traditional healers, even though Muslim preachers and holy men (marabouts) from Niger destroyed altars of the traditional cults in many Dendi villages in the 1950s (Bello 2001:31). Among those still active, Bello lists eight main traditional therapists–power persons (Love 2000:24)–generally recognized among the Dendi:

1. The real *zimas* who belong to the *Baani Zumbu Kabu Ize* cult (the possession worship troop which use dance and possession for therapy).
2. The *sorkos* who are specialized in ORL problems (Otorhinolaryngology or illnesses of the head and the neck)–the *sorkos* make incantations for major spirits, in particular that of lightning.
3. The *zam* or blacksmiths who treat burns.
4. The *touri kako* who master remedy by plants–herbalists.
5. The *gounous* who perform circumcisions and scarifications.
6. The *wanzam* or hairdressers who put on suction cups.
7. The 'binders', beaders from father to son or from mother to daughter.

8   The *mo ka bey* or the 'makers of recipes', who treat after acquiring the knowledge to treat after having been themselves treated for a long time for a given disease (Bello 2001:31).

The *marabout* or *alfa* who uses Qur'anic verses and other Islamic insights from the Qur'an and the *hadith* are counterpart traditional healers from folk Islam. But, as Bello points out, the *marabout* or *alfa* is a traditional Islamized therapist who, depending on the case, uses practices more or less syncretic between the traditional techniques of pre-Islamic care and techniques of folk Islam covered by Koranic sciences (2001:32). Generally visited in the evening, an *alfa* or a *marabout* uses a family-oriented approach to deal with misfortune of individual health or in family life (2001:32). Bello also lists four kinds of marabouts (folk Islam therapists and healers) among the Dendi:

1   The *alpha* who come first in numbers. Their therapy revolves around Qur'anic verses which are written on wooden tablets. The patient washes the verses, collects the ink water in a calabash and then drinks it or baths with it to purify himself or herself.
2   The *alpha zima* who are both priests of the possession cult and marabouts.
3   The *sheik*, rare masters of Islam who only use prayers to cure their patients.
4   The *Dan Faraïze* which means in Haoussa 'fake marabouts' who use magic to deceive their victims (Bello 2001:32).

According Hiebert et al., an explanation system is necessary in every culture in order to deal with misfortune or adversity (1999:141). They give an example of what the main components of the explanation system could be (see T**Error! Reference source not found.**2).

Table 12: Explanation system characteristics
(source Hiebert et al. 1999:141)

1	2	3	4	5
ADVERSITY	Choose a belief system to explain it	Diagnose the cause using this system	Select a remedy and apply it	NEED SATISFIED

Table 13: 3 describes a Dendi etiology of illnesses and diseases and the traditional explanation system used by the Dendi people (Bello 2001:31-33). Only organic explanations and remedies of misfortune are presented. Mechanical explanations and remedies for misfortune, such as fate, astrology, bad luck, pollution, object intrusion or violation of a taboo etc., are left out because of space and time.

Table 13: Dendi traditional etiology of illnesses and diseases

DIVINE DISEASES	DISEASES BY SPIRITS	COMMON ILLNESSES
Ikwe waadu no or 'divine will and punishment' These are diseases intentionally sent by God on a community who broke his laws.	*Gandji doori no* or 'diseases by spirits' Disease caused by the bad spirits such as chronic or slowly evolving illnesses involving bewitchment, spellcasting or poisoning (witchcraft and sorcery).	*Doori kwaarey no* or 'a white disease' or 'an ordinary disease' A natural disease that can reach anyone and does not call for any particular attention.
ACTIONS OR REMEDIES		
Prayer is the only curative way. There is no prevention. Marabouts can totally avert the misfortune through *awé gnharé*, therapeutic prayers performed by patients.	Individual or community organized rituals with *zimas*, *sorkos*, *zam*, *touri kako*, *gounous*, *wanzam*, *binders, mo ka bey, marabout, alpha, alpha zima* or *sheik*. Divination is sought to find the appropriate remedy.	Hospital or clinic or any western medical centre could help. Local specialist of natural therapies (herbalist) could help as well.

Some of the healers mentioned above are diviners who master different systems of divination (Bello 2001:45-46): oneiric methods; dream therapies (this includes therapist and patient's dreams); geomancy (only therapy that has a cost and that is done with the patient's agreement); transference objects (cowrie shells, leather, wood arranged in bulk, etc.); and the papyrus-like bark/charcoal technique (this is the most sophisticated technique, reserved for the great master healers). But the ability to divine and know the future and reveal the unknown may occur sooner as a result of spirt possession or adorcism (Page & Davis 2005:73-74). This is the case for most *zimas* who are priests in possession cults or *Foley Fori*, a popular cult and ritual among the Dendi (Bello 2001; Bello & Giannotti 2017).

Zimas are important in Dendi communities. They are known to address adversities of any kind and keep the individual or the community in harmonious balance. Unfortunately, space and time will not allow discussing the specific types of adversity the *zima* specialize in, but they include adversities, such as untimely birth and death; natural calamities; failures; wars and raids; etc. Bello describes the responsibility of a *zima* in these terms:

> Being a zima is a social duty, a heavy mission that is impossible to escape. It is a dive into a world of torments between trance and possession, a succession of journeys to the world of the dead without certainty to come back and reintegrate that of the living. To be a zima is to be able to master the divinatory power (Bello & Giannotti 2017:51; own translation).

Thus, whether misfortune stemmed from neglect of ancestral spirits, or offense against God or other spirits, the *zimas* are trained for many years (seven in general) to address each case of misfortune and peer into the unknown. Their bodies are usually the vessels that the *foley* (spirit) uses to speak to individuals or the group during trance. But the *zima,* as the priest of the *foley* worship, knows that anybody could become a chosen vessel for the *foley* and become an intermediary between the visible and the invisible (Bello & Giannotti 2017:68). This

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challenging truth and reality make the *zimas* recognize that a spirit, even though in a covenant with a human, can decide to leave a former vessel any time and choose a new vessel of communication. This principle of spirit independence[58] forces the *zima* and all true healers and diviners to remain humble and know that they are nothing while the spirit is everything (Bello 2001:45). According to Bello, in the Dendi traditional belief system, every human being is made up of three elements: *Gaham* (his physical body)*; Biya* (his soul, his conscience); and *Diya* (his vital energy, his divine breath) which animates and gives life (Bello 2001:68). This explains why a *foley* could use anybody found spiritually superior during a trance ceremony that day to become a vessel of the gods to reveal the unknown rather than using a recognized *zima* with strong links to the spirit world.

3.2.2.3.   Dendi people and moral order, disorder and sin

As it is in much of the world, the Dendi believe that religion has much to do with questions of moral order, right and wrong, righteousness and sin in everyday life (Bello 2001:16; Benon 2020:158, 160; Bierschenk & De Sardan 1998). It was pointed out earlier that most Dendi people believe that their ancestors look after them. As such, elders and ancestors are responsible for the maintenance of moral order and the moral behaviour of the individual, the family, the clan and the entire society (Bello 2001, 2005; Bello & Giannotti 2017:111, 157-158; cf. Hiebert et al. 1999:200-2001).

Bello's allusion to the "curse of the maternal milk" in African societies, when children fail to morally and socially honour their parents and particularly their mother, is an unacceptable behaviour that is severely punished by ancestors, gods or other beings. As the parent who carried

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[58] This notion of spirit independence contradicts the widespread notion of spirit manipulation often attributed to folk religionists or animists in Western literature in general and Western mission books in particular.

them for nine months in her womb and who breastfed them for many months, there is not only a psychosocial dynamic of pregnancy and breastfeeding, but also an experienced intimacy, joy, trust, and closeness of the mother with her infant. With this view, the child is expected to reciprocate to his/her mother what she has given him or her in his or her life. The Bible see this as the first manward duty in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:6, 7; Eph. 6:1–3; Colos. 3:20). So, based on this Judeo-Christian perspective, respect begins with the attitude of children towards their parents, which becomes the basis for respect and obedience the child owed to fellow humans and citizens and to those who are legitimately placed in authority over him or her throughout life (Matt. 22:34–40; Rom. 13:1–7; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 2:13–18). So, when the child does not display such moral and social accountably and support, particularly toward his mother, Bello asserts that such a mother has a God-given power to curse a wayward child who brings upon her only shame and disgrace rather than joy (Bello 2005:66-69). A summary of Bello's narrative reads:

> **"The curse of the maternal milk"**
> In a conflict between a mother and her child, the wise men meet to ask the mother not to get angry with her child or curse the child because this will harm him or her. There are several kinds of curses.
>
> (1) In the first case, the mother grumbles her anger towards her child, inaudibly with bad intentions, without anyone hearing her.
> (2) A more serious curse is when the mother openly and verbally utters bad words, heard by others against her child.
> (3) Finally, the worst thing a mother can do, is to hold her breast and say to her child: "If it is true that it is the milk of this breast that you suckled, you will pay for the act you did."
>
> In the last two cases, the child must ask for forgiveness from his mother by prostrating himself before her in the presence of an old woman who also prostrates herself to ward off the act (*mé ka yam*, literally to remove the mouth). The most perilous and irrevocable curse is when the mother in extreme anger curses her child while naked and showing her nudity to her child. If this happens, the curse is final and there is nothing anyone can do.
>
> (Bello 2005:66; own translation)

From Bello's illustration, one understands that the fear of sanctions or punishment of the wayward by ancestors, gods, or other beings serves as a powerful force in maintaining moral standards in family life (Hiebert et al. 1999:121, 197). In this view, sin or any moral and social transgression, offenses, or obligations not met, not only break human relationships–they violate the cosmic order created by God and bring sickness, adversity, and curses (Bello 2001:31-33; Bello 2005 66-69; Bello & Giannotti 2017:87, 158; cf. Hiebert et al. 1999:201).

As presented above, folk Islam beliefs and practices are syncretistic. Nevertheless, folk religionists "rarely see themselves as syncretists" (Love 2000:22). Love observes folk Muslims, such as the Dendi people, "view themselves as genuine Muslims. From their perspective, no conflict exists between their popular religion and its more orthodox variety" (2000:22). Hence, Samuel Zwemner, the well-known missionary to Muslims, rightly stated: "Islam and Animism live, in very neighborly fashion, on the same street and in the same mind." (Zwemner 1920:207 cited in Love 2000:22). The table below is an adaptation of Love's comparison of formal and folk Islam.

Table 14: A comparison of formal and folk Islam
(adapted from Love 2000:22, 24)

Religious characteristics	Formal Islam	Folk Islam
Focus, fear, needs & morality	Faithfulness in beliefs and practices in the teachings of the prophets, in the Qur'an and *hadiths*.	Protection against evil eye, spell; cure of illness, protective power, blessings (*baraka*), etc.
Questions	How to be a good Muslim?	How to be successful and avoid harm?
Language	Arabic	Arabic and Local language
Institutions	Mosque and Madrassa	Sacred forests or rivers, shrines (Saints' tombs), etc.

Authorities	Scholars and *Imams* with Islamic knowledge	Power persons
Symbols	The crescent and the start	Power places, power objects (hand of Fatima, amulets, tattoos, etc..)
Methods	Cognitive, truth-oriented Legalistic, dogmatic, structural	Mystical, ritualistic, liberal (controlling/manipulative)
Spiritual channels	Spiritual revelation, dreams & visions, *ruqyah*	Inspirational. Chanting, mystical music. Prayers and incantations using the Qur'an
Teachings	Ultimate issues of life: origins, heaven hell, purpose Sacred Traditions	Heart-felt, emotional Everyday concerns health, guidance, success, prosperity
Main power persons	Imams. Islamic practitioners who function like priests. They lead congregational prayers. They preserve and explain the Qur'an, the Sunnah. They fast in an attitude of supplication to approach the spiritual.	*zimas*, *sorkos*, *zam*, *touri kako*, *gounous*, *wanzam*, 'binders', *mo ka bey*, 'marabout', 'alpha', 'alpha zima' or *sheik* (The Dendi traditional religious priests).
Rituals	Life cycle/rites of passage Birth The *adhan* The *tahneek* The *aqiqah* Marriage Funerals	*Gossi* virginal ritual' *Baani Zumbu Kabu Ize* (the possession cult, worship for therapy) *Genji bi hori* (black spirits cult, worship) *Yenaandi* (rain dance in the dry season)

3.3.   Hiebert and colleagues' views on shared beliefs: A critical examination

The general context of Hiebert et al.'s assertation, that "without shared beliefs, communication and community life are impossible" (1999:36), is that there is unity and focus of purpose in the community when people's beliefs are communal, conjoint or homogeneous (1999:36). Hiebert and his colleagues point to three religions as examples: Christianity, Hinduism, and African Traditional Religion (ATR). In ATR, they point to the common beliefs

of the Tiv of Nigeria–God, ancestors, spirits (good and bad), life force, and witches, which are considered responsible for many diseases. In Christianity, communal beliefs include God, angels, demons, sin, and salvation; and in Hinduism, common beliefs include "*devas* [gods], *rakshasas* [demons], *karma* [the cosmic law of good and evil that punishes and rewards gods, humans, and animals, and determines their future lives], *samsara* [the cycle of rebirths], and *moksha* [salvation]" (1999:36).

For these three authors, shared beliefs are expressed in people's experiences, assumptions, and logics (1999:36). According to them these beliefs constitute the cognitive dimension of religion and they are considered true in an ultimate sense and embedded in people's worldview (1999:36, 80). As thoughts and reasoning, the three authors contend, these deep religious beliefs and knowledge constitute the "unalterable shape of reality and the real conditions of life" for people (1999:80). Thus, building on these general facts of established causality between shared religious beliefs and right order in society, Hiebert and his colleagues assert that shared beliefs are very important, because they are comparable to a common language, agreed-upon ways of relating, and a common worldview without which relationships, communication, and community life are impossible (1999:36, 284). Therefore, they defend that shared beliefs and their associated cultural rules are the basis for religious life (1999:283-285). They further argue that shared beliefs work like social systems essential to pass religious beliefs and practices on to the next generation (1999:43).

The researcher agrees with Hiebert et al. that shared beliefs, shared myths, shared rituals, shared doctrines, and ethical teaching in religion tie a group of people as tightly as the word religion in Latin, *religare,* implies (Partridge & Dowley 2013:518; cf. Hiebert et al. 1999:36-37, 43, 283-284). As a matter of fact, there is an obvious relationship between public peace,

social hope, life satisfaction, spiritual harmony, moral and political values, community life structure, and a group's common emotional attachment to shared symbols and shared beliefs (Cooper 1975; Ladd 2007; Sailer et al. 2012). George Thomas concurs when he asserts that "religious beliefs and practices in world society take the form of explicit collective action that engages global rationalism" (Thomas 2007:35). Furthermore, shared religious beliefs or communitarian spirituality organized along the lines of shared skills or training and interests are fostered by a shared history and a shared way of life of a group of people (Saville-Troike 2003:64). According to Deer, these shared beliefs, or what Pierre Bourdieu calls conceptualized *doxa*[59], are unquestioned most of the time by the people who share them (Deer 2008:120). Thus, such groups have some practical reasonings "based on their own vision and experience of the world" (Bourdieu 1990c cited in Deer 2008:120).

However, the researcher contends that homogeneity of belief and praxis cannot be considered as prerequisites for communication and community life. The contention is that Hiebert et al.'s assumption with shared beliefs does not consider communication and community life in the context of divergent beliefs. Their assumption implies that communication and community life are not possible among people with controversial beliefs on some aspects of their cultural and religious expressions. Such an assumption is currently challenged and it is not even accurate to think it was an acceptable understanding of the way communication and community life existed in the past–in the past, religious beliefs were

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[59]"Doxa", according to Cécile Deer, refers in modern societies to "pre-reflexive intuitive knowledge shaped by experience, to unconscious inherited physical and relational predispositions" (Deer, C. (2008). Doxa. In Grenfell, M.J. (ed.). *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts*. Durham: Acumen: 119–130). Deer points out that Bourdieu first used the term Doxa in his description and explanation of "natural" "practice and attitudes in traditional societies from a phenomenological perspective" (Bourdieu 1977b cited in Deer 2008:120).

qualified by some early scholars of religious studies who seize and despise other religions as primitive, lowly, backwards, and/or distasteful tribal forms of religion among 'uncivilized' peoples (Bowman & Valk 2012; Maduro 2007; Phoebus & Octopus 1975; Skreslet 2012). Such view led some to think that traditional societies had less complex communal beliefs (Bowman & Valk 2012:2). According to Bowman and Valk, this understanding of foreign religions is wrong. Vásquez argues that, as the present is overwhelmingly characterized by complexity, connectivity, and fluidity, so were beliefs in previous societies (Vásquez 2008:151 cited in Bowman & Valk 2012:2). Hence, Bowman and Valk point out that "the ways in which people have expressed, maintained, articulated and negotiated beliefs in the past lack neither complexity nor fluidity" (2012:1-2). For many authors (Knuuttila 2012; Leete & Lipin 2012; Sepp 2012; Valk 2012;), belief narratives and practices do not only maintain social coherence, they also define the borders between ingroup and outgroup behaviour and negotiate individuals' identities and belongings (Bowman & Valk 2012:14). This individual religious identity or "religious pluralism in a local and global perspective" is the standard for many societies as a common responsibility to respect religious feelings (Riis 2007:435). Thomas (2007:36), for instance, argues that "one need not assume integration, homogeneity, or strong binds to interpret diversity as being within one whole thing."

This important contribution of the individual voice in community communication and community life is not emphasized enough in Hiebert et al.'s assumption on shared beliefs. Although they recognize this fact when they state that "sociocultural anthropologists take beliefs and activities seriously, but often lose sight of the uniqueness of each individual in a society" (1999:32), they fail to contrast this important aspect of community communication in their assertion mentioned above. Although the voices of tradition and the community have always

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been mixed with individual voices, instead of being univocal, shared beliefs are always ambivalent, dialogic, and polyphonic (Bowman & Valk 2012:7). Valk points out that, in contemporary societies, narratives about the supernatural evoke different attitudes and disagreements (Bowman & Valk 2012:14; Valk 2012). Thus, discussing belief and disbelief becomes a concomitant part of transmitting shared beliefs such as legends for instance (Valk 2012:14). As such, argues Valk, disbelievers have a crucial role in repeating beliefs and upholding the supernatural traditions in contemporary society, as expressions of disbelief are like "an ectoplasmic fluidum, emanating from the living generic body of beliefs" (Valk 2012:361, 364-365; Bowman & Valk 2012:14). Hence, Valk asserts that "disbelief is nothing more than a shadow of its dominant 'other'–the discourse of belief" (Valk 2012:365). Consequently, individuals' beliefs and communities' shared beliefs play an active role in creating and upholding traditions of belief (Bowman & Valk 2012:10). Therefore, to talk about a religious culture with dominant beliefs or community mentality would be more appropriate in most cultures today, and even in those of past centuries, than to talk about homogeneous beliefs (Bowman & Valk 2012:373-374). McGuire contends that Medieval Christianity was not a unified homogeneous entity but had some broad outlines of commonality (2007:61). He points out that "there were enormous differences from one part of Europe to another, and often from a community in one valley to the next valley" (McGuire 2007:61).

Conclusively–communication and community life are possible without shared beliefs. Even though diversity is not an unalloyed good, it "is both a fact of life and a value" (Fukuyama 2018:127). Hoppe asserts that human cooperation is the result of the natural diversity of people (2001:77). According to Hoppe, "man's natural biological attractions and repulsions for and against one another are transformed into a mutually recognized system" in an increasingly

diversified and differentiated world that leads to improved standards of living (Rothbard 2000 cited in Hoppe 2001:175). Thus, exposure to different ways of thinking and acting often stimulates innovation and creativity (Fukuyama 2018).

3.4.   Conclusion

This chapter described the Dendi folk religion phenomenologically without passing any judgement on its mixed and bewildering collection of rites, celebrations, beliefs, practitioners, music, and processions. According to Hiebert et al., a phenomenological study of folk religion should be the first step in a biblical response to popular religiosity (1999:31). As exposed above, the Dendi belief system is a syncretistic fusion of Sunni Maliki Islam beliefs and practices with Tidjaniyya Sufism and Songhay African Traditional Religion (ATR). This syncretistic Islam or folk[60] Islam is at the core of the Dendi culture and touches every area of the people's lives.

This chapter explained that, culturally and socially, the Dendi religion has its own internal logic, with a few visible facets in public and modern towns, but many hidden practices in private life. However, as related in many instances, Dendi villages are known for their open observances of traditional rites and festivals despite critics and pressure from Dendi elites and Islam leaders to promote a more orthodox practice of Islam (Bello 2001:31). Thus, the Dendi's practice of Islam is still heavily influenced by their pre-Islamic Songhay traditional religion (Bierschenk & De Sardan 1998:107; Gosselain & Smolderen 2013:5, 109; Joshua Project 20016; Page & Davis 2005:117).

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[60]The researcher means by 'folk' here 'common', 'popular' Islam as oppose to idealistic, philosophical or orthodox Islam which is expected to be practiced by Muslims. But less than 15% of Muslims worldwide practice such Islam (see 1980. Parshall 1983:16, cited in Love 1994:87).

One of the advantages of the systems approach used above, in addition to the complementarity relationships among these systems in the cultural and social aspects of the Dendi religion, is that, from a cognitive perspective, the Dendi's deep religious beliefs and knowledge shared by the community have specificities. Religious practitioners in the Dendi culture have different powers and different spheres of action with organic and mechanic entities such as God, angels, gods, goddesses, spirits, and impersonal forces, such as lightning, thunder, rain, stones etc. This confirms the view that "it is important to understand religious beliefs in terms of people's experiences, assumptions, and logics" (Hiebert et al. 1999:36). The affective and evaluative perspectives obey the same principle of relationship. The expression of joy and sorrow, fear and revulsion, awe, and worship, leave long, powerful, and pervasive moods in the people who go through them. This is the case with beliefs in predestination, hell, and paradise, or with belief in "the curse of the maternal milk" as discussed in this chapter. According to one's obedience to God and his laws or the moral law or moral order of one's community (which judges people's actions as right or wrong, righteous or evil, moral or immoral, just or unjust, proper or improper etc.), you are protected and have a good life, and paradise etc. as reward. Otherwise, you are cursed here on earth and have a life of failure and misfortune and end up in hell with all its torment.

The evaluative perspective in this phenomenological study of the Dendi religion has touched on what the Dendi people consider as true and worthy of their allegiance, and what they consider false, that does not merit their allegiance. Values are the basis for human action. Hiebert Shaw and Tiénou write: "Only as people respond to their beliefs and feelings do these become a living religion in their lives" (1999:37). As Kraft rightly observes, the relationship between culture and human beings is similar in many respects to that between water and fish,

because "humans are understood to be totally, inextricably immersed in culture" (Kraft 2005:38). In other words, the fish worldview cannot be analyzed outside of the realities of water. Kraft further points out that "Societies' pattern perceptions of reality into conceptualizations of what reality can or should be, what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible, and impossible"–this is the worldview of any given culture to which the members of the society assent (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system (Kraft 2005:38, 43). The next chapter starts by discussing this perception regarding the results and interpretations of the field study in more detail.

Chapter 4: Qualitative study on folk religious practices among Dendis

4.1.   Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the field[61] research from its inception and philosophical basis to its design, genre/methods, methodology, ethics, and reflexivity (Leavy 2014:2). The research was conducted among the Dendi of Kandi and Malanville in February 2020.

Qualitative research in field work consists of the collection, collation, description, analysis, interpretation, and understanding of a variety of empirical materials (Denzin & Lincoln 2018; Leavy 2014, 2017; Merriam 2009). The goal of the field research conducted was to gather empirical data that could contribute to answering the following research questions:

1   What are the Dendi folk religious questions and needs in times of crisis?
2   What mission strategy will best meet the Dendi cognitive, affective, and evaluative folk religious needs in times of crisis so that they can believe and understand the transforming power of the gospel?

Hence, learning how the gospel can be relevantly communicated to the Dendi people in their unique historical, sociocultural, and religious setting was the purpose of the contextualized research (Hiebert 2009:160-161). In other words, the qualitative research in mission (Cameron & Duce 2013:14; Elliston 2011:69, 74; Hiebert 2009:160-174) critically pursues the Dendi

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[61] Here 'field research' means the generic term for any qualitative research done in the field and not 'field research' as one of the qualitative research genres which include, but are not limited to: 1) field research, 2) interview, 3) grounded theory, 4) unobtrusive approaches, 5) participatory research, 6) community-based research, 7) arts-based research, 8) internet research, and 9) multimethod and mixed-method approaches (Patricia Leavy (ed.). 2014. *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 3).

people's understanding and belief in the power of the gospel so that their lives and their societies are transformed as they become followers of Christ (Hiebert 2009:160).

The context of the above methodology provides an explanation why the stratified random sampling method was used and why a questionnaire was used during the interviews, with most of the questions (13 out of 15) tested in a quantitative research survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2012. The next part of the chapter presents the findings of thirteen days of field research work conducted in Kandi and Malanville in the Alibori province of North-East Benin.

The field research started on 19 February 2020–just before the Covid-19 pandemic brought the first lockdowns in most countries in mid- or late March 2020. In Malanville the field research was conducted with IntMalanville, the translator, in his early forties, and in Kandi with IntKandi, in his late sixties, and a retired worker from a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). IntMalanville and IntKandi worked with the researcher in Kandi from 2011 until 2014. They were both instructed on the academic and ethical guidelines and implications of the research. IntKandi was allowed to conduct the interviews alone in Kandi, because the researcher and his family left Kandi in 2016 after ten years of missionary work. The decision not to be involved in the interviews in Kandi was firstly to avoid polluted data, and secondly, to guarantee triangulation in the research process (Merriam 2009; Leavy 2017).

The chapter concludes with a theory generated from the field data that might explain some of the folk beliefs and practices observed in the data. Based on this theory a missiological implication was considered to develop informed Christian mission strategies for the Dendi people. The great functionalities of ATLAS.ti 9, the computer program used to code and

categorize the field data, were helpful and appreciated during the data analysis and interpretation process.

4.2.   Field research background

The definition of qualitative research in this study is a combination of Denzin and Lincoln's generic definition (2018) and Leavy's suggested definition (2014). Thus, qualitative research for this research is a process with a set of interpretive material that makes the world's social life visible, understandable, describable, explainable, unravelable, illuminable, chronological, and documentable (Denzin & Lincoln 2018:43; Leavy 2014:1-2). On the one hand, Leavy points out that the process mentioned above requires the qualitative researcher to pay special attention to daily life, which includes the "mundane and ordinary, as much as the extraordinary" (Leavy 2014:2). Leavy qualifies this process as a complex relationship "between, within, and among people", groups, and the researcher's own entanglements (Leavy 2014:2). On the other hand, Denzin and Lincoln assert that material practices turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self (2018:43).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, folk religionists focus on how to achieve well-being in life while preventing life crises as much as possible (Adeleke 1996:28; Bello 2001, 2005; Bello & Giannotti 2017). Even though all people face crises of one sort or another in their lives on earth, what is considered as a crisis varies significantly from culture to culture (Hiebert et al. 1999:141). Generally, crises in life are due to natural disasters, epidemics, droughts, floods, wild fires, sudden illnesses, or any other misfortune or life emergency. Among the Dendi, one major life crisis is spirit possession (Bello 2005; Bello & Giannotti 2017; Joshua Project 2016;

Mauranges 2005). Spirit possession can cause illness, barrenness, celibacy, disturbed marriage, or loss of mind/folly (Bello & Giannotti 2017). Spirit possession is a common occurrence in different cultures and especially in folk religion (Guest 2018:66, 370, 381; Hiebert 1989; Hiebert et al. 1999; Kottak 2011:170, 299; Love 2000; Stacey 1989). The phenomenon is known to be prevalent among the Songhay people (Guest 2018:381-382). An important cult and religious ceremony associated with spirit possession among the Dendi is the "possession troops". In some Dendi villages, the rituals of the possession troops are organized weekly (Bello & Giannotti 2017; Joshua Project 2016).

Dendi possession troops are made up of *zimas* (traditional healers), traditional musicians, patients of all kinds and their relatives, devotees of the cult and curious spectators etc. This researcher believes the term possession troop is used, because the troop or the group uses desired possession. The *zimas,* as cult practitioners, are possessed by one or several spirits in the Dendi pantheon of gods and goddesses. This reception or descent and embodiment of spirits into the *zimas* or other selected individuals gives its name to these adorcistic[62] rituals practiced by the Dendi. Openshaw asserts that adorcisms "occur across the world and are embedded within the sociocultural contexts in which they occur" (Openshaw 2020:6). She further describes adorcism in these terms:

> Unlike exorcism, which aims to expel or bind troublesome or uninvited entities, adorcism is concerned with creating or strengthening beneficial ties between the possessed person and the entity. Indeed, adorcism aims to enhance connections and dialogues beyond the human realm. Thus, adorcism is the ritualistic labour that is focussed on appeasing entities whose presence is deemed valuable to the possessed persons and their communities. This

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[62] The term adorcism by opposition to exorcism was coined by the Belgian structuralist Luc de Heusch (1927-2012). The works of the anthropologist Ioan Myrddin Lewis (1930-2014) in Somalia where the Zar cult is dominant (*Islam in Tropical Africa*, 1980; and *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, 1989, etc.), note adorcistic rituals (Kathleen Openshaw. 2020. Adorcism, In Possamai, A. and Blasi, A.J. (eds). *The SAGE encyclopedia of the sociology of religion*: 5-7).

relationship is understood by them to provide advantages such as healing, gifts of the spirit (such as glossolalia and the ability to heal in the case of the Holy Spirit in some denominations of Pentecostal Christianity), sacred knowledge, and guidance. (Openshaw 2020:6).

Thus, Dendi possession troops, as they exist in many Dendi villages currently, are a cult characterized by an adorcistic ceremony, which uses the favourable accommodation of ancestors' spirits or other sprits into one or many *zimas* with the purpose of receiving guidance and revelation from the hosted spirits to treat patients with malevolent spirits that require removal, or to treat any kind of illnesses or predict future calamities that will affect the community (Bello 2005:13; Bello & Giannotti 2017; Mauranges 2005). The Dendi adorcism ceremony or ritual lasts generally seven days and has most of its important ceremonies conducted around midnight and in sacred forests with all kinds of violent spirit manifestations (Bello & Giannotti 2017:53-91; Mauranges 2005:46-49). A typical Dendi adorcism ritual can be described as such:

1. The *zima* or the traditional priest in charge of the patient consult firstly with the chief spirit (*Sidikoye*) in Dendy mythology to determine if the *Sidikoye* consents to cure or set the sick patient free. If that consent is not assured, any attempt to assist an individual will be in vain.
2. The *zimas* and the music band (the *kabu* izé family–the children of the *kabu*, or the initiated) are alerted to prepare the adorcism ritual.
3. The white sand; the purification water to be used for the patient bath; the ointment oil; the plants to be used for the drinking concoction; and the protecting incense are prepared.
4. The patient is admitted in the sacred hut for generally a seven-day and seven-night treatment period that often begins at the appearance of the new moon.

5. The spirits reveal the required sacrifices for the case. Generally, milk, honey, chickens or goats are involved. But more sacrificial elements could be demanded by the spirits on a case by case basis.

6. Intercessory prayers for help in treating the case are made to *Dan Kama* and the *toorous*, the deities in relationship with the local Dendi ancestors.

7. One or several spirits respond by possessing either the *zima* in charge of the case or any *zima* chosen that day to serve as the channel of revelation and guidance to the ill patient (Bello & Giannotti 2017:51).

As a bricoleur–this is how many have qualified qualitative researchers (Denzin 2010; Levi-Strauss 1966; Schwandt 2001; Saldaña 2011 cited in Leavy 2014:5-6;)–the field research was approached with insights from multiple bodies of scholarship, methods, and theories to reach the particular research configuration. Qualitative researchers, as bricoleurs, use ways of relating "various fragments of inherited methodologies, methods, empirical materials, perspectives, understandings, ways of presentation, situated responsiveness, and so on into a coherent, reasoned approach to a research situation and problem" (Schwandt 2001:20 cited in Leavy 2014:5-6). As such, they pursue with practicality and creativity, a scholarly project that demands intuition, flexibility, responsiveness, and sustained attention to ethics and values (cf. Leavy 2014:1).

4.3. Research philosophical basis and design: Grounded theory

A range of beliefs guide every research practice. From its paradigm[63] to its ontology and epistemology, qualitative research is a highly diverse field of inquiry (Leavy 2014:1). Together,

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[63] Qualitative research is multiparadigmatic. This means that qualitative researchers work from different worldviews: feminism, materialism, Marxism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, postscientism, positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, structuralism, poststructuralism, postconstructivism, and even post qualitative methodologies (Patricia Leavy (ed.). 2014. *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. New York, NY:

the ontological perspective (nature of reality) and the epistemological belief systems (source of that knowledge) serve as the philosophical basis or substructure of any research practice (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011 cited in Leavy 2014:3). Cameron and Duce note the perfect match between the question being asked, the research question, and the methods being used or the methodology (2013:xviii, 5, 132). Getting a good match between the research questions and the methodology is critical. As such, choosing to use ethnography or grounded theory, and not a case study method was mainly motivated by the research questions and the purpose and objective of this study, even though a case study method is considered "one of the most powerful methods of ethnographic research" (Hiebert 2009:170) with considerable advantages (Cook & Payne 2002:169 cited in Torrance 2018:1330) and more varied than phenomenology, (Johnson & Christensen 2014:50-51, 434; cf. Yin 2018). Leavy better states the circumstances and factors that can lead a researcher to choose a particular research genre/method in these terms:

> Research methods are selected because they are the best tools to gather the data sought for a particular study. The selection of research methods should be made in conjunction with the research question(s) and purpose or objective. In other words, depending on the research topic and how the research questions are framed, as well as more pragmatic issues such as access to participants or textual/ preexisting data sources, time, and practical skills, researchers are guided to particular methods (Leavy 2014:3).

Glaser and Strauss (1967), who discovered the grounded theory, simply presented it as a theory generated from the qualitative data of social research (Glaser & Strauss 1999:viii). Grounded theory was introduced by Glaser and Strauss as a social research approach to study social phenomena based on qualitative data (1999:1; Merriam 2009:6-7). Glaser and Strauss offered, through their discovery, an alternative approach to the goal of social research methods,

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Oxford University Press; Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.). 2018. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

which, in their time, was to obtain accurate facts and test theories more rigorously (1999:1). Through their grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss promoted a systematic acquisition and analysis of qualitative data that generates a theory or leads to the discovery of a theory (1999:1). According to the two authors, a theory generated from such qualitative data "fits empirical situations, and is understandable to sociologists and layman alike" (1999:1). Furthermore, they asserted, grounded theory works and provides "relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications" (1999:1).

Glaser and Strauss warned that they did not write their book *The discovery of grounded theory* to offer clear-cut procedures and definitions on grounded theory; rather, they intended that their book, through stated positions, counter positions, and examples, would begin a "venture in the development of improved methods for discovering grounded theory "(1999:1). Charmaz, Thornberg and Keane (2018:720) believe that Glaser and Strauss have succeeded in creating a "lasting impact on qualitative inquiry" with their book. Indeed, since 1967, proponents of Glaser and Strauss' theory have clarified and developed the original methodology of grounded theory offered by their originators (Bryant 2002; Bryant & Charmaz 2007; Charmaz 2000, 2006, 2008a, 2014a; Corbin & Strauss 2008; Gibson & Hartman 2014; Glaser 2005, 2013; Thornberg 2012, cited in Charmaz et al. 2018:720).

Grounded theory, with its systematic guidelines in dealing with qualitative data with the goal of constructing a relevant theory, will sometimes combine aspects of quantitative research methods with those of qualitative research (Bryant 2014:116-136; Charmaz et al. 2018:723-724; Hiebert 2009:170). This ability to combine two competing traditions–"Columbia University quantitative methods and structural-functional theory and Chicago school qualitative research and the pragmatist philosophical tradition through symbolic interactionism" (Charmaz

et al. 2018:723)–gives grounded theory its "rigor, language, direction, and objectives" (2018:723). Some have called a grounded approach to theorizing an "emergent analysis" that is intuitive and creative and not mechanical (Lofland 1995 cited in Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault 2016:8).

In using grounded theory such as mixed-methods research (MMR), combining in some ways both quantitative and qualitative data in a single project (Leavy 2017:9; Teddlie & Tashakkori 2011 cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2018:11), the methodology and the epistemology used in this study integrated synergistically different phases of the research (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011 cited in Leavy 2017:9) for a comprehensive understanding of the Dendi practice of aspects of their old traditional religion. Leavy argues that MMR is generally appropriate when the researcher's purpose is to describe, explain, evaluate, or prompt community change or social action (Leavy 2017:9).

Glaser and Strauss list five interrelated functions of theory in sociology to keep in mind in the process of doing grounded theory research. These are to:

1. enable prediction and explanation of behaviour;
2. be useful in theoretical advance in sociology;
3. be usable in practical applications–prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner understanding and some control of situations;
4. provide a perspective on behavior–a stance to be taken toward data; and
5. guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behaviour. (Glaser & Strauss 1999:3).

Missiologists such as Paul Hiebert regard grounded theory as a qualitative research method that goes beyond typical theories already in the literature by allowing speculative thinking (2009:170). By speculative thinking, Hiebert means that suppositions initiated during

the process of developing a theory are contextual in a continuous interplay between the researcher, the data, and the process, or the data collection, and the data analysis (Denzin & Lincoln 1998:158 cited in Hiebert 2009:170; Johnson & Christensen 2014:459-460). This concept of constant interplay between the researcher and the qualitative data collected or being collected characterizes the reality of the active role of a qualitative researcher in this process.

Johnson and Christensen argue that, with theoretical sensitivity, the researcher decides "what kinds of data need to be collected and what aspects of the already collected data are the most important for the grounded theory" (2014:460). Thus, assert Johnson and Christensen, a theory that is grounded in such data has four characteristics:

1. It fits and corresponds very closely to the data and not to the researcher's personal "wishes or biases or predetermined categories".
2. It is clearly stated and understandable to research professionals or lay people.
3. It has generality because it is not specific or reserved to one set of people.
4. It is controllable by anybody who wants to use it because the theory has controllable variables (2014:457-458).

4.4. Data collection methods: Questionnaires and interviews

Data collection methods are tools for data collection. Traditionally, using questionnaires has been reserved for quantitative research, because they are "typically administered to a large number of subjects" (Benney & Hughes, 1970 cited in Taylor et al. 2016:102). However, qualitative researchers are using questionnaires more and more to gather data for interpretative qualitative studies (Cameron & Duce 2013:16-17; Taylor et al. 2016:202; Costa, Reis & Moreira 2019). Nonetheless, any data-collection method is allowed in research focused on developing a grounded theory (Johnson & Christensen 2014:461). The questionnaire used in

this study borrowed directly thirteen of its fifteen questions (13 out of 15) from a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center[64] in 2012. For this study, the last two questions were inductively formulated. Pew Research Center's 2012 survey, entitled *The world's Muslims: Unity and diversity*, asked questions on "end times" and questions on "belief in the imminent return of Jesus" and the *Mahdi* (2012:58, 65-66). Thus, the two questions introduced in the questionnaire of this study were: Question 14: Do you believe in the healing and miracle working power of Isa (Jesus)? (yes or no, why, and what do you know about Isa (Jesus)?) and Question 15, Would you accept healing prayer and exorcism prayers from a Christian? (yes or no and why?) derived from the above insights and the assumptions the Pew Research Center expressed on what the Qur'an says about Jesus (2012:114).

The fifteen questions were dichotomous questions (Ruel et al., 2016 cited in Leavy 2017:104) with initial yes or no answers–close-ended, for quantitative data collection. However, each question was followed by why, where, when, and what, which are open-ended questions and were used for qualitative data collection, according to the initial question's context. The essay type questions in the questionnaire required long and detailed answers that were mostly recorded during conversation. The dichotomous questions were used not only to reach cross-validation, but also to provide easy to quantify data that could be used adequately for generalization (cf. Vogt et al., 2014 cited in Leavy 2017:104).

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[64] See Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life 2012. The complete publication titled *The world's Muslims: Unity and diversity* is in a pdf format with 164 pages. The report contains methodology and data for surveys on topics such as religious affiliation, religious commitment, articles of faith, other beliefs and practices, boundaries of religious identity, and boundaries of religious practice. The report is based on more than 38,000 face-to-face interviews conducted in over 80 languages with Muslims in 39 countries and territories that collectively are home to roughly two-thirds (67%) of all Muslims in the world. Available at: https://www.pewforum.org/2012/08/09/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-executive-summary/

Accordingly, the formal interviews were organized around these mixed questions of fixed questions that required fixed answers (yes or no), but also open-ended questions. It was decided to mix the research this way because of the objectives and also because this quantitative approach method is also used in qualitative research (Elliston 2011:153). Although closed-ended, fixed questions, also known as forced-choice questions, are used mostly in surveys (Leavy 2017:104), they can become qualitative questions if used with open-ended questions. As Taylor et al. rightly point out "open-ended questions in a structured survey or questionnaire are sometimes referred to as producing qualitative data" (2016:202). Consequently, using the Pew Research Forum's tested questions, it was not necessary to test the questions.

While working as an interpretive bricoleur, face-to face and one-on-one interviews were used, using the questionnaire as the tool that best fitted the research topic and how the research questions were framed. The three sections of the questionnaire used addressed the interviewees' cognitive, affective, and evaluative responses to Islam's articles of faith and their practices in daily life, particularly in times of crises, focussing on illness and spirits possessions. The first section touched on their daily prayer lives and asked two questions, the second section, with nine questions, touched on their beliefs in *jinn* (spirits), evil powers such as witchcraft, their experience with exorcism. etc., and the means of protection they used against evil powers. The third section, with four questions, touched on the practice of visiting spiritual healers, their beliefs in *Isa* (Jesus), and their disposition towards the received help in times of crises from Christians.

4.5. Stratified random sampling

Sampling is the process by which a number of elements are selected from a larger population or group for data collection. Leavy points out that all sampling approaches are grouped into two types: probability sampling, and purposeful sampling; the latter is used in qualitative research while the former is used in quantitative research (2017:7. 78-79). Qualitative research uses a limited number of people in order to see humans as they live their life complexities in their context (cf. Denzin & Lincoln 2018; Hiebert 2009:170; Johnson & Christensen 2014; Leavy 2017:75-8; Taylor et al. 2016). Given the nature of the researcher's project and its goals, a sampling method with its strengths and weaknesses was chosen (Leavy 2017:78). The simple random sampling (SRS) used in the stratified random sampling belongs to the probability sampling group and it is mainly used to generalize findings to a larger population with statistical formula (Leavy 2017:79). Unfortunately, stratified purposive sampling or random purposive sampling, which are mixed methods, but with more qualitative research characteristics, could not be used, not only for reasons already detailed above, but also because they "require prior knowledge about the phenomenon in question and its distribution" (Schreier 2018:95). However, the choice to use simple random sampling (SRS) in stratified random sampling was justified.

According to Leavy, quantitative research tools can be used in the quantitative phase of mixed methods research (2017:78). Hence, two strata were used in the study population: men and women. A third gender category was not included, because the concept of bisexualism or transgenderism exists only in Dendi mythology among spirits, as it is in other world religions or cultures (Bello 2005; Doniger 2014; Phoebus 1975:156;). The practice of transgenderism or bisexuality in Dendi social life is not yet recognized.

This does not mean that probability theories or mathematic numerical descriptions, or any of the 'how likely' languages familiar to probability sampling approaches generally used in quantitative research were used. SRS in both strata, the men stratum and the women stratum, was applied with the goal of having an equal number of elements among men and women interviewed (Leavy 2017:79). This had its limitations and did not always work out. For this study, the SRS conducted after the strata had been defined by shared gender was intended to allow every element in the study population an equal and independent chance of being selected (Kumar 2011:198; Leavy 2017:79). Simply put, no element in the population had a zero chance of being selected.

On the sample size, there are no hard-and-fast rules or rigid guidelines for sample size selection (Roller & Lavrakas 2015 cited in Leavy 2017:77). A saturation point was reached when the additional data collected did not yield additional insights. This means that, after a certain number of interviews were conducted, it was noticed that there were "inundation and redundancy from additional data" (Coffey 1999; Agar, 1996 cited in Leavy 2017:78). While some authors have suggested that 20 or more participants will be enough for qualitative research, especially in some focus group projects, others such as Brinkmann, Jacobson and Kristiansen (2014), with rather arguable guidelines, contend for no more than 15 participants for qualitative research (Brinkmann et al. 2013 cited in Leavy 2017:78).

A saturation point for this study was reached after interviewing 28 participants. They comprised 12 women and 16 men;. 11 in Kandi (3 women and 8 men) and 17 in Malanville (8 men and 9 women). All of them were randomly approached and met in different quarters of each town; in their shops, in their offices, in front of their house, on the street talking on the phone, in a restaurant, at a group gathering, in a cybercafé, etc. They were first asked if they

were Dendi. If so, the next question asked was if they were willing to participate in an academic interview on religious beliefs and practices in different situations. More detail on this process is presented in Section 4.7 Data collection process.

4.6.   Research ethical considerations and limitations

4.6.1.   Ethical considerations

Research on human subjects is a particularly value-laden enterprise and specific ethical considerations are necessary (Ellison 2011:104; Yin 2018:88). Ethical concerns in research currently are critical issues. The process of application to the ethical review board of the University of the Free State to obtain approval for this research in the field lasted about a year. The ethical clearance application had to be reviewed several times due to the sensitive nature of the research. As a human subject researcher, specific guidelines had to be followed to protect participants in the study in all aspects. They were each informed on the nature of the study and formally solicited for their voluntary participation. For instance, the US National Research Council recommendation (2003:23–28) was used, which advocates: gaining informed consent, protecting participants from any deception or harm, protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants, taking special precautions to protect especially vulnerable groups, and selecting participants equitably (cited in Yin 2018:88).

Edgar Elliston, building on Trochim (2006)'s six foundational ethical protections used in social science and medical communities, makes similar recommendations for missiological research. These six capital ethical protections are: voluntary participation, informed consent, risk of physical, psychological and spiritual harm, assurance of confidentiality, assurance of anonymity, and equal rights to any beneficial effects that may result from the study (Trochim 2006). As a Christian researcher, biblical values such as truth, justice, and love were also core

in this researcher's ethical concern, while keeping the purpose of missiology–the *missio Dei*–in mind (Ellison 2011:104).

One of the risks associated with this research related to the local, traditional, and animistic beliefs of causality. That is, that people fear that the gods, the ancestors, and spirits can do great damage and create misfortune if angered or not honored properly. Because spirit possessions and manifestations can be traumatizing with physical, emotional/psychological, or spiritual stress and even sometimes danger, former demonized people were not specifically sourced, even though some were randomly selected considering the popularity of the phenomenon among the Dendis. However, the following risk management procedures were takenby the researcher:

1. Explained to participants that the interview was not intended to protect participants from sprit manifestation, influence, or control.
2. Assured participants that no interview would be conducted after sunset, in order to reduce the fear factor related to spirits and darkness, unless otherwise necessary with the consent of the interviewee.
3. Assured participants that they would be free to avoid any question they did not want to answer.
4. Assured participants that, should they have choosen to withdraw from the study, all data referring to them would immediately be destroyed.

Due to some cultural traditions (signing documents is Western and done at government official places and sometimes means trouble), and because many of the interviewees were illiterate, the consent forms were not signed directly in most cases. However, a way to have such consent verbally recorded was designed and reported on the form (see Appendix A).

4.6.2. Research limitations

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the researcher's ten-year stay in Benin in the Alibori department, and particularly in Kandi where Dendi is the spoken language (even though the Dendi are only 10% of the population (Republique du Benin, Ministere de la Decentralisation, de la Gouvernance Locale, de l'Administration et de l'Amenagement du Territoire. 2015:21, 22)), unfortunately did not provide the researcher the ability to speak Dendi to the point of engaging in conversation on topics such as religion, culture, or daily life issues. As such, the language barrier was the biggest limitation during the interviews and discussion process. However, the researcher speaks French and most of the interviewees understood some French.

A second limitation or obstacle related to the researcher, especially in Kandi, was that the researcher had lived in the town from 2006-2016 as a male Christian missionary. This meant that the researcher's relationship as the observer with the observed could not be neutral. The goals for the research would have been implied by those who knew the researcher as a Christian missionary, and from experiences in the past, a fact that had always conditioned some people in their interactions with the researcher. This was why the researcher did not join the interviews in Kandi, and was also not in town during the process. This was not the preferred strategy, but it had some advantages. The risk to contaminate the data with his presence was high. According to Blumer, most investigators, implicitly or explicitly, have preconceived ideas about the people they study and their culture (Blumer 1969:58 cited in Taylor et al. 2016:24)–this could have been the case for this researcher after living in Kandi for ten years.

A third limitation was the danger that, with reflexiveness, his background and biography, identity as a Christian missionary, history in the Alibori department in Benin, roles as a student and researcher, and expectations could influence the analysis, findings, and

interpretations of the data (Presser 2005; Tracy 2013 cited in Taylor et al. 2016:25). To remedy this, a flexible research design (Marshall & Rossman, 2011 cited in Taylor et al. 2016:8) was followed, although the researcher, who is not a *tabula rasa* "must have a perspective that will help him see relevant data and abstract significant categories from his scrutiny of the data" (Glaser & Strauss 1999:3). By flexible research design is meant a willingness to let IntKandi collect data in Kandi without the researcher being present. What was needed were participants' honest responses to questions without experiencing a dismissive look or judgment of any foreign person. This was accomplished using a recording device. This was sometimes the only way to get some of the 'provocative stories' available in the data (Denzin 1992 cited in Taylor et al. 2016:25). However, as Richardson points out, the knowledge of the interviewer of the interviewee's world will always be "partial, situated, and subjective" (Richardson 1990a:28 cited in Taylor et al. 2016:25).

4.7. Data collection process

As noted above, the twenty-eight participants comprised twelve women and sixteen men. Eleven were interviewed in Kandi and comprised three women and eight men. Seventeen were interviewed in Malanville: eight men and nine women. All of them were randomly approached as they were met in different quarters of each town. In each town, major quarters were visited for diversity and care of location being representative. People were met while walking in their neighbourhood or where paths crossed in the town. Through eye contact or initiated move, each participant was approached and firstly asked if they were Dendi. Once this was confirmed, the next question was if they were willing to participate in an academic interview on Dendi religious beliefs and practices in different instances. Depending on where

they met, what they were doing, and where they were going, appointments were made with some participants to meet them at home or at an indicated place at a certain time when they would be available to grant the interview. However, most of the participants (as is done in Africa) left whatever they were doing to give of their time and attention.

Participants ranged from age twenty-two to eighty and belonged to a cross section of all social classes: food vendors on the street, a primary school principal, a seamstress, a hairdresser, a mechanic, a retired government worker, a spiritual healer, a koranic school teacher and healer (*alfa*), a house wife, a farmer, etc. Most interviews lasted for about an hour. Though, with some talkative interviewees, half an hour extra or an entire extra hour was necessary. All the data collected in Kandi and Malanville were through face-to-face interviews. These in-depth interviews were conducted with the questionnaire memorized or with the hard copy barely visible. The questions asked were either with inductive or open-ended questions in a conversational manner, something people are accustomed to participating in naturally (Brinkmann, 2012, 2013 cited in Leavy 2017:139). For a sample of the questionnaire used for the interviews see appendix B.

4.8.   Data analysis and interpretation

Basic qualitative data analysis uses the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss. 2008; cf. Costa, Reis & Moreira 2019; Creswell 2014; Flick 2014; Glaser & Strauss 1999, 1967; Merriam 2009:31, 169, 175; Miles et al. 2014; Leavy 2017; Taylor et al. 2016; Tracy 2013;). Developed by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser & Strauss 1967 cited in Merriam 2009:200), the constant comparative method of data analysis is a comparative means of devolving grounded theory that is emergent, recursive, dynamic and inductive (Merriam 2009 31, 169). This

inductive, concept-building orientation is developed to constantly compare incidents within and between levels of conceptualization, which lead to the formulation of a *substantive theory*– "theory that applies to a specific aspect of practice" (2009:200).

Data analysis in the qualitative research process is not only the most important part of the research process, but also the most challenging for many researchers (Meriam 2009:207)[65]. The amount of qualitative data to analyze can sometimes be overwhelming (2009:207), but the process of data analysis becomes manageable when an efficient system for inventorying, organizing, coding, and categorizing data for their easy retrieval and manipulation is adopted (2009:207). The above process leads to an intense data analysis that gives voice to the data because "data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter, or a translator" (Vogt et al., 2014:2 cited in Leavy 2017:150; cf. Ratcliffe 1998:149 cited in Merriam 2009:213).

Allen Trent and Jeasik Cho (2014:652 cited by Leavy 2017:150) define data analysis as "summarizing and organizing data", and interpretation as "finding or making meaning". Commenting on Trent and Cho's definition, Leavy points out that "analysis and interpretation are often a recursive process, with analysis leading to interpretation leading to analysis, and so forth" (2017:150). Reid (1992) divided this process of data management into three phases: data preparation, data identification, and data manipulation (Reid 1992:126 cited in Merriam 2009:194). Leavy suggests five general stages that constitute data management or data analysis and interpretation in order to clarify these blurring phases between analysis and interpretation:

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[65] Merriam points out that to wait until all data are collected before beginning data analysis is to plan for disaster (Merriam, Sharan B. 2009. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Revised and Expanded from *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass: 207.). According to Merriam to "wait until all data are collected is to lose the opportunity to gather more reliable and valid data" and countless of qualitative researchers have been "overwhelmed and rendered impotent by the sheer amount of data in a qualitative study" (207). For this reason, Merriam suggests that researchers begin data analysis along with data collection in order to make this difficult segment of the research process manageable (207).

data preparation and organization, initial immersion, coding, categorizing and theming, and interpretation (2017:150).

4.8.1. Data preparation and organization

This stage of the data analysis process comprises transcribing and organizing data in sources for easy access the interviews recorded, the notes taken, and any other field documents (Leavy 2017:150). At this stage, a color-coding system and a backup measure of all files is important (Saldaña, 2014 cited in Leavy 2017:150).

4.8.2. Initial immersion

Here, the initial reading and reasoning about the data take place (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005, 2011 cited in Leavy 2017:150). Saldaña states that this immersion is done in three phases. Firstly, deep emotional insights about the people being studied emerge (Saldaña 2014:583 cited in Leavy 2017:150). Secondly, while taking notes manually or electronically and highlighting words or phrases in the data, the researcher develops initial ideas, thoughts, and arguments (Creswell, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005, 2011; Saldaña, 2014, all cited in Leavy 2017:151). Finally, this initial data exploration helps the researcher to sort and reduce his/her data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005, 2011) and leave only data considered a priority with the characteristics to "address the research purpose and answer the research questions" (Saldaña 2014:583–584 cited in Leavy 2017:151).

4.8.3. Coding

This third phase of the data analysis process is mainly to summarize and classify the data generated (Leavy 2017:151). According to Sharan Merriam, the term coding may sound mystifying for many, although it is the simple process of assigning "single words, letters,

numbers, phrases, colors, or combinations of these" to various aspects of the data for easy retrieval of specific pieces of the data (2009:173; Leavy 2017:151). Corbin and Strauss (2007, cited in Merriam 2009:200) suggest three phases of coding in coding qualitative data in grounded theory:

1. *Open coding*–"being open to anything relevant to answer your research questions", or tagging at the beginning of the data analysis any unit of data that might be relevant to the study–"exact word(s) of the participant, your words, or a concept from the literature" (Merriam 2009:178, 200).
2. *Axial coding or analytical coding*–relating categories and properties to each other or refining the category scheme by grouping open codes (Merriam 2009:200).
3. *Selective coding*–developing "a core category, propositions, or hypotheses" (Corbin & Strauss 2007 cited in Merriam 2009:200).

Hence, the code selected summarizes or describes the idea or substance of that segment of data (Saldaña 2009 cited in Leavy 2017:151). Accordingly, coding could be:

1. *In vivo coding*–that is generating codes from participants' exact language (Strauss, 1987 cited in Leavy 2017:151);
2. *Descriptive coding or generating codes* with nouns that describe the data.
3. *Values coding*–that is generating codes using values in power issues such as conflicts and struggles (Saldaña, 2014 cited in Leavy 2017:151).

Leavy argues that a coding approach is selected in regard to the researcher's study purpose and research questions (2017:151).

Following that thought, since qualitative study is an emergent process, according to Saldaña (2013:69-175), other coding methods or strategies more specific in "First Cycle or Second Cycle coding methods" could be considered. Thus, coding is done manually, electronically, or with a mix of both. Because "hand coding is a laborious and time-consuming

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process, even for data from a few individuals", the program Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), was considered the "logical choice for qualitative data analysis over hand coding" (Creswell 2014:196). When done electronically, it is either with a simple or powerful word processing program, which can be adapted to data management, or with a more professional CAQDAS specifically designed to deal with qualitative data (Andrade et al. 2019:279-289; Merriam 2009:193-198, 207). About forty[66] CAQDAS were already available, each with specific characteristics and objectives in 2011 (Andrade et al. 2019:280). CAQDAS, in addition to their safe storage and accuracy, facilitate massive data organization, decrease data analysis time, and enable better triangulation (Andrade et al. 2019:280; Merriam 2009:194-196). Although each line of the original transcripts had to be evaluated to assign codes (as in hand coding), the process with ATLAS.ti 9 was faster and more efficient than expected (Creswell 2014:196). However, codification and analysis "are not made exclusively by the computer, and it is always the responsibility of the researcher to select, indicate and conduct– among the data–the directions of his/her qualitative analysis" (Andrade et al. 2019:280; cf. Bogdan & Biklen 2007:187 cited in Merriam 2009:194). Consequently, advantages and limitations of using CAQDAS must be considered before deciding to use them since "basic word processing programs are quite adequate for most qualitative data analysis" particularly in small-scale qualitative studies (Ruona 2005 cited in Merriam 2009:194, 195-197).

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[66] CAQDAS exist in two formats: (1) those that need installation like (a) ATLAS.ti, (b) Coding Analysis Toolkit (CAT), (c) ConnectedText, (d) Dedoose, (e) HyperRESEARCH, (f) MAXQDA, (g) NVivo, (h) QDA Miner, (i) Qiqqa, (j) Quirkos, (k) Saturate, (l) XSight, etc.; and (2) those that are online without the need for installation such as: (i) Computer Aided Textual Markup & Analysis (CATMA), (ii) Dedoose, (iii) LibreQDA, (iv) QCAmap and (v) webQDA, etc. (Andrade, Costa, Linhares, De Almeida, Reis. 2019. *Qualitative data analysis software packages: An integrative review* in Costa, A.P., Reis, L.P., and Moreira, A. (eds.). *Computer supported qualitative research: New trends on qualitative research.* Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature: 281).

In this study, the decision to use ATLAS.ti 9 for Mac was mainly time related. Although digital technologies such as CAQDAS need time and skill to learn and master (Merriam 2009:196), ATLAS.ti was relatively easy to learn and use, and cost effective, compared to the two other CAQDAS' with similar features that were evaluated. A literature review presents ATLAS.ti not only as one of the computer programs for qualitative data analysis most frequently mentioned (Saldaña 2013; Leavy 2017; Costa, Reis, and Moreira 2019), but also as one considered excellent (Corbin & Strauss 2008), fascinating (Corbin & Strauss 2014:203), and popular–along with MAQDA and NVivo, the two former being developed in Germany and the latter in Australia (Creswell 2014:196-197). According to Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014:182), ATLAS.ti is among the CAQDAS which, considering the researcher-initiated linkages, can calculate and display a visual model that illustrates the researcher's codes' organizational arrangement with graphic capabilities for drawing taxonomies. ATLAS.ti is among the three computer software programs mentioned alongside NVivo and Dedoose (more recently) by Taylor et al. for qualitative analysis (2016:186).

4.8.4. Categorizing and theming

This stage of the data analysis process searches for "patterns and the relationships between codes" in order to group them–this is categorizing (Saldaña 2014 cited in Leavy 2017:152). According to Merriam (2009), categorizing should meet at least five criteria. It should be:

1. responsive to the purpose of the research;
2. exhaustive–all important or relevant data should have a place in a category;
3. mutually exclusive–a unit of data cannot fit in more than one category;
4. sensitizing–that is a category's name is sensitive to the content of the category; and

5. conceptually congruent–that is "that the same level of abstraction should characterize all categories at the same level" (Merriam 2009:185-186).

Theming, on the other hand, comprises finding the emerging themes in the codes–that is, formulating a phrase or a sentence "that signals the larger meaning behind a code or group of codes" (Leavy 2017:152 cited in Saldaña 2014). Leavy asserts that memo writing occurs at this stage of categorizing and theming to create the link between coding and interpretation to document the researcher's impressions, and emerging and particular understandings (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011; Saldaña 2014 cited in Leavy 2017:152). Leavy identifies a few types of memo, namely

1. detailed descriptions or summaries;
2. key quotes from the data;
3. analytic memos about different codes;
4. interpretive ideas about how codes and categories are related;
5. what you think something means; and
6. interpretive ideas about how a theory or piece of literature relates to a segment of coded data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011:314 cited in Leavy 2017:152).

4.8.5. Interpretation

In qualitative research, human subjects are the principal source of data collection and analysis. As such, it is only through human observations and interviews that "interpretations of reality are accessed" (Merriam 2009:215). Merriam argues that it is important to "uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening" (2009:215). According to Mills (Mills 2007 cited in Leavy 2017:152) research interpretation is about answering the question: So what?–that is discovering anomalous data, and "links between different categories, concepts, and/or themes". Constructing a

grounded typology, with all its advantages and restrictions, wherever the goal of the researcher is to construct models of action in specific social contexts with subjective/objective argumentation and interpretation (Semenova 2019:133), Leavy suggests using triangulation "in order to build confidence in the summary findings" being developed for interpretation (2017:153).

Triangulation is the approach of "using multiple methods or sources of data to address the same question" (Greene 2007, Greene et al. 1989 cited in Leavy 2017:153; cf. Berg & Lune 2011; Denzin 1978 cited in Taylor et al. 2016:93-94; Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2005, 2011; Patton 1980). For example, triangulation is used when, after collecting data through interviews, observations, and documents, the researcher compares what someone had said in an interview with what the researcher observed on site or what he/she reads about in literature relevant to the phenomenon of interest (Merriam 2009:216). This approach of "comparing and cross-checking data collected" through those different means could be through *investigator triangulation*–that is, having multiple investigators analyzing the data collected, or *triangulating analysts*–that is, "having two or more persons independently analyze the same qualitative data and compare their findings" (Patton 2002:560 cited in Merriam 2009:216). A researcher has the option of using: *data triangulation*, using "multiple sources of data to examine an assertion" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011:51 cited in Leavy 2017:153); *theoretical triangulation*, using multiple theoretical lenses to look at the data and see different interpretations emerge (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011:51 cited in Leavy 2017:153); or *investigator triangulation*, comparing the findings of two or more researchers who studied the same topic (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011:51 cited in Leavy 2017:153).

Leavy further suggests using seven explicit questions that will better help in the data interpretation and induce meaning out of the data to "put it in a framework for understanding" (Leavy 2017:153). These seven questions are:

1. What are the relationships between categories, themes, and concepts?
2. What patterns have emerged?
3. What seems most salient in the data?
4. What is the essence of the data telling me?
5. What do I learn by placing the data in the context of existing literature?
6. What do I learn by considering the data through more than one theoretical lens?
7. Using what I have learned, how might I respond to my research questions?

4.9. Evaluation and validation of qualitative research

For research findings to be understood and considered credible, readers need to clearly follow the rationale of the researcher's work (Leavy 2017:154). Leavy claims that such disclosure of the researcher's methodology is possible if three principles are in place.

1 *Explicitness*–the researcher clearly accounting for his role as a researcher and his/her methodological strategies used (Leavy 2011b; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle 2001 cited in Leavy 2017:154).

2 *Thoroughness*–"comprehensiveness of the project's components, including sampling, data collection, and representation" (Whittemore et al., 2001 cited in Leavy 2017:154).

3 *Congruence*–"how the various components of the project fit together, including the fit between the questions, methods, and findings; the fit between data collection and analysis; and the fit between your project and previous research on the topic" (Whittemore et al., 2001 cited in Leavy 2017:154).

Readers will trust a qualitative research process and ultimately its findings–that is the research validity, credibility (Agar 1986), or trustworthiness (Mishler 1990, 2000; Seale 1999 cited in Leavy 2017:154)–if the rigor of a research methodology is established. Leavy argues that "validity speaks to the credibility and trustworthiness of the project and any assertions or conclusions" (Leavy 2017:154 cited in Leavy 2011b). Thus, the rigour of a research methodology will determine the quality of the research and establish the trustworthiness of its findings (Aguinaldo 2004; Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011b, Lincoln & Guba 1985 cited in Leavy 2017:155; cf. Lincoln & Guba 1989:398).

Leavy further asserts that research validation is "a process of confidence building that occurs in community (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008) through the development of intersubjective judgment (Polking-horne 2007)" (Leavy 2017:155). Consequently, qualitative research validation depends on how well-crafted the research was–that is "how the project has been conceived, designed, and executed" (Leavy 2011b :155 cited in Leavy 2017:155); this notion of well-crafted research includes not only artfulness–that is "an elegant representation" of the research (Leavy, 2011a cited in Leavy 2017:155), but also "innovation or creativity"–that is, developing "a unique methodology by employing methods of data collection or analysis in new ways" that allow the researcher to "examine what might otherwise remain invisible or out of reach" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006, 2008 cited in Leavy 2017:155; Leavy 2009, 2011a; Whittemore et al., 2001).

Finally, research vividness,–"providing detailed and rich descriptions and highlighting the particulars of the data" (Whittemore et al., 2001 cited by Leavy 2017:155), fittingness and transferability (Leavy 2011b; Lincoln & Guba 1985 cited in Leavy 2017:155)–make credible

research transferable from one context to another (Lincoln & Guba 1985 cited in Leavy 2017:155). Leavy refines her above assertion in these terms:

> The extent to which you can transfer findings from one context to another depends on the similarity, or what Lincoln and Guba (1985) termed the "fittingness," of the two contexts. That is, the more similar the contexts are, the greater the extent to which you can transfer your findings from one to the other. Therefore, the more vivid your account, accomplished through detailed descriptions, the greater a case you can make for fittingness. (Leavy 2017:155)

Table 15 below summarizes Leavy's qualitative research evaluation criteria.

Table 15: Qualitative research evaluation criteria
(source: Leavy 2017:156)

Explicitness	Methodology disclosed
Thoroughness	Comprehensiveness of project
Congruence	Components of project fit together
Validity/credibility/trustworthiness	Quality of project and establishment of confidence in assertions
Triangulation	Multiple sources address same question
Craft	How the project was conceived, designed, and executed, including innovation, creativity, and artfulness
Vividness	Detailed and rich descriptions that can be seen, heard, and imagined
Transferability	Ability to transfer findings from one context to another based on "fittingness" (the similarity between the contexts made clear by a vividness in the data)

To ensure validity of this research study, as indicated earlier, two different sites were used for data collection. IntKandi worked alone as an investigator in Kandi, where the researcher lived for ten years. This was to avoid data pollution with the researcher's presence

affecting interviewees during the interviews. IntKandi was properly instructed on how to conduct the interviews based on the guidelines provided above. The researcher conducted the interviews in Malanville, where he was not known, with IntMalanville as translator. Triangulation was then obtained using "multiple sources of data to address the same question". This approach helped the researcher to compare and cross-check not only data on the same questions from the two towns, but also data obtained during the field research with observation on site and data relevant in the literature about the study interest (Merriam 2009:216).

In both locations, random sampling was used to select the sample of interviewees. The people were from different social backgrounds: retired government workers, employees of the mayor's office, food vendors, house wives, Islamic religious teachers, *Imams*, government school teachers, mechanic, spiritual healers, etc. Unfortunately, while the goal of gender parity of the interviewees was almost met in Malanville (eight men and nine women interviewed), it was not so in Kandi where there were eight men interviewed, but only three women. Some of the aspects regarding this fact that IntKandi shared with the researcher are:

1. The more rigid type of Islamic *umah* present in Kandi where there is a Sunni Islamic theological school.
2. Time constraints.
3. The nature of the topic.
4. IntKandi, a man in his late sixties. As such, he has a personal disposition to speak more to men than women. Although this was not the ideal, the researcher did not believe this had any effect on the findings, because this research was not gender oriented.

The next section endeavours to present "engaging, descriptive, interesting, and memorable" findings (Gilgun 2005, 2014 cited in Leavy 2017:156).

4.10. Research findings and interpretations

According to Elliston, research findings only report relevant information in the data necessary to address "the central research issue and research questions or hypotheses" (2011:81). Such findings need to be reported respecting ethical obligations, whether those findings support the researcher's position on the central research question or not (2011:81). Hence, in reporting findings, other findings in precedent research or the researcher's previous experience are bracketed (2011:81).

Leavy suggests using seven explicit questions that will help in the data interpretation, induce meaning from the data and "put it in a framework for understanding" (Leavy 2017:153). These seven questions are:

1. What are the relationships between categories, themes, and concepts?
2. What patterns have emerged?
3. What seems most salient in the data?
4. What is the essence of the data telling me?
5. What do I learn by placing the data in the context of existing literature?
5. What do I learn by considering the data through more than one theoretical lens?
7. Using what I have learned, how might I respond to my research questions?

The face-to face interviews conducted involved twenty-eight Dendi male and female participants randomly selected in Kandi (11 interviewees) and Malanville (17 interviewees). The interviewees were aged from twenty-two to eighty years of age. There were seventeen men (61%) and eleven women (39%). Twenty-four were married (86%), two divorced (7%), and two were single (7%). They all identified themselves as Muslim. As indicated earlier, the twenty-eight interviewees came from a diverse range of social backgrounds: religious leaders,

government and Islamic school teachers, small vendors and farmers, housewives, Islamic healers, mechanics, office guardians, etc.

4.10.1. Findings on folk beliefs and practices among the interviewees

Six questions in the questionnaire, five in section two and one in section three, focused on folk beliefs and practices among the Dendi interviewed that are in contrast with orthodox Sunni Islam teachings. These questions touched on issues such as superstitious fear, spirit worship, use of a talisman for protection or magical use of the Qur'an, and visit to local diviners or religious healers, etc. Data from the interview transcripts revealed that, although some interviewees have affirmed allegiance to orthodox Islamic theologies (see answers to questions 1, 2, 3, 8, and 14), they have at the same time indicated that they use Qur'anic verses as protection and visit local diviners and healers when they struggle with fear (see answers to questions 6, 7, and 9). While fear is considered as the source of religion, and an opening into held beliefs (Sacks 1988:781), fear, as an "emotional foreboding or dread of impending distress or misfortune" (1988:781), is common and dominant in many traditional societies (Hiebert et al. 1999:224). According to Hiebert et al., such fear is expressed toward "ancestors, arbitrary spirits, hostile enemies, witchcraft, magic, and invisible forces that plague everyday life" (1999:224). Thus, to satisfy basic human existential needs, such as protection, good health, and an honorable and respected social life, the Dendis interviewed in Kandi and Malanville try to meet these needs at all cost when surrounded by life dangers. In such times, depending on their affective needs, their religious questions in terms of their values and expectations are different. The question for most of them in such times of crisis is no more if their belief or action is in line with Islam theology, but rather if their belief or their action gives them or their loved ones security, honour, respect, healing, or deliverance.

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Accordingly, responses to question number five showed that four interviewees (14%) admitted to spirit worship. M, a woman in her thirties living in Malanville who admitted spirit worship, said this: "I offer sacrifices to *jinn* to please them and calm them." She further added that "the Qur'an is not against our traditional practices". When asked how she knows that the Qur'an is not against Muslims being devoted to *jinn*, she replied: "our *imams* say some *jinn* are Muslims[67]". In other words, if the *imam*–literally the one "in front of", the leader of the group of Muslims during prayer in Sunni Islam and who is considered to have sufficient knowledge of the prayer ritual, "the person to be imitated" (Campo 2009:347)–says that some *jinn* are Muslims, it means their services are acceptable. Other interviewees who identified with the practice corroborated similar convictions as M's and alleged that not all *jinn* are bad. Some, according to these interviewees, offer help for protection, healing, and even cures for barrenness and lack of material wealth. In contrast to this minority, a large percentage of the interviewees (86%) affirmed no involvement with *jinn*. These Dendi interviewees asserted no participation in the practice of making offerings to *jinn* or spirits. For this group, such practices are *haram*, illicit and forbidden by Islam. Some more specific reasons were personal motives. E for instance, from Kandi, commented: "I am not in such cult". While O, a woman in her mid-forties, also in Kandi, exclaimed: "I fear God." Others, such as R, a retired former government worker in his late sixties in Kandi, asserted that "collaboration with *jinn* is forbidden" because "they were created like man".

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[67] The Qur'an reveals that some *jinn* converted to Islam and became believers and even try to convert other *jinn*. Surahs 46:29-32 and 72:1-2. Surah 72 The *Jinn* declares in verses 1-2: "1. Say: It has been revealed to me that a company of Jinn listened (to the Qur'an). They said, 'We have really heard a wonderful Recital! 2. 'It gives guidance to the Right, and we have believed therein: we shall not join (in worship) any (gods) with our Lord."

However, answers to Question 6, the next question, which is designed to confirm and evaluate the answers given in Question 5 above, were four per cent less (82%). This was because one interviewee from the twenty-four interviewees who said "No" to devotion to *jinn* was not sure if there was an Islamic teaching prohibiting the practice. Apparently, F, the twenty-two year old woman from Malanville, who was not consistent with Question 5 and Question 6, did not know that Islam considers it as idolatry–crediting anyone or anything to God's status. Such practice is considered as *shirk*, an unforgivable sin like *kabirah* (blasphemy) (Surah 17:111; 19:35). F's beliefs were based on sermons preached in mosques and oral religious teachings she had heard since childhood, as is still the practice in many African societies (Smythe 2005:842). Smythe points out that, although the colonial period introduced literacy (2005:842), "oral historical traditions are still maintained, though now often influenced by written histories. Education, whether Koranic or state, also relies heavily on oral instruction. Literacy changed African families, religions, and governments, but it also continues to be mediated by long-standing cultural traditions of oral discourse" (2005:842).

Fifty per cent (50%) of interviewees disclosed their fear of *jinn*. Most reasons enumerated were that *jinn* are generally evil in nature. Question 7 was intended to evaluate fear and the need for security among the Dendi interviewees–"a worldview theme that runs through nearly all folk religious belief systems" (Hiebert et al. 1999:87). Hence, fourteen interviewees admitted their fear of *jinn* during the interviews. These interviewees shared different aspects of the fear they live with in their daily lives: fear of *jinn*, fear of witchcraft, fear of evil attacks, fear of misfortune and death, etc. This confirmed that fear is a common struggle in traditional societies where life is precarious (Hiebert et al. 1999:87). The other 14 interviewees (50%), who stated not being afraid of *jinn*, commented that they trusted God and read the Qur'an. R, who

liked to make singular comments, argued that the fear of *jinn* should not be because "man is more sacred than *jinn*."

Excerpts of Question 9 and Question 10 show even more variation in the interviewees' responses. While only four interviewees (14%) indicated in response to Question 9 that they used a talisman for protection, 24 interviewees (86%) confirmed not using charms or talismans for protection. Nevertheless, less than forty per cent (36%) of the interviewees said "No" when asked "Do you use Qur'anic verses in your home to ward off the evil eye?" This means that sixty-four per cent (64%) of the interviewees use Qur'anic verses such as a magical object or a power object for protection. This also means that, although 86% of the interviewees believe that using talismans or charms are proscribed in Islam (see Chapter 3), less than half regard using Qur'anic verses for protection as contrary to Islamic teachings. This discrepancy indicates that the boundaries for the interviewees between charms and talismans and Islam teachings are not the same as those with using Qur'anic verses as power objects for protection. These fuzzy boundaries are characteristic of Dendi interviewees' understanding of "Which beliefs and practices are Islamic, and which are not?" (cf. Pew Research 2012:83-84). The purpose of Question 9 and Question 10, as designed by the Pew Research Forum, was to see the consistency or inconsistency in beliefs based on Islam orthodox teachings. These forms of folk beliefs and practices being researched were referred to in the Pew Forum study as other beliefs or certain beliefs to express the contrast with orthodox Islamic beliefs (Pew Research 2012:67).

Answers to Question 12 indicate that half of the interviewees (14 or 50%) said they visit spiritual healers for treatments for themselves or their family members, particularly when the health condition is alarming and not finding a solution in Western medicine. The interviewees who shared this practice claimed that they go to these local spiritual healers known as *alfas*, or

marabouts, because they are Muslims and they use the Qur'an. Some insisted that they do not visit witchdoctors who are idol worshipers. But the syncretistic practices of these *alfas* or local *marabouts*[68] are well established. They are not only *imams* who lead in prayers, but also healers (Bello 2001; Bello & Giannotti 2017; Joshua Project 2016). Bello, discussing the *marabouts* in Dendi culture, points out that the *marabout* or *alfa* who use Qur'anic verses and other Islamic insights from the Qur'an and the *hadith* are counterpart traditional healers from folk Islam; he also points out that the *marabout* or *alfa* is a traditional Islamized therapist who, depending on the case, uses practices more or less syncretic between the traditional techniques of pre-Islamic care and techniques of folk Islam covered by Koranic sciences (2001:32). Generally visited in the evening, an *alfa* or a *marabout* uses a family-oriented approach to deal with misfortune on individual heath or in a family life (2001:32). Bello lists four kinds of *marabouts* (folk Islam therapists and healers) among the Dendi:

1   The *alpha* who come first in numbers. Their therapy revolves around Qur'anic verses which are written on wooden tablets. The patient washes the verses, collects the ink water in a calabash and then drinks it or bathes with it to purify himself or herself.
2   The *alpha zima* who are both priests of the possession cult and *marabouts*.
3   The *sheik*–rare masters of Islam who only use prayers to cure their patients.
4   The *Dan Faraïze*, which means in Haoussa 'fake marabouts', who use magic to deceive their victims (Bello 2001:32; cf. Chapter 3).

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[68] As a comparison, the marabout or *sëriñ* among the Wolof of Senegal, another West African culture, are Muslim leaders with religious and political powers. In the eighteen century they "distributed land to their followers, collected taxes and rents, and served as religious councilors, judges, and educators. They were required to aid the monarchy in the defense of the kingdom and served as intermediaries between their followers and the state" (Searing 2005:1659-1660). In the Maghreb a characteristic of Sufism is maraboutism–the "Islamicization" of hagiolatry, or saint-worship–the prevalent tradition of North Africa and particularly of Morocco (see Hitti 1968a: 437 cited in Mojuetan 2005:7).

Reasons for visiting *marabouts* did not vary significantly. Most of the interviewees who admitted the practice said they visit them for additional help for their health or social needs, because they pray to God or because they are Muslims, an answer either to feel less guilty or generally used in arguments. However, S, a farmer in his late forties boldly held his conviction in these words: "I do go to spiritual healers when all my efforts are in vain". This reason, although not verbally mentioned by many, seems to be an important one. As indicated earlier, many made visits to local healers when Western medicine was thought to be inadequate. This sounds like what S meant by "when all my efforts are in vain"; in other words, when Western medicine, or Qur'anic prayers do not work, they visit local healers. The main concern for most of the interviewees, who admitted visiting *marabouts*, was the nature of the health crisis.

Consequently, based on this life crisis factor, sixty-one per cent (61%) of the interviewees responded that they have no particular objection to receiving healing prayers and exorcism from a Christian in the name of *Isa* (Jesus). The majority of this sixty-one per cent claimed that they would accept such help from Christians. These seventeen interviewees who said "Yes" to Question 15 clearly expressed their openness to compound interpretations of their beliefs. However, they were not too interested in cognitive reasoning or argumentations, particularly when facing life-threatening decisions. The Dendi interviewees in the sixty-one per cent mentioned above had no significant generational or gender difference. They comprised ten men and seven women. They were between twenty-two and eighty years of age. The average ages were thirty-four years of age for the women and forty-four years of age for the men. These data are useful indicators of the reality and the importance, to people of all ages, gender, and even social class, of finding a viable solution in times of health crises or life crises in general, even if it is theologically incorrect at some point. These data also illustrate what could contribute

to a worldview change in a person's life. From the data, one hundred per cent (100%) of the interviewees knew *Isa* (Jesus) as a prophet from God, and eighty-nine per cent (89%) believed in his healing and miracle-working power; hence, questions 13 and 14 were two of the questions with the highest consensual responses. Indeed, Question thirteen was the only question with a one hundred per cent consensual response. Other questions in the questionnaire with similarly high consensual responses were Question 1: "Do you say your five daily prayers?" (Yes, 96%); Question 3: "Do you believe in the existence of supernatural beings called *jinn*?" (Yes, 92%); and Question 8: "Do you believe in witchcraft?" (Yes, 89%). One factor that distinguishes Question 13 is that it was inquiring about *Isa* (Jesus), who is considered a holy and great prophet in Islam and mentioned more than 30 times as Jesus and Messiah in the Qur'an (see a selected list of surahs: 2:87, 136, 253; 3: 45, 52, 55, 59, 84; 4:157, 163, 171, 172; 5:17, 46; 6:85; 9:30, 31; 19:34; 33:7; 42:13; 43:61; 57:27; 61:6; etc.).

The substantial number of interviewees who expressed openness to Christian healing and exorcism prayers pointed out that "Christians pray in the name of the unique creator God", and as such, they are not idol worshipers. Although this is good news from the data in terms of Christian mission, it is, however, important to put it in perspective with the thirty-nine per cent (39%) of the interviewees who clearly indicated that they would not accept healing or exorcism prayers from Christians. Although this group (with a categoric "No" to Christian help, no matter what their needs in times of crises) share beliefs that *Isa al Masih* (Jesus the messiah) was a messenger of God and a holy and great prophet with power to heal and deliver from spirit possession, its members do not think it was proper to request Christian prayers. These interviewees perceived a distinction between their beliefs mentioned above and their being open to Christian beliefs and ministries. Y, an *alfa* or *marabout* in Kandi in his late forties and one

of the interviewees who said "No" to Christian religious help, alleged that beliefs in *Isa* (Jesus) as a great prophet sent by God with healing and miracle working power "should be the belief of every good Muslim". Therefore, according to a solid majority in this group, rather than reinforcing Christianity, they prefer to promote Muslim exorcists who use *ruqyah*[69] (called or considered Islamic exorcism). To some degree, interviewees in this group showed either judgmental or conservative positions. For instance, one of the interviewees, a woman in her late fifties in Malanville, exposed her particular theology on Christians and Jesus in these terms: "I have seen the name of Jesus in the Qur'an. But He is the leader of Christians. When Christians pray in his name, they have a result now in their earthly lives, but on the Day of Judgment, *Issa* will turn his back on Christians and face Muslims who are true believers". In the same vein, B, a male interviewee in his late sixties in Kandi, said "I will not accept exorcism from a Christian in the name of *Isa al Masih,* because *Isa* had a mission: bring the Good News to his people and assure them the coming of a prophet who will speak of Him more than Himself". The idea of visiting Muslim exorcists was the solution for the great majority of these interviewees. Consequently, assertions such as "if one Muslim exorcist fails, I will go to another Muslim exorcist", or "I will go to different Muslim exorcists if I am no satisfied", were mentioned. This view indicates that the majority of the thirty-nine per cent (39%) were not ready to go outside their Islamic *ummah* (Islamic community) for help, even if it was a matter of life and death. Thus, no matter the health crisis or the life crisis, allegiance to the Islamic *ummah* was of capital

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[69] Ruqya or ruqyah seen by some as "a kind of treatment" is literally a spell, an Incantation, or a speech considered divine and "recited as a means of curing disease". (Imam M.B. Yazeed and Ibn M. Al-Qazwini. 2007. *Sunan Ibn Mâjah*. Vol. 5, 510). For instance, *ruqyah* is "to recite Sûrat Al-Fitihah or any other Sūrah of the Qur'an and then blow one's breath with saliva over a sick person's body-part" (2007:510).

importance. Interviewees in this group were ready to exercise patience and perseverance in their search of an Islamic solution to their needs.

According to the field data, the town of Kandi led in this determination to find an Islamic solution in times of life crisis. To be honest, the researcher never observed this fact during the entire time he lived in Kandi from 2006 to 2016 as clearly as the data revealed in this research. Unfortunately, this study started when the researcher was phasing out his work in the region. Eight out of eleven (about seventy-three per cent (73%)) of the interviewees in Kandi were against a Christian solution in times of health crisis. Surprisingly, in Malanville, fourteen out of seventeen (about eighty-two per cent (82%)) said "Yes"; they would accept a Christian healing and exorcism prayer if needed. The researcher believes this strong sense of total allegiance to the Islamic *ummah* in Kandi could be due to either the presence of a Sunni Islamic theological school in the town or the fact that the Dendi in Kandi make up only ten per cent (10%) of the Kandi population (Republique du Benin, Ministere de la Decentralisation, de la Gouvernance Locale, de l'Administration et de l'Amenagement du Territoire 2015:21, 22). Whatever the reason, the data reveal that the Dendi in Kandi are more rigid in their practice of Islam and take seriously the image of the Islamic *ummah*. In contrast, the data illustrate that in Malanville, where the Dendi/Djerma are in the majority, comprising between eighty and ninety per cent (80-90%) of the town's population (Ahoyo Adjovi 2006:12; Boluvi 2004:7-20), the practice of Islam is less rigid with no particular attention to the image of the Islamic *ummah*–the shame and honour paradigm characteristic of Islamic culture (Bauer 2014; Georges & Baker 2016).

The overwhelming majority of the interviewees in Malanville who admitted being open to Christian healing and exorcism prayers did not initially give theological reasons, such as 'Christians are monotheists' or 'mentioned in the Qur'an' etc.–rather, they almost unanimously

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referred to their need to try "something that could help" them resolve their pending health or life crisis. K, a forty-seven-year-old farmer in Kandi's assertion is an illustration. He said: "I am open to any help as long as it is not from a witchdoctor". As expressed in K's statement, the fear of committing idolatry was perceptible in many answers.

The next chapter discusses the worldview assumptions and implications of beliefs such as the one embedded in K's statement. But it is important to note that most interviewees who are open to receiving Christian help are also afraid of *jinn*. To recall, fifty per cent (50%) of the interviewees admitted their fear of *jinn* in answer to Question 7, while answers to Question 15 showed that sixty-one per cent (61%) of the interviewees were in favour of Christian help if facing a case of spirit possession or illness that had not been resolved otherwise. Put into perspective, interviewees with similar answers to Question 7 (fear of *jinn*) and Question 15 (open to Christian help) also said "Yes" to Question 11 (witnessed an exorcism). These people had not only witnessed a case of spirit possession with its traumatizing cycle of violent and sometimes oppressive manifestations, but sometimes they had witnessed the suffering of family members or family friends. Some talked about their cousin, their children, their nephew, etc. Fortunately, the focus of the field research was not on spirit manifestations and experiences. This initial plan was abandoned considering the heavy emotional and psychological trauma that would have been involved in the process for both parties. Nevertheless, three interviewees admitted to having been possessed by a spirit. With ten years' experience in the field among the Dendi, this researcher was sure there were more; however, this was not substantiated by the data.
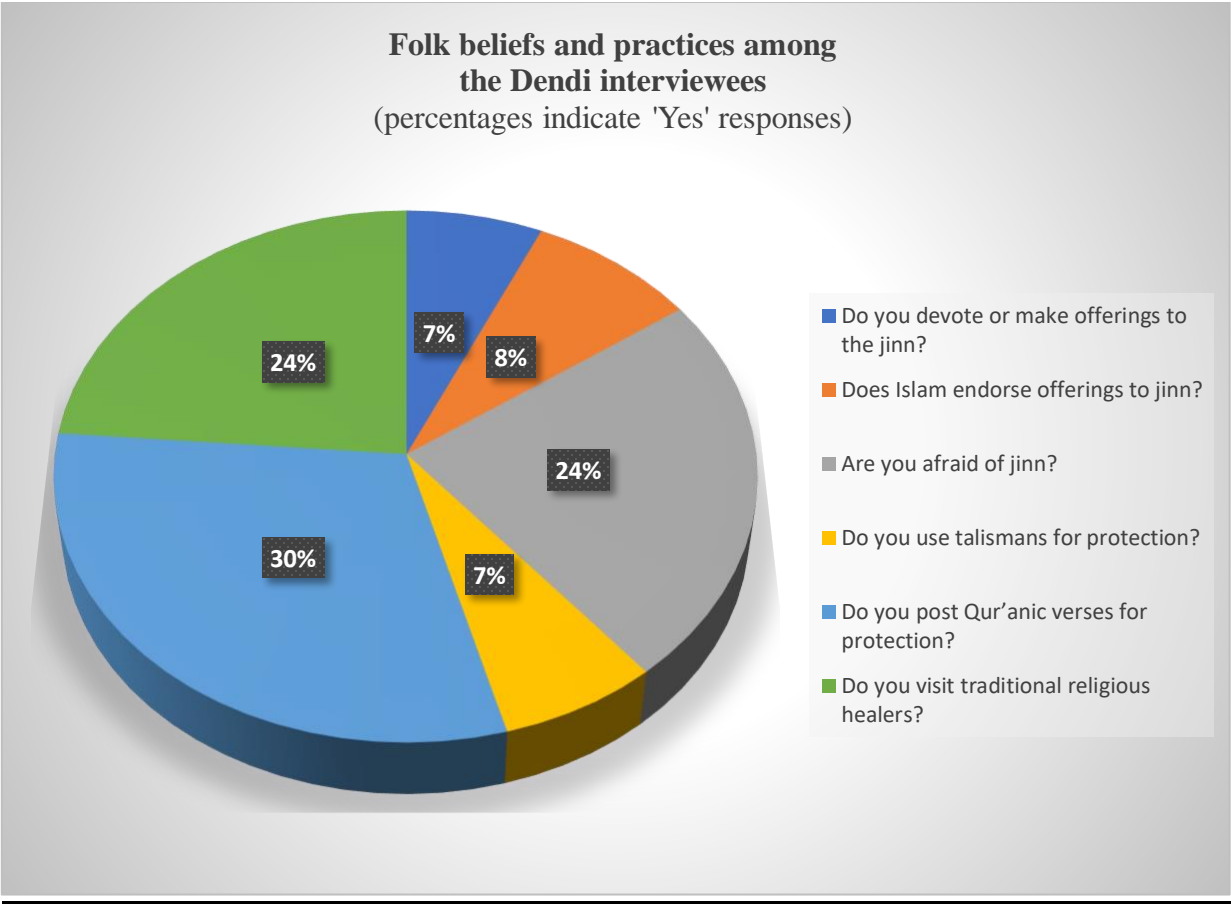
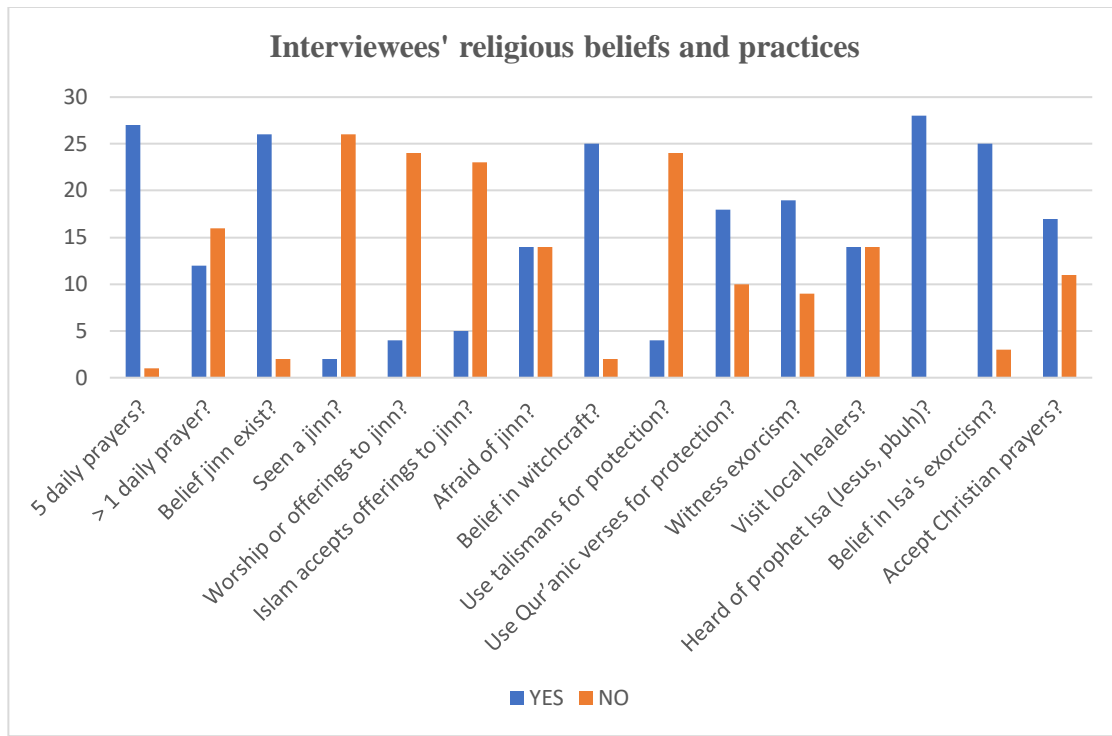**Figure 7: Graphical representation of field quantitative data**

Figure 8: General representation of field quantitative data

Figure 9: Field qualitative data word cloud created with ATLAS.ti 9

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4.10.2. Implications of the findings on research questions

Merriam (2009:16, 23-24, 171) argues that findings or categories/themes, which are recurring patterns developed from the data analysis, are answers to the researcher's study question(s). The design of the questionnaire with "Yes or No" questions followed by open-ended questions, inquiring into the reasons or circumstances of the initial answer, presupposed two categories for each question. As seen above, the questionnaire had three sections and fifteen questions. Two groups of interviewees developed during the data analysis with two major themes. The first group was the pro-Islamic *ummah* honour and the second was the pro-crisis solution first. Fundamentally, these two groups held contrasting and contending values and theological assumptions. While the former argued around faithfulness to Islamic creeds or tenets with cognitive and evaluative themes such as "what is *haram* or illicit beliefs and practices in Islam?", the latter expressed more experiential themes such as "what do I do when my Qur'anic prayers are not giving me satisfaction with my illness or spirit oppression and manifestation?" Accordingly, to answer the central research question, "What are the Dendi folk religious questions and needs in times of crisis?" the researcher can list the following, which express different needs based on the categories and themes from the data analysis:

- What is *haram* or illicit beliefs and practices in Islam?
- Which Muslim can assist me?
- Which Muslim healer has the most efficient *ruqyah*?
- What can I do on my own while waiting for a lawful solution?
- What do I do when my Qur'anic prayers are not giving me satisfaction?
- Why are my prayers not working against the bad *jinn* that are making me ill or tormenting me or people I know?
- Who has tried something different against wicked jinn that is working?
- Where can I get effective help against witchcraft and evil *jinn*?

The categories that emerged from the data mentioned above were employed to develop theories for mission strategy to respond to the Dendi cognitive, affective, and evaluative needs in times of crises. With regards to which mission strategy will respond best to the above questions and meet their associated needs among the Dendi in times of crises, this researcher offers two suggestions: A Christian mission strategy that goes toward a scriptural response to fear of *jinn* (spirits), fear of witchcraft, spirit attacks that cause illness, and spirit possession; and A Christian healing and exorcism/deliverance prayer ministry/strategy that is contextualized considering the existing Islamic practice of *ruqyah*.

With some exceptions, according to the data, most Dendi interviewed who embraced mystical or esoteric dimensions of Islam and had mixed evaluative religious standards appeared to be strongly influenced by persisting pre-Islamic worldview themes, a lack of life crisis rituals in orthodox Islam, and confusions around what is lawful or illicit in terms of beliefs and practices in the Qur'an. This theory could explain certain religious practices with a range of supplementary spiritual practices observed in the data, including the three major folk practices, exercised by seventy-eight per cent (78%) of interviewees, namely the fear of *jinn*, magical use of the Qur'an, and visits to spiritual healers. The theory also considers three additional folk practices exposed in the data with a lesser distribution: using a talisman (7%), the practice of making offerings to *jinn* (7%), and belief that Islam cautions making offerings to *jinn* (8%). These animistic or pre-Islamic beliefs and practices that have been legitimated by some of the interviewees who admitted using them in their daily lives, despite these local folk/popular beliefs and practices being contrary to orthodox Islam tenets, answers the questions of those who use them to satisfy their needs and hearts' longing (cf. Hiebert et al. 1999:10).

As a response to these findings, this researcher developed a theoretical model for mission, applying critical contextualization in order to avoid the mistakes of orthodox Islam among the Dendi and suggests a Christian response to Dendi andorcism and Islamic *ruqyah*–a practice often solicited, according to the data. The theory derived from the research findings, especially as it relates to question fifteen, is that worldview orientation changes when people face life crises. This confirms information already stated in the literature. Hiebert et al. argue that in times of crisis, when facing life emergencies in daily life, people are open to new ideas and new answers, and appropriate instruction enables them to cope in appropriate ways (1999:167, 389). They add that such culturally sensitive support is welcome as it empowers those in crisis and helps them to rise above their immediate circumstances to survive the emergency (1999:318). Hiebert et al. further write:

> Many people are open to the gospel when they are sick and find no healing in their old ways. Others look for new answers when their old explanations fail. It is important at such times to present Christ as the answer, but to do so without manipulation. It is our task to point people to Jesus. When people turn to him, it is he who is the answer to the longings of their hearts…. Leaders must begin by ministering to people according to their specific needs. This is particularly important in reaching out to people who have never heard of Christ and who need signs demonstrating to them his reality and power. Such ministries, however, are preevangelism, and Christians must use these occasions to declare to the people the great news of God's salvation from sin. Diseases, failures, losses, and other disasters are also occasions for teaching people biblical truths regarding the nature and causes of misfortunes and afflictions (Hiebert et al. 1999:167-168).

Hiebert et al. did not specifically introduce the above statements as a specific principle or theory. However, their assertion sounds like one. Leavy defines a theory as "an account of social reality that is grounded in empirical data but extends beyond that data" (2014:4). As such, Hiebert et al.'s affirmations above can be considered as a model for ministry among folk people.

Nevertheless, Paul Hiebert saw grounded theory as a qualitative research method that goes beyond typical theories already discussed in the literature by allowing speculative thinking (2009:170). The next chapter, to validate the theory(ies) that have emerged, discusses excerpts from the data in conjunction with missiological principles in critical contextualization and make suggestions for models of mission strategy that will take into account the Dendi folk questions and needs that emerged from the field research.

4.11. Conclusion

This chapter covered the design and methodology used for the field research using the grounded theory in Kandi and Malanville among twenty-eight randomly selected Dendi. The goal of the field research conducted was to gather empirical data that could contribute to answering the research questions: (1) What are the Dendi folk religious questions and needs in times of crisis? and (2) What mission strategy will best meet the Dendi cognitive, affective, and evaluative folk religious needs in times of crisis so that they can believe and understand the transforming power of the gospel? An explanation was given in the context of the above methodology, why the stratified random sampling method was chosen, and why a questionnaire was used in interviews in which most questions (13/15) had been tested in a quantitative research survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre in 2012.

The researcher was greatly assisted in this process of data preparation, organization, and coding by ATLAS.ti 9. This CODAS facilitated the data evaluation and validation processes. The findings reported have shown initial answers to the research questions and helped in providing suggestions for developing a theoretical mission model that is contextualized in order to answer the Dendi folk religious questions and meet their related needs.

Chapter 5: Toward a contextualized approach to the Dendi people

5.1. Introduction

Based on the field research findings this chapter offers several suggestions towards a contextualized mission strategy for the Dendi people. The focus is on responses to the Dendi's persisting pre-Islamic beliefs and practices, such as the shame-guilt worldview typical to Muslim cultures, the fear-power worldview characterized by fear of the *jinn*, using talismans for protection, etc. iden tified in the grounded theory field study. Hiebert et al.'s four-step critical contextualization model (1999:22) is combined with Rick Love's five-steps to contextualization among folk Muslims (2000:57-65) to suggest a contextualized ministry to the Dendi. Hadaway (2010:20) points out that "methods contextualized according to the worldview of folk Muslims hold the most promise for their evangelization". Hwang (2019:50) has also stated that "Parshall, like Zwemer, stresses the importance of a deeper understanding of ordinary Muslims by contemplating their hearts and minds", hence, Parshall "encourages missionaries to study carefully the traditional Muslim mindset in order to figure out their felt-needs".

Consequently, Love's suggestion to articulate a "kingdom theology" in witnessing among folk Muslims is emphasized in this chapter. As Love rightly puts it: "the planting of contextualized churches rooted in kingdom theology is the most effective way to reach folk Muslims" (2000:9). Therefore, this chapter does not discuss or evaluate John Mark Terry's (1996:167-173) five[70] commonly discussed approaches in Muslims ministry. The chapter refers

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[70]For a detailed discussion of John Mark Terry's five approaches to Muslim mission see Wonjoo Hwang 2019. *Toward a healthier contextualization among Muslims*. Although Hwang's (2019:2-3) main concern in his book is to give a critical evaluation to Insider Movement (IM) based on John Travis's spectrum of six "Christ-centered communities" (C1-C6); he pays a great tribute to evangelical pioneers in Muslim evangelism (2019:18-58). Hwang's historical survey of Protestants' mission among Muslims is commendable. Likewise, are George W.

briefly to John Travis' C1-C6 spectrum as it relates to these six possible ways a Christian church among the Dendi could be contextualized (Love 2000:187-194; cf. Travis 1998:407-408). Subsequently, this chapter explores ways to arrive at a living ritual that will not only be culturally acceptable as a replacement or substitute for the important adorcism ritual of the Dendi, but will also provide a biblically and theologically sound element to use in Christian mission among the Dendi.

5.2.   Contextualization and the Dendi's two main worldview orientations

Previous chapters in this study exposed the strong influence of pre-Islamic beliefs and practices in the Dendi observance of Islam. The folk Islam that results from the Dendi syncretism obviously blends different worldview frameworks. Firstly, the shame-honour worldview model, generally characteristic of the Mediterranean culture in which Islam originated (Bauer 2014; Hwang 2019; Malina 2001; Muller 2013; Musk 1996, 2005; Pikkert 2008; Swartley 2005; Trousdale 2012), but also the guilt-innocence worldview paradigm, and mostly the fear-power worldview context known to dominate animistic cultures such as sub-Saharan African cultures, as well as Asian, Central- and South American cultures (Muller 2013). Thus, although data from the field research exposed the fear-power local worldview, the shame-

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Peters' (1977) three step Muslim evangelism approach–"direct, comprehensive, and indirect or infiltration"; and Sam Schlorff's (2006) Muslim evangelism in six models: "1. nineteenth-century imperial, 2. direct, 3. indirect or fulfillment, 4. dialectical, 5. dialogical, and 6. dynamic equivalence or translational" (Hwang 2019:19-20) The strength of Hwang's book is that it gives major proponents, main characteristics and an evaluation of the different models listed above–and more. Hwang touches Phil Parshall's (1979, 1980, 1998, 2002, 2003) contextualization among Muslims with his concepts of common ground, bridges, points of contact, dynamic equivalence principle and form and meaning. Unfortunately, while Hwang comments briefly on the Camel method (2019:58), he does not no refer to folk Islam or "power encounter". This is to this researcher a major shortcoming in Hwang's excellent book.

honour Mediterranean worldview framework was identified and the guilt-innocence worldview assumed to some extent. These three opposing worldview models are often discussed together.

John Pilch (1991 cited in Moskala 2014:25) thinks that guilt, anxiety and shame/honour are "three control patterns of human personality that exist in all cultures". According to Pilch, all cultures have aspects of behaviour control mechanisms using guilt, shame, and honour and as such "there is no honor culture, no shame culture, and no guilt culture", but only a dominant control pattern for people's conduct in each culture. Tennent concurs with Pilch's argument and argues that recent anthropological research has demonstrated that "no known cultures of the world can be spoken of as exclusively guilt-based or shame-based (2007:79, 80; 77-103 cited in Moskala 2014:25). However, Pilch acknowledges the works of anthologists who identify "Mediterranean cultures as being characterized by honour and shame controls" (Moskala 2014:25). Although Moskala's article focuses on the shame and honour worldview paradigm, with a good survey of relevant literature (Augsburger 1986; Bechtel 1991; Daube 1956; Davis 1977; De Silva 2003, 2008; Downing 2007; Flanders 2011; Giordano 2002; Hagedorn 2005; Jewett 2003; Malina 2001; Malina & Neyrey 1991; Mbuvi 2002; Peristiany 1968; Peristiany & Pitt-Rivers 1992; Pilch 1991; Pilch & Malina 1993; Pitt-Rivers 1977; Plevnik 1993; Rohrbaugh 2010; Sawicki 2000; Schneider 1972; Simkins 2000; Tennent 2007 cited in Moskala 2014:24), he also touches on the guilt-innocence worldview framework. Nevertheless, Moskala's holistic understanding of these three human behaviour control patterns is expressed in these terms: "every human action had potential for either gaining honor or shame. The crucial issue is what is dominant in the society—values of honor and shame, or justice and guilt? Is the culture fear or freedom oriented?" (2014:26).

Muller calls these worldview examples the "three mega-trend blocks" (2013:35). Anthropologists and sociologists confirm these three main worldview categories. Their studies have identified and associated the 'guilt-innocence' worldview environment as the one dominating, but not controlling, in Western nations such as "Northern Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand" (Muller 2013:32). This guilt-innocence Western worldview is characterized by 'right versus wrong' as the basic underlying principle with innocence regarded as telling the truth, being honest, being right or righteous (Muller 2013:38). Muller points out that much money and time is spent in the West "debating the rights and wrongs of society", hence many westerners are obsessed about "knowing their rights and exercising them" (2013:38). However, the tension, "pulls and demands of these two diametrically opposed forces" leave many Westerners plagued with guilt that haunts them, "bringing fear and condemnation upon them" (2013:38). Consequently, Westerners, in general, "do everything they can to avoid being or feeling guilty" (Muller 2013:38). Similarly, Moskala points out that, in a Judeo-Christian Western civilization, "guilt, sin, justice, forgiveness, atonement, salvation, justification, and innocence" are key elements in interplay in an average life (2014:26).

On the other hand, the shame-honour worldview framework is widely, but not exclusively, the worldview in the 10/40 window with its Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist majority (Muller 2013:32). In distinct contrast to this the fear-power worldview paradigm is dominant, but not exclusive, to cultures in "Africa, Central- and South America, and some islands in the Far East" (Muller 2013:29). Based on these anthropological and sociological insights, Muller contends that Christian witnessing approaches to people in each of these worldview contexts should be "culturally appropriate" (Muller 2013:6). It is admittedly true that this will not be an easy task for missionaries, considering the fact that "cultures evolve from one emphasis to

another" (Doss 2014:92) with a blending of the three blocks and the combination of shame and fear and power and honour as observed in the Dendi culture and most sub-Saharan African cultures (Doss 2014:92, 96-98; Hiebert et al. 1999:224-226; Mbuvi 2002;).

The following sections attempt to contextualize the Dendi's above mentioned three worldview blocks with regards to the Dendi culture, using Hiebert's paradigm of five ways to change old forms:

1   *addition*–keeping old cultural forms that have support from the scripture and contextualize when with biblical light;

2   *subtraction*–rejecting old cultural forms which "convey heretical or sinful connotations";

3   *substitution*–replacing old cultural forms with new ones that meet in a Christian way the "needs and functions" of the old form;

4   *reinterpretation*–giving an old form new meaning through systematic teaching and clear communication; and

5   *creation of new forms*–initiating new cultural and religious forms not yet locally known, which could meet an existing need of the target people; (Hiebert 1985:156, 166, 189, 236; Love 2000:61-62).

According to Love, Hiebert's five approaches to change and transform old forms in a target culture or Richard Neibuhr's classic "five-fold analysis of possible positions regarding Christ and culture", is based on the three ways God brings every culture "under his kingship", namely through adoption, confrontation, and transformation (2000:60-63, 68; cf. Hesselgrave 1978:79-82; Kraft 1979:103-115; Neibuhr 1951 cited in Love 2000:68).

Niebuhr's (1951) theological perspective on culture presents five possible attitudes of Christians to culture:

1   Christ against culture;

2   Christ of culture;

3   Christ above culture;

4   Christ and culture in paradox; and

5   Christ the transformer of culture" (1956:45-218).

Below is a summary of Niebuhr's five Christian perspectives on culture without engaging

them[71].

Succinct summary of each of Niebuhr's five Christian postulates toward culture (1956:45-218).

1. *Christ against culture*. This first position, according to Niebuhr, with no compromise "affirms the sole authority of Christ over" Christians and any culture and resolutely rejects any claim any human culture could make (1956:45). In other words, Christ is opposed to any cultural feature be it its development, morality, value etc. (1956:48-51, 60-65). This is a denial of cultures which not only is not balanced, but does not reflect God's work in human cultures through history (1956:66-82).

2. *Christ of culture.* The second position is the understanding that Christ's incarnation in the Jewish culture with a local birth, a local language, a local dress, local food, local feasts, and a local religion is a sign of God's full approval of human cultures. What Niebuhr believes "will be objected" because "culture is so various that the Christ of culture becomes a chameleon; that the word 'Christ' in this connection is nothing but an honorific and emotional term by means of which each period attaches numinous quality to its personified ideals" (1956:107).

3. *Christ above culture*. This third paradigm rejects the total denial of cultural value in witnessing of the Christ against culture–the "anticultural radicals" and the uncritical view and accommodation of any culture of the Christ of culture. This position could be compared to Hiebert's critical contextualization or Love's confrontation model. Yet, the weakness of this position is that, despite its central position, which represents "the great majority movement in Christianity" this position considers all human efforts to be sinful, and sees man's problem only with God and not with Christ and the world (1956:117).

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[71]For detailed discussions of Niebuhr's five Christian historical attitudes toward culture see Paul Louis Metzger. (2007). Christ, culture, and the sermon on the mount community, *Ex Auditu* 23; Eunice Okorocha (2006) *Cultural issues and the biblical message*. In T. Adeyemo (ed). *Africa Bible commentary*; Craig A. Carter, *Rethinking Christ and culture: A Post-Christendom perspective*; Rick Allbee. (2005). *Christ witnessing to culture: Toward a new paradigm between Christ and culture*; Glenn Rogers. (2004). *The Bible culturally speaking: The role of culture in the production, presentation and interpretation of God's Word.;* Paul G. Schrotenboer. (1998). Christ and Culture, *Evangelical Review of Theology* 22:316–336.

Succinct summary of each of Niebuhr's five Christian postulates toward culture (1956:45-218).
4. **Christ and culture in paradox.** This fourth position is held by another central Christian movement called the dualist (1956:149). This group "divides the world in Manichaean fashion into realms of light and darkness, of kingdoms of God and Satan" and the position tries to distinguish between "loyalty to Christ and responsibility for culture" (1956:149). The problem of this group is its existential thinking with regard to God's righteousness and man's need of sanctification (1956:150). As such, argues Niebuhr, the group can't reach a meaningful contextualization because too much into conservatism (1956:188).
5. **Christ the transformer of culture.** This is the fifth Christian movement identified by Niebuhr. It is called the conversionists (1956:190). It has "a more positive and hopeful attitude toward culture" (1956:191). Not only the group admits corruption in most human cultures, but the group is optimistic about the renewal of human cultures because Christ does not only deal with the "specious, external aspects of human behavior in the first place, but that he tries the hearts and judges the subconscious life; that he deals with what is deepest and most fundamental in man" (1956:191).

5.2.1. Contextual responses to the Dendi guilt-shame worldview matters

From the field data, a few interviewees often mentioned here and there the "compulsory" nature of the five pillars of Islam for every Muslim, especially the *salat*. With words such as "because I am a Muslim", "because it is compulsory", "because it is forbidden" or "because it's not good", many interviewees expressed their reasons why they practice or obey most of the Islamic religious tenets and also why they do not engage in illicit social or religious acts. Obviously, notions of sin and guilt related to breaking Islamic religious law, or offending the family or the community by not having a public and faithful practice of the tenets of Islam, are being expressed. While Hiebert (1985:213) argues that "shame is a reaction to other people's criticism, an acute personal chagrin at our failure to live up to our obligations and the expectations others have of us", Tennent (2007:80 cited in Moskala 2014:38) contends that "virtually every culture in the world contains concepts of both guilt and shame, including the pressure to conform to certain group expectations as well as some internalized ideas about what

is right or wrong. The difference is not in the absence of either shame or guilt, but rather in how dominant these tendencies are."

Hiebert points out that one feels guilty when he or she violates his/her conscience–"the absolute standards of morality within us" (1985:213). Such violation may bring guilt "even though no one else knows of her or his misdeed" (1985:213). Hence, the person is only relieved after confessing or making restitution (1985:213). Hiebert further comments that "true guilt cultures rely on an internalized conviction of sin as the enforcer of good behavior, not, as shame cultures do, on external sanctions. Guilt cultures emphasize punishment and forgiveness as ways of restoring the moral order; shame cultures stress self-denial and humility as ways of restoring the social order" (1985:213). Hiebert's insight is so true for both Western and Eastern cultures. From our Judeo-Christian worldview the guilt and shame feelings live within us like twins.

Moskala notes that *asham* (Gen 26:10; Lev 4:13, 22, 27; Eze 25:12; Hab 1:11 cited in Moskala 2014:27) and *avon* (Gen 4:13; 44:16; Pas 32:5 cited in Moskala 2014:27) are the "two main words used in the Hebrew Bible to express the meaning of guilt" (2014:27). These two worlds, according to Moskala, imply "sin, transgression of God's law, disregard of God's will, disobedience of his word, twisting his standards, and putting down his name and reputation" (2014:27). Muller (2013), Moskala (2014) and Doss (2014) all trace the guilt, shame and fear feelings back to Adam and Eve's first experience of sin in the garden of Eden–what Muller calls "the Eden effect" (2013:19, 23-24). In Muller's view the account of Genesis 3, 7, 8 and 10, which recall the sad discovery of the effect of sin by the first-to-live humans, exposed these three concepts in these terms:

> 7. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they **knew** that they were **naked**; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8.And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife **hid** themselves from the presence of the LORD God

among the trees of the garden". 10. So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was **afraid** because I was naked; and I **hid** myself." (Gen 3:7-8, 10 cited in Muller 2013:27, emphasis in bold supplied).

Commenting on the above verses, Muller identifies in those verses what he calls "the three common-ancestor worldviews" of guilt, shame, and fear (27-29). Doss, also commenting on those same verses, argues in that same line and asserts that Adam and Even were in a "horrible predicament called sin with three interwoven and overlapping dimensions–shame, guilt, and fear" (2014:90). In Muller's view, the Edenic story of the fall of the first humans (Gen 3:1-13) and its related consequences are responsible for the guilt-, shame-, and fear-based ancestral worldviews "passed upon mankind from that point on" (2013:27). Muller further reveals that:

> Over the millennia that followed many different worldviews developed, all of them built around sin's effect on mankind. The worldviews that we experience today are all trying in some way to negate these effects. Thus, it is unwise for missionaries to champion one worldview over others. As cultures and worldviews developed over the millennia, many gravitated towards one of the three perspectives of guilt, shame or fear. This polarization has created three mega-trends in worldview. While the majority of worldviews generally fit into these three classifications, there are many worldviews which draw equally from two or all three common-ancestral worldviews. (Muller 2013:35)

Consequently, humans' feelings of guilt, shame, and fear, although sometimes subjective responses, are an objective acknowledgment of spiritual reality (Mullen 1996:734). This means that guilt, as a judicial element, and shame, as a relational component, are related, although with shame emphasizing "sin's effect on self-identity" (1996:734). As such, "Shame is a godly motivator" because "a virtuous life shames the ungodly, providing a context for evangelism" (Titus 2:8; 1 Peter 3:16 cited in Mullen 1996:734). Fortunately, points out Moskala, Genesis 3 offers us "at least four signs of God's grace", which are:

> 1. God's calling: "Where are you?" (3:9) reveals His crying and broken heart. It was not only an invitation to dialogue but an expression of His grace (Rev 13:8). Christ's victory over Satan, death, and sin was proleptically applied to

them. It was a question of a Judge that demanded a response and acceptance of responsibility. They are accountable to Him because He is their Creator. This cry of God would also help Adam and Eve to realize where they were- in- stead of enjoying God's presence, they were afraid of Him and hiding!

2. "I will put enmity"–God gives people the ability to hate evil and sin (3:15a). Thus, spiritual warfare is introduced and the Great Controversy started. Sinners need outside help because their nature loves sin. In order to hate sin, people need God"s help.

3. The proto-gospel was announced–the promised Seed will come (3:15). What they could not do for themselves, the promised Seed would accomplish. He would defeat their enemy and bring salvation (for the full exposure of Gen 3:15, see Kaiser 1995 & Ojewole 2002).

4. God clothed the first couple with garments of skin (3:21) which point to God's ultimate sacrifice. He covered their shame, forgave their guilt, and restored their status of honor in spite the consequences of sin they would still experience. (Moskala (2014:34-35).

5.2.1.1. Practical Christian responses to Dendi guilt-shame worldview concerns and needs

1. Christian missionaries to the Dendi should be cautious with a strong emphasis on individualism that characterizes Western societies: (1) Africans are generally concerned about their community. (2) The Dendis as Muslims are group/community orientated.

2. Christian missionaries to the Dendi should find or identify what in their community (e.g., business failure, lying, adultery, deceiving one's family or community, apostasy, not fasting publicly, not sending parents to the hajj, stealing, pregnancy out of wedlock, losing a fight etc.) brings guilt and shame to them and "that are also seen as sin in the Bible" and address them biblically with case studies from the Bible (Trousdale 2012:191).

3. In the Bible, immorality, disobedience or sin in general is the inner cause of shame because: "when a thief is caught, he is ashamed" (Jer 2:26; De Vries 1962:306 cited in Moskala 2014:37). But, Christian witness to the Dendi should emphasize that "God is a God of reconciliation, seeking to restore them to fellowship and harmony with Himself and one another" (Hiebert et al. 1999:226). The Dendi need to hear more about "forgiveness, reconciliation, and restored fellowship" in Christ (1999:226).

4. Christian missionaries to the Dendi should teach against false guilt, especially when God decides not to "heal the sick, deliver the bewitched, and bring justice to the oppressed". These people should not be blamed or accused wrongly to the point of putting them in a "false sense of guilt and despair", because, "to attribute sickness and death to a lack of faith or to spiritual defeat is too simple an answer (Job; John 9:2; 2 Cor. 12:7–9)" since those events might not be a failure on the part of those suffering or dead, but they might be elements of "God's greater redemptive work" (Hiebert et al. 1999:380).

5. Christian witnessing among the Dendi should emphasize that the answer to the problem of a broken relationship resulting from sin is *shalom* or "the mending of broken peace and harmony" (Hiebert 1985:213). As such, Christian witnessing needs both a theology of guilt and shame in order to "fully understand the biblical meaning of sin and salvation" (Hiebert 1985:213).

6. Christians working among the Dendi should make good use of the guilt-shame worldview assumptions already present among the Dendi. It can serve as a bridge for teaching and experiencing the Bible message of sin as a human condition "tied to both shame and guilt. The former is emphasized in the Old Testament, where sin is seen primarily as a break in relationships that occurs when people violate their covenants with God and with one another" (Hiebert 1985:213).

7. Christian witness among the Dendi should clearly demonstrate in the local context that, through Christ's sacrifice, individuals who have sinned or violated social or religious laws and who are feeling guilty and fear judgment are "forgiven and they are restored to a right standing before God" (Hiebert et al. 1999:226).

5.2.2. Contextual responses to the Dendi shame-honour worldview matters

Findings from the field data revealed that the Dendi in Kandi are highly attached and defensive of the honour of the Islamic *ummah*. They appear to have a high identity with Islam even though their practice of the religion is low to many standards. Subsequently, they take the image of the Islamic *ummah* seriously. By way of contrast, though the Dendi in Malanville may

have a high identity of Islam, they are less concerned with the honour of the *ummah* in times of crises. But they generally identify with the shame and honour paradigm characteristic of Islamic culture (Bauer 2014; Georges & Baker 2016).

An Arab proverb says "Nothing cleanses the shame except blood" (Swartley 2005:119). Swartley observes that Muslims generally hold honour collectively in the family or in the community (2005:119). According to Swartley "shame is an offense against all and must be avenged. Someone who dishonours his family may be shunned, or, in extreme cases, murdered to restore the honor of the family name" (2005:119). Thus, argues Swartley, honour-shame are "powerful social motivators" in many cultures and particularly in the Mediterranean cultures (2005:119). This is in line with Malina's view of the Mediterranean culture. He observes that honour and shame are the pivotal values of first century Mediterranean cultures (2001:28). In his view, honour results from the combination of three boundary markers called "authority, gender status, and respect" (2001:28). Malina contends that these three boundary makers determine the sets of feelings and meanings existing among a particular group, and as such they (authority, gender status, and respect), influence the honour one can receive in a particular setting (2001:29-30). As an example, Malina refers to the authority of a father over his children in a dynamic interplay of these three social checkers or boundary makers in these terms: "a father in a family (gender role, status on the ladder of society) commands his children to do something, and they obey (authority), as God (the gods) intended: they treat him honorably. Other people seeing this would acknowledge that he is an honorable father" (2001:30). Thus, Malina could say "when you lay claim to a certain status as embodied by your authority and in your gender role, you are claiming honor" because "honor is understood as one's claim of reputation and status that has to be publicly affirmed" (2001:30). Thus, honour can only be truly

appreciated in the context of one's own cultural values and worldview. The way some children obey their parents in one culture could be regarded as abuse or slavery in others. This could be true to a wife's submission to her husband or a worker to his boss, etc.

According to Hiebert (1985:213), in true shame dominated cultures, one is expected to alienate his/her personal desires in "the collective expectation". This means that the community comes first, because this is how self-respect is gained and maintained (1985:213). As such, "those who fail will often turn their aggression against themselves instead of using violence against others" (1985:213). Hiebert further comments that "by punishing themselves they maintain their self-respect before others, for shame cannot be relieved, as guilt can be, by confession and atonement. Shame is removed and honor restored only when a person does what the society expects of him or her in the situation, including committing suicide if necessary" (1985:213).

5.2.2.1. Practical Christian responses to Dendi shame-honour worldview concerns and needs

1. The Dendi need to hear that "shame cannot bring healing, restoration, or remedy by itself, but it can point to a solution", a salvation only possible in God through Christ as the soteriological aspect of God's relationship with Adam and Eve when He provided them with "garments of skin" (Ge 3:21 cited in Moskala 2014:36).

2. Christian witness among the Dendi should clearly teach that "suffering for Christ is identification with Christ's glory not shame" (Acts 5:41; 1 Pe 4:16 cited in Mullen 199:735). As, such, when "one confesses Christ and openly rebels against Him, however, the work of Christ is publicly shamed (Heb 6:6), thus, "Christians must be diligent to renounce shameful behavior, though tempting because of its hidden character (2 Cor. 4:2)" (Mullen 1996:735).

3. Christian mission to the Dendi should focus on transforming the present anthropocentric and sociological accent of the Dendi shame-honour values into a Theo-Christocentric orientation (cf. Onongha, 2014:87).

5.2.3. Contextual responses to the Dendi fear-power worldview

Findings from the field research indicate that fourteen (14) interviewees out of twenty-eight (28), which is fifty per cent (50%), admitted to being afraid of *jinn* and being involved in using Qur'anic verses in different ways for protection. As mentioned in Chapter 4, elements of the interview transcript have identified that some interviewees are afraid of the *jinn* because they are generally evil in nature against humans. Such a worldview theme, according to Hiebert et al., "runs through nearly all folk religious belief systems" (Hiebert et al. 1999:87), where fear is a common struggle because of the precarity of life (1999:87). The fear of "ancestors, arbitrary spirits, hostile enemies, witchcraft, magic, and invisible forces that plague everyday life" is common among folk religions (1999:224). Thus, to satisfy basic human existential needs, such as protection and good health, the Dendi interviewed in Kandi and Malanville seek to address their fear of witchcraft, curses, *jinn* etc.

Because traditional cosmologies regulate folk Islamic societies (Shenk 1989:7), God is perceived in such cultures as "the apex of the power hierarchy with lesser intermediary spiritual powers permeating natural phenomena." Because of this, as it is with the Dendi, many Muslims in these cultures "wear Quranic and other talismans to ward off evil forces" (Shenk 1989:7). Pre-Islamic practices for curing illnesses are "often interwoven with Quranic prayers for healing" (1989:7). Shenk argues that this is how folk Muslims "seek *tawiz*–the protection of God, the all-powerful and merciful" (1989:7). This belief in "an impersonal power linked primarily with power objects, such as charms and amulets" (Love 2000:25), calls for using

"protective magic" through "supernatural measures in order to overcome these fears" (Love 27). Thus, "folk Muslims confess the greatness of Allah, but live in fear of the spirits" (Love 2000:36), and remain "preoccupied with powers, power persons, power objects, power places, power times, and power rituals" (2000:36). Love argues that Christians will have more effective ministries among folk Muslims if they understand folk Muslims' orientation to life (2000:36).

In that context, some interviewees confessed fear of witchcraft, evil attacks, misfortune and death–the common struggle in animistic societies where life is precarious (Hiebert et al. 1999:87). Similarly, Love asserts that folk Islam, like any religion with an animistic background, "takes a more spiritualistic orientation to life" (2000:21). This means that animists' lives revolve around "spirits and demons, blessing and curses, healing and sorcery" (2000:21). Therefore, spiritual power, which could be "present in people or animals, or even in inanimate objects like trees or hills" is called *baraka* by folk Muslims, *mana* in the Pacific Islands, *orenda* by the Iroquois of North America, *sila* by the Inuit (Eskimos) or *fung shui*–"the powers within the earth and sea" by the Chinese (Muller 2013:65). Hence, animists not only fear some humans (power persons), but they also fear the supernatural.

About folk Muslims' *mana*–Love reveals that R.H. Codrington coined the term *mana* in the late 1800s while a missionary to Melanesia. Love points out that Codrington "discovered that the inhabitants of the islands conceived of an impersonal supernatural force called mana that could reside in people and unusual objects" which "worked more like electric power" (Spradley & McCurdy 1980:258 cited in Love 2000:25). As such, power, according to Love, is one of the six components of folk Islam in the spectrum of folk Islamic practices (2000:25). These six components of folk Islam, according to Love (2000:24, 25), are:

Power(s)	demons, angels, mana
Power persons	imams, shamans

Power objects	charms, amulets
Power places	Mecca, saints' tombs
Power times	Muhammad's birthday, the pilgrimage
Power rituals	prayers and incantations using the Qur'an

Concerning power persons, Muller argues that, whether official religious persons or gifted people in the community for religious rituals, etc., these people hold power, because they are sometimes the only people "who understand the needs of the gods or demons, and they are the ones through whom the demons or gods communicate" (2013:66). So, these people have power objects or create them, live in power places or create them, and conduct power rituals during power times, all of which are backed by Satan and demons and generate real power (2013:66). Muller further asserts that "these powers are often regarded as having their own particular character, feeling, and ability to relate to others, and often even have a will of their own. Like people, they may be angered, placated, or turned to in time of need" (2013:65). Consequently, people in fear-power worldviews establish rules and regulations such as taboos to appease offended powers and to "protect the unwary from harm" (2013:65). As seen with Bello's illustration in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, one understands that the fear of sanctions or punishment of the wayward by ancestors, gods or other beings by means of sickness, adversity and curses serve as powerful forces in maintaining moral standards in family life and in animist societies (Bello 2001:31-33; Bellow 2005:66-69; Bello & Giannotti 2017:87, 158; cf. Hiebert et al. 1999:121, 197, 201). Based on the above insights, the following section offers theological and missiological responses to the Dendi fear-power beliefs and practices.

5.2.4. Theology of the invisible

According to Hiebert et al. (1999:370), a theology of the invisible was neglected by modern Western mission movements because of the dominant emphasis on the visible and the

touchable as it was the credo during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. David Bosch argues that "since the seventeenth century the Enlightenment paradigm has reigned supreme in all disciplines, including theology" ([1991], 2011:173). Bosch (2011:252-253) identifies two scientific approaches as characteristic of the Enlightenment: the 'Empiricism of Bacon' (in his *Novum Organon);* and the 'Rationalism of Descartes' ("who published his *Discourse sur la méthode* in 1637 and posited the famous precept "*Cogito*, *ergo sum* ["I think, therefore I am"])". As Bosch observes, "the *elimination of purpose* from science and the introduction of direct causality as the clue to the understanding of reality" (italic in the original, 2011:255), the belief that manipulation and exploitation of the physical world is possible (2011:254), led to the assumption that "the cause determines the effect" the effect being obviously "explicable, if not predictable" (2011:255).

Consequently, argues Bosch, "modern science tends to be completely deterministic, since unchanging and mathematically stable laws guarantee the desired outcome" (2011:255). Hence, Bosch notes that these two scientific paradigms led people during the Enlightenment to see science as the opposite of faith and as such they eliminated God from their logic and their validation system and with Him, anything invisible (2011:254). Technically, during the Enlightenment era, a belief was true when it had an independent fact–in other words, a belief is true, if it "is a *fact*, and this fact does not…in any way involve the mind of the person who has the belief" (Russell 1970:75 cited in Bosch 2011:256). The implication of Russell's proposition is that a belief is false if there is no corresponding fact about such belief (Russell 1970:78f cited in Bosch 2011:256). Facts were thus being opposed to values, the latter not being considered based on knowledge, "but on *opinion*, on *belief*" which are in the same class as "preference and choice" (2011:256). Accordingly, belief in the invisible associated in religion with God, angels,

demons etc. was "assigned to this realm of values since it rested on subjective notions and could not be proved correct" and as such "relegated to the private world of opinion and divorced from the public world of facts" (2011:256). Bernstein (1985:5 cited in Bosch 2011:257) proudly writes that human intellectual life has passed "through the dark ages of theological, metaphysical, and philosophical speculation, only to emerge in the triumph of the positive sciences" Thus, Mesthene could boldly argue that "inventions in the past were few, rare, exceptional, and marvelous"; today they are "many, frequent, planned, and increasingly taken for granted" (Mesthene 1967:484 cited in Bosch 2011:257). Hence, qualifying Mesthene as "exuberant", Bosch critically notes that for Mesthene "the demonic, external power of nature was at last surrendering to human planning and reason, thus enabling humans to remake the world in their own image and according to their own design" (2011:257).

Bevans and Schroeder (2004:172) rightly evaluated the forces of the Enlightenment and those of the natural sciences as a distraction for Christianity in Europe. A distraction which unfortunately still affects Christianity today. Hearn and Vos (1988:88-89), for instance, point out that Christian angelology, the doctrine of angels, has not been a major concern for Christian theologians despite the fact that the two major words (מַלְאָךְ, *mal'akh* in Hebrew and ἄγγελος, *angelos* in Greek,)* translated as 'angel', appear about 300 times in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. This lack of interest in Christian theology for the invisible is a clear sign of the persistence of the Enlightenment paradigm and worldview. Hence, Hiebert et al. rightly call imperatively to Christians to "recover an awareness of the invisible in this world" (1999:370). Ott et al. (2010:253) concur and discuss the role of the "unseen powers" in mission. Referring to Hiebert's 1982 article on "the excluded middle", they point out that missionaries' attitudes toward the invisible powers in some cultures reflect the "two-tier perspective of reality that

largely eliminates the middle level" that characterized most westerners' worldviews that were derived from the Enlightenment. Hence, Ott and others argue that "any discussion of spiritual dynamics and mission must address the spirit world that plays such a prominent role" for most peoples of the world who "recognize three levels of reality" as Paul Hiebert (1982a) has observed in his article on the excluded middle (Ott et al. 2010:252).

Hiebert has contended and continues to contend that Christian mission will continue to fail among folk religionists if a three-tiered view of the universe is not considered in Christian mission strategies (1982, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2008). Consequently, Hiebert et al. defend that "until the invisible world becomes a living reality in the lives of Christians, they will not be able to deal with the questions folk religions raise" (1999:371). Peterson similarly asserts that:

> Most of the reality with which we deal is invisible. Most of what makes up human existence is inaccessible to our five senses: emotions, thoughts, dreams, love, hope, character, purpose, belief. Even what makes up most of the basic physical existence is out of the range of our unassisted senses: molecules and atoms, neutrons and protons, the air we breathe, the ancestors we derive from, the angels who protect us. We live immersed in these immense invisibles. And more than anything else, we are dealing with God "whom no one has seen at any time." (Peterson 1994:89–90 cited in Hiebert et al. 1999:370).

5.2.5. Theology of the kingdom of God

Arthur Glasser is known for his in-depth work on the biblical understanding of the kingdom of God (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:451; Van Engen, Dean and Pierson 1993:25; Ott et al. 2010:4; Pierson 2009:351; Verkuyl 1993, etc.). Bevans and Schroeder (2004:451) consider Glasser as a "major proponent" of an approach to study the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation through the theme/lens of the kingdom. Pierson (2009:351) concurs and identifies Glasser as the missiologist whose theology focused around the theme of the kingdom of God.

Pierson notes that Arthur Glasser was only being a good disciple of George E. Ladd, Fuller's New Testament scholar and John Bright, Union Theological Seminary's Hebrew and Old Testament specialist; "two scholars" whose endeavours have contributed to recovering "the understanding of the Kingdom of God" as a major theme in the Bible (2009:351).

John Bright, for instance (1953, 1981, 2000:330), asserts that the theme of the kingdom of God is "central to the thought of both Testaments". George Ladd (1959:11) similarly notes that the theology of the kingdom of God is "deeply rooted in the Old Testament." According to Ladd the kingdom of God is nothing less than the rule, the reign and the sovereignty of God in action (1959:14, Ladd 1978, 1988, 1993). Hence, Ladd argues that, although God's kingship [or rule] could be compared to the rule of any earthly king, such comparison will not be fair, because earthly kings can only promise to their subjects or people security, safety, social, economic, and political peace, whereas God promises all the above and more (Ladd 1959:15). God promises not only social stability (Ps 119:165; Isa 26:3; John 14:27, 16:33; Col 3:16, etc.) and physiological wellness according to his will (Jer 30:17; Ps 107:19-21; Isa 58:11; Matt 10:8; Luke 8:50; James 5:14-15), but also, and above all, salvation or redemption of "the souls of individual believers" (Ladd 1959:15). As such, faith in Judaism and Christianity is based on hope for the kingdom of God as "the very heart of revealed religion", which in Ladd's view, is a totally different hope as compared to "the dreams of the Greek poets" (1959:14).

Consequently, Ladd points out that both *malkuth,* the Hebrew word in the Old Testament, and *basileia,* the Greek word in the New Testament, primarily mean the authoritative and sovereign reign of a king (2 Chron 11:17, 12:1, 26:30; 2 Chron 12:1; Ezra 4:5; Ezra 8:1; Dan 8:23; Jer 49:34; Neh 12:22, Luke 19:11-12 etc. cited in Ladd 1959:19-20). Applied to God, *malkuth,* it is the "Lordship of God, the rule that is established wherever men undertake to fulfill

God's law" (Windisch 1937:199f., 62, 28f. cited in Ladd 1993:140). Nevertheless, Ladd argues

that the theology of the kingdom of God, as applied to Israel and the church, is not without

difficulties, because one would have in doing so to make deductions that are sometimes not

"explicitly set forth in Scripture but must be inferred" (1959:107). Therefore, Ladd argues that

the Bible's teachings on the kingdom of God have some complex aspects, which have given

rise to "diverse interpretations" in the "history of theology" (Ladd 1959:17). Time and space

prevents engaging in a debate on the difficulties of developing a kingdom of God theology in

the Scriptures and the divergent interpretations of the theology of the kingdom of God in both

Testaments. Hence, the next section gives a summary of the main views on the kingdom of God

and puts those views in the context of ministry to folk Muslims. While Arthur Glasser's

understanding of the kingdom of God is pivotal in the next arguments, Rick Love's insights are

complementary to Glasser's contribution because of the way he employed the kingdom theology

in ministry among folk Muslims.

- **Kingdom of God in the Old Testament**

    As pointed out above, Ladd claims that the theology of the kingdom of God can only be

inferred in the case of Israel, because there are no explicit texts in the Old Testament to support

that Israel was really under the kingship of God (1959:107). Ladd argues that the definition of

the kingship of God implies the rule or the reign of God in the sense of His "divine sovereignty

in action" (1959:14). Hence, Ladd observes that, unfortunately, God was "not the earthly King

of Israel" (1988:1270-1271). As a matter of fact, Ladd points out, the Old Testament has no

record of the expression "the kingdom of God" (Ladd 1988:1270). Seal (2016) concurs and

asserts that no specific reference to the kingdom of God is made in the Old Testament, and if it

were, it is rare and mostly notable "after the initiation of the Israelite monarchy". According to

Ladd, God first enters in a covenant with Abraham, who in return brings the male members of his household into the same covenant through their circumcision (Gen 17:22-27 cited in Ladd 1959:108). This covenant made between God and Abraham and later with Abraham's household, proves, in Ladd's view, that God first dealt with Israel as a family and later as a nation (1959:108). Ott et al. (2010:8) similarly point to the patriarchal and pioneered role of Abraham in God's choice to enter in a covenant with a people, a nation. They assert that "from Abraham will come the nation Israel". Hence, Ott and others share Bright and Glasser's view and do not see any difficulty in arguing a theology of the kingdom of God in relationship with Israel. Ladd (1988:1269) later nuances his position and acknowledges that the kingship of God "appears throughout the prophets." Agreeing that "God is frequently spoken of as the King, both of Israel (Ex 15:18; Num 23:21; Deut 33:5; Is 43:15) and of all the earth (2 Kings 19:15; Pss 29:10; 47:2; 93:1, 2; 96:10; 97:1–9; 99:1–4; 145:11–13; Is 6:5; Jer 46:18)" (Ladd 1988:1270). Ladd further notes that

> The main emphasis of the prophets is on the hope, the establishing of God's perfect rule in the world. ...The prophets describe the final establishment of God's kingdom in terms of a theophany–a divine visitation. "For behold, the Lord is coming forth out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will be cleft, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place" (Mic 1:3, 4). …Israel will be "visited by the Lord of hosts" (Isa 29:6) and delivered from its enemies (Ladd 1988:1270-1271).

Nevertheless, Ladd contends that, although the prophets put more "emphasis upon the individual, the terms of the Old Covenant were primarily with Israel as a nation; and Gentiles could share the spiritual blessings of the Covenant only by becoming part of the nation" (1959:108). For Ladd (1988:1270), God's kingship was more of a prophetic concept as several Old Testament "references speak of a day when God shall become King and shall rule over his

people (Isa 24:23; 33:22; 52:7; Obad 21; Zeph 3:15; Zech 14:9–11)". Consequently, in an observation that joins others, Ladd points out that "this brief glimpse of the idea of God's kingship provides the outline for the entire OT concept…" (Ladd 1988:1270).

Contrary to Ladd, John Bright's points were straightforward. Bright contends that from the Israelites' exodus out of Egypt to the conquest of Palestine, the promised land, Israel, as God's people and a nation under God's leadership, was in formation (2000:235-450). Bright's position is that the theology of the kingdom of God could be traced to the establishment of the covenant contracted between Israel and her God; a covenant which acknowledged the kingship of Yahweh "after the analogy of the suzerainty treaty form, as that of vassal to overlord" (2000:330). Hence, Bright notes that Yahweh's kingship over Israel was represented in "the symbols of the early cult" where "the Ark[72] was Yahweh's throne (cf. Nu 10:35f.), the rod of Moses was his scepter, the sacred lots his tablets of destiny" with the observation that "the earliest poems occasionally hail him as king (Ex 15:18; Num 23:21; Deut 33:5; Ps 29:10f.; 68:24)" (2000:330). Bright traces the chronology of Israel's monarchy formation to her first experience with the theocracy (2000:119-487). Brown, who wrote the introduction to *A history of Israel,* points out that, although Bright focuses during the monarchy on Saul and David, "Bright dramatically recounts the painful wrenchings of a theocracy caught between its theological heritage and outside pressures that threatened to bring Israel into the fold of the pagan nations" (Brown 2000:45).

Love's view of the kingdom of God concurs basically with that of Bright. Love (2000:40) notes that God's "sovereign rule and kingship is a major theme in the Psalms: 'The

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[72]Bright (2000:381) cites Albright 1948: 378f, *(JBL*, LXVII) who "suggests that the name of the Ark was "[name of] Yahweh of Hosts, Enthroned on the Cherubim" (cf. I Sam. 4:4)"

Lord has established his throne in the heavens; and his sovereignty rules over all' (Ps 103:19, see also Ps 93:1,2; 95:3; 145:10-13)." According to Love (2000:40) the kingdom of God theme is "a comprehensive construct" which describes God in the Old Testament as "an eternal king: 'The Lord is a king forever' (Ps 10:16)." As such, Love asserts that:

> Three major motifs of Scripture-the covenant, the promise and the salvation history approach' - are all linked solely with the acts of God in redemptive history. Prior to creation, however, there was no covenant, promise or salvation history. Yet even before creation, there was the kingdom of God–God ruled. Moreover, the concepts of covenant, promise and salvation history focus on God and humankind. These themes generally do not relate to the universe and to the spirit realm. By contrast, the kingdom of God focuses on the totality of God's creation–the entire cosmos, as well as the spirit realm. Moreover, the kingdom of God provides us with a comprehensive framework for mission. It describes what missiologists call the *missio Dei* (God's mission), which is the restoration of God's rule over all creation. The kingdom of God is a macro-theological model, summarizing the whole counsel of God (Love 2000:40).

- *Missio Dei* **and** *missio Trinitatis* **and the kingdom of God**

Bosch ([1991] 2011:380-381), Bevans and Schroeder (2004:290), Wright (2006:61-62), Ott et al. (2010:63) all attribute the paternity of the term *missio Dei*[73]–mission according to God's providence and attributes–to the German missiologist Karl Hartenstein. Bosch ([1991] 2011:380), for instance, observes that, in past centuries, mission was first understood or interpreted in four ways:

    1   mission with soteriological motives to save individuals from eternal damnation;

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[73]Thus, McIntosh (2000b), Moreau (2000:637) cited in Pocock, Van Rheenen and McConnell Pocock et al (2005:322), reveal that the Latin term *missio Dei* which means "the sending of God" and its implication as "everything God does in his task of establishing his kingdom in all its fullness in all the world". However, *Missio Dei* as a missiological concept was first suggested during the report of the *Fifth International Missionary Council conference, held in Willingen, Germany, July 1952* (Glasser et al. 2003:244; Bosch [1991], 2011:381; Kirk 2002:25). Glasser and his colleagues point out that the report of the conference used the term "to underscore the fact that the missionary movement has its source in the triune God" (2003:244; Ott et al. 2010:63).

2   mission based on cultural considerations like "introducing people from the East and the South to the blessings and privileges of the Christian West";

3   mission with ecclesiastical motives to expand Christianity or a specific denomination; and

4   mission as "salvation-historically" to transform the evolved world into the kingdom of God.

Bosch argues that circumstances such as the end of the First World War (1914-1918) exposed missiologists to changes and developments taking place in biblical and systematic theology ([1991], 2011:380). Such new social developments and religious challenges will give birth to many theological conferences among different Christian denominations. About ten years after the first World War, Karl Barth's teachings on mission in 1928 will inspire Karl Hartenstein to coin the term *missio Dei* in order to summarize Barth's perspectives on mission, the doctrine of the trinity and the "intratrinitarian movement of God himself" (Wright 2006:62-63).

Hence, at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932, Bosch asserts, Karl Barth (1932, 1957) became the first theologian to speak of "mission as an activity of God himself" ([1991], 2011:381). Bosch contends that Barth is the "first clear exponent of a new theological paradigm which broke radically with an Enlightenment approach to theology" (cf. Küng 1987:229 cited in Bosch [1991] 2011:381). Bosch further points out that:

> The Barthian influence …. on missionary thinking reached a peak at the Willingen Conference of the IMC (1952). It was here that the idea (not the exact term) *missio Dei* first surfaced clearly. Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world (Bosch [1991] 2011:381).

Thus, Bosch observes that Barth, who might have been himself influenced by Gisbertus Voetius,[74] became a prominent mentor for many German missiologists and his contribution was decisive in the paradigm shift in the theological understanding of mission (Bosch [1991] 2011:381). For instance, Karl Hartenstein (director of the Basel Mission), as one of Barth's students, as mentioned above, was able to innovate missiological terminology with the concept of m*issio Dei* in 1934 (Bosch [1991], 2011:383; Bevans & Schroeder 2004:290; Ott et al. 2010:63). Bosch notes that Karl Hartenstein was one of the youngest German missiologists influenced by Barth compared to Paul Schütz, Hans Schärer, and Hendrik Kraemer (Bosch [1991], 2011:496). In Bevans and Schroeder's view, Karl Hartenstein developed *missio Dei* to distinguish *missio Dei* from *missio ecclesiae*, the mission of the church, which takes its existence from the church's "participation in God's mission", which, according to Bevans and Schroeder, should always be "accomplished in Trinitarian fashion" (2004:290). *Missio Dei* as a missiological concept was therefore the fruit of "decisive shift toward understanding mission as God's mission" (Bosch [1991], 2011:380). Bosch's brief history of how Hartenstein coined the term *missio Dei* in 1934 and the tension around it is referenced by Wright (2006:62). Unfortunately, Bosch argues, Karl Hartenstein's great ambition and hope to "protect mission against secularization and horizontalization, and to reserve it exclusively for God" in the use of

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[74]Bosch considers Gisbertus Voetius (1588-1676) the first Protestant missiologist "to have developed a comprehensive 'theology of mission'" which could rightly be compared and equated what contemporary missiologists view as *missio Dei*. ([1991] 2011:246). Bosch believes that for Voetius the foundation of mission was primarily theological, that is "flowing from the very heart of God" (2011:246). However, on Voetius' work in contemporary analysis Bosch writes, "Today his views on mission appear, on the one hand, hopelessly outdated, on the other, surprisingly modern" (cf. Jongeneel 1989:146f). His formulation of the threefold goal of mission has become widely known and is still unparalleled. The immediate aim was *conversio gentilium* (conversion of the Gentiles), which was subordinate to the second and more distant goal, *plantatio ecclesiae* (the planting of the church); the supreme and ultimate aim of mission, however, and the one to which both the first two were subservient, was *gloria et manifestatio gratiae divinae* (the glory and manifestation of divine grace) (Bosch [1991] 2011:246).

the new terminology, he developed was in vain ([1991], 2011:383). Bevans and Schroeder (2004:290) concur and assert that "there was present at Willingen, however, an interpretation of the *missio Dei* that actually militated against this powerful ecclesiological interpretation and actually excluded the church's involvement". Nevertheless, Bevans and Schroeder argue that from the 1980s, "Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal" saw in their theology "a genuine renewal in trinitarian theology" (2004:291). Bevans and Schroeder further contend that fortunately, the trinitarian nature of Christian mission was being reconsidered among many Christian body's missiological thinking (2004:291). They assert that:

> The 1980s and 1990s saw the publication of a number of important works on the Trinity, many of which were linked explicitly to ecclesiology and the church's mission. Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff linked the unity in diversity of the trinitarian communion with God's action for justice in the world. For Boff, God is both model and agent for liberation, equality and justice in a world marked by sin and oppression; to be church is to share God's life and to be on God's side. (Boff 1988 cited in Bevans & Schroeder 2004:291.

This trinitarian view of *missio Dei* understood by Karl Hartenstein and as referenced above by Bosch (1991), Bevans and Schroeder (2004) and Wright (2006) was "an important innovation" (Aagaard 1974:420 cited in Bosch [1991], 2011:381 cf. Schumacher 1970:182f; cf Snijders 1977:171f; Fries 1986:761; Gómez 1986:31" cited in Bosch [1991], 2011:381; as authors who also defined mission in "trinitarian, Christological, pneumatological, and ecclesiological terms"). Thus, Kirk calls this 'Trinitarian' activity involved in God's mission, '*missio Trinitatis*' (cf. Kirk 1999:27).

On the other hand, there is an obvious relationship between the theme of the 'kingdom of God', that is, God's sovereignty as seen earlier in this chapter and God's mission–*missio Dei, or missio Trinitatis*, that is, God's ultimate plan to redeem humanity throughout salvation history (Bosch 1991:10; Glasser et al. 2003:74; Hiebert et al. 1999:25; Love 2000:40; Ott et al.

2010:65, 315). Yoshimoto, for instance, observes that "the completion of the Kingdom of God and salvation of the people of God" defines mission. Hence, mission for Yoshimoto is "the self-sending creative and redemptive action of the triune God for the [sic] mankind and the world" (Yoshimoto 2005 cited in Ott et al. 2010:xv). In similar view, Glasser et al. assert that God has a people and a "mission (*missio Dei*) among the nations" with which every generation willing to serve God–willing to be under the kingship of God–needs to personally and publicly identify with without fearing the risks and implications of such decision (Glasser et al. 2003:75-76). Ott et al. (2010:4) concur and praise Glasser in their observation. They assert that Glasser rightly identifies "the kingdom of God as the uniting theme of mission in the Bible" (2010:4). For Ott and his co-authors, God's plan for saving the nations is characteristic of God's interaction with nations throughout the entire Bible (2010:4). This is a fact, according to them, in the Old Testament where the theme of the kingdom of God "emerges from time to time in significant places, remaining an underlying motif in God's election of Israel and the unfolding of salvation history" (2010:4). For Glasser and others (2003:244), authors, such as Goodall (1953), Vicedom (1965), and Rosin (1972) have contributed in understanding the *missio Dei* concept. Goodall, for instance, contended that the purpose of God's mission is expressed in his sending of his son, his Spirit, and his Church (Goodall 1953:243 cited in Glasser et al. 2003:244). Vicedom, on the other hand, notes that God is the-"owner", the initiator, and the "protagonist in the mission" (Vicedom 1965:5 cited in Glasser et al. 2003:244). While Rosin argues that God's initiative to save humanity through his love implies his support to believers who take up the responsibility to advance his mission (Rosin 1972:17 cited in Glasser et al. 2003:244).

Consequently, the kingdom of God or God's sovereignty over all nations and all people "is the center of mission" (Ott et al. 2010:86). Similarly, Love defines the kingdom of God as

the sovereign reign and control of God over "the events and peoples of this world in such a way that his ultimate will is accomplished" (Love 2000:40). These statements above by Ott and others constitute an important assumption, because all other mission activities of the triune God are possible only if God's kingship and authority is central (Ott et al. 2010:86). Ott and others further argue that:

> The concept of the kingdom of God captures in a single phrase the divine intent to bring all things under his rule, to reconcile all things to himself, to restore that which is fallen and corrupted, and to overthrow all powers in opposition to him and his reign of peace, joy, and righteousness. The kingdom of God is a concept spanning the full flow of salvation history and encompassing all realms of life (Ott et al. 2010:86).

Therefore, because mission is a divine prerogative (Ott et al. 2010:61), God's overarching purpose in human history, as told in the entire Bible, is to demonstrate his love for his creation and creatures (2010:61). "For God so loved the world…." (John 3:16) is the Christian cliché that reminds us of God's love for the world. David Bosch rightly notes that "Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people" ([1991], 2011:384). Hence, mission does not begin with God because He is the initiator of mission, but because God's "very character is mission" (Gnanakan 1989, 67 cited in Ott et al. 2010:62). This implies that, before the coming of Christ in the flesh, the nation of Israel–sons and daughters of the Kingdom–was to be the channel of God's blessing and the witness of his "redemptive activity in history" (Ladd 1959:114). Ladd argues that "Gentiles could share these blessings only by entering into relationship with Israel" (1959:114, cf. 109). However, points out Ladd,

> When the time came that God manifested His redemptive activity in a new and wonderful way and the Kingdom of God visited men in the person of God's Son bringing to them a fuller measure of the blessings of the divine rule, Israel

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rejected both the Kingdom and the Bearer of the Kingdom. Therefore, the Kingdom in its new manifestation was taken away from Israel and given to a new people. (Ladd 1959:114).

- **Kingdom of God in the New Testament**

In the New Testament, the kingdom of God theme was central to the teachings of Jesus. As such, it is mostly found in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Matthew, for instance, uses the expressions "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" interchangeably (Matt 19:23-24). During Christ's earthly ministry his teaching was called the "gospel of the kingdom" (Ott et al. 2010:87). Ott and his colleagues (2010:87) assert that Christ's incarnation was "good news that God's kingdom has been inaugurated with Christ's coming (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Luke 16:16; Acts 8:12)." George Ladd rightly claims that "The kingdom of God is first of all the divine redemptive rule manifested in Christ, and it is secondly *the realm of sphere* in which the blessings of the divine rule may be experienced" ([1959], 1992:114 cited in Ott et al. 2010:87).

Ladd, for instance, summarizes seven ways in which the theme of the kingdom of God was central in Christ's teaching with both its present and eschatological consummation (1959:14). Ladd writes that Christ preached and taught the following:

- o "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17).
- o There is only one way to inherit the Kingdom of God (Matt 5:20; 7:21).
- o My mighty works "prove that the Kingdom of God had come" upon you (Matt 12:28).
- o My parables illustrate "the truth about the Kingdom of God (Matt 13:I1)." (Ladd 1959:14).
- o The prayer I taught you was intentionally framed so that at the heart of your petition you repeat "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" Matt 6:10).
- o On the eve of my death, I assured you that I would no more share with you "the happiness and the fellowship of the Kingdom (Luke 22:22-30)." (Ladd 1959:14).

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o I promised that I "would appear again on the earth in glory to bring the blessedness of the in Kingdom to those for whom it was prepared (Matt 25:31, 34)." (Ladd 1959:14).

Ott and his colleagues do likewise. But, their summary of Christ's teachings on the kingdom of God is done in contrasting form. They list eight facts about the kingdom of God and their opposites in this way:

o The kingdom is not a nation, but will be composed of people from all nations.
o The kingdom is not a religious institution, though it is manifest in the church.
o The kingdom is not a culture, though it purifies and transforms cultures.
o The kingdom is not a moral or ethical code, though it calls all thought and action to submit to the righteousness of Christ.
o The kingdom is not an ideology, though it challenges every human ideology.
o The kingdom is not a political movement, though it confronts political power structures.
o The kingdom is not an economic system, though it addresses the dangers of greed and the evils of poverty and exploitation.
o The kingdom is not coercive, though it is persuasive in love (Ott et al. 2010:87-88).

These eight contrasting facts about the kingdom of God listed by Ott and others are complementary to Howard A. Snyder's six enriching and challenging "mysteries relating to the kingdom" (Snyder 1991:16–17 cited in Ott et al. 2010:88). Snyder's six mysteries about the kingdom of God in the New Testament are as follow:

o Present versus future (Mark 1:15; Matt 6:10)
o Individual versus social (Matt 13:44; Luke 12:32; John 3:3; Luke 13:29)
o Spirit versus matter (1 Cor 15:50; John 18:36; Luke 4:18–21; Rev 5:10)
o Gradual versus climactic (Mark 4:26– 28; Matt 25:1–6)
o Divine versus human action (Luke 19:11–27; Ps 99:1–2; Matt 6:33; Col 4:11)

o The church as identified with the kingdom versus the church as different from the kingdom (Matt 16:19; 7:21) (Ott et al. 2010:88).

Ott and his colleague call these six contrasting and complex yet symmetrical facts about the kingdom of God mysteries, because, they argue, they rightly express the risks inherent to the concept of the kingdom just like the risks and tensions that exist with the concept *missio Dei* (2010:88). Ott and others contend that the concept of the kingdom of God "can–and has–become a catchall to justify any good work, any spiritual ministry, any economic or political agenda, any new strategy as 'mission'" (2010:88).

George Ladd was already aware of such danger of misunderstanding and misusing the theme of the kingdom of God. Hence, he asserts that Matt 12:28-29 is the embodiment of "the essential theology of the kingdom of God" (Ladd 1974:66 cited in Love 2000:41). Love, in that same line of exegesis of Matt. 12:28-29, argues that the text "describes six dimensions of kingdom theology" (2000:41). As Matt. 12:28-29 reads: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first binds the strong man? And then he will spoil his house", Love identifies those six dimensions of the kingdom theology as:

1   the dimensions of God as ruler;
2   the dimension of God as rescuer;
3   the present dimension;
4   the future dimension;
5   the physical dimension; and
6   the spiritual dimension (Love 2000:41).

Each of these six dimensions was dear to our Lord Jesus Christ (Love 2000:41). But in our context, Love's emphasis on the "saving reign of God" is the next focus in this study. The

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aspect of the delivering power of God implied in his "saving reign" specifically. Love calls this aspect of God saving reign the "Satanward aspect of the gospel" (2000:41). As such, the study's emphasis touches four dimensions among the six dimensions listed above: the dimension of God as a rescuer, the present dimension, the physical dimension, and the spiritual dimension.

God as a rescuer in the kingdom of God

According to Elwell and Beitzel (1988:609) the words "deliverance, deliverer" denote the action of rescuing or redeeming "and the agent of such a rescue." Elwell and Beitzel point out that to rescue humanity from the curse of sin, from death, from Satan and eternal damnation has been God's ultimate goal in history (1988b:609). They further contend that the Old Testament "depicts God as delivering his chosen people from Egyptian slavery, from Babylonian captivity, and from oppression at the hands of various Palestinian tribes" (1988b:609). Accordingly, they assert that, for Christians today, "those deliverances foreshadow the coming of Jesus Christ as supreme deliverer" (1988:609). Consequently, when Jesus quoted the messianic passage of Isa 61:1, 2 in Luke 4:18 he was describing and revealing his own mission "to proclaim release to the captives" (1988b:609).

Ladd earlier expressed a similar view. Ladd pointed out that Jesus's ministry on earth was characterized by "the mighty works of the Kingdom of God itself" (1959:108). Such mighty works were, Ladd asserts, that Jesus cast out demons, delivered "men from satanic power" and preached "that the Kingdom of God had come upon them to defeat Satan and to deliver men from his rule" (Ladd 1959:108). Love concurs and argues that the ruler/rescuer dimension of the kingdom of God–the "Godward aspect of the gospel", implicit in Matt 12:28-29 implies God's commitment to a rescue mission in redemptive history through "conflict and conquest" (2000:41). This conflict against Satan and his "kingdom of darkness" will ultimately lead to the

conquest and destruction of Satan and his kingdom–the "Satanward aspect of the gospel" (2000:41).

The present dimension of the kingdom of God

In Luke 4:21 Jesus makes an amazing claim: "…Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Love points out that this statement of Jesus was "the fulfillment in history of the OT hope" (2000:41). Thus, when Jesus said in Matt 11:4-5 "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blinds see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me", he claimed with these words that "the blessings of the messianic salvation are present" (Ladd 1988:1275). This means that prophesies were being fulfilled "without the eschatological consummation" (1988:1275).

So, the implication of this present dimension of the kingdom of God in relation to Matt 12:28-29 is meeting "the present ethical and spiritual" need of people. As Love rightly points out "where Satan is driven back, the rule of God begins" (2000:42). Characterized by sufferings, Love (2000:43) further argues that this present age faces "an intense spiritual battle (Mr 5:10-12, Acts 14:22, Phil 1:29, 2 Tm 3:12). In other words, Ladd contends,

> The strong man is Satan; this "present evil age" (Gal 1:4) is his "house"; his "goods" are demon-possessed men and women. Jesus has invaded the strong man's house to snatch away from him men and women whom he has in his power; and this is the work of the kingdom of God. The kingly reign of God has come into history in the person of Jesus before the apocalyptic consummation when Satan will be destroyed, to render Satan a preliminary defeat…If God's eschatological rule brings to his people the blessings of that kingdom, and if God's kingdom is his rule invading history before the eschatological consummation, then we may expect God's rule in the present to bring a preliminary blessing to his people. This fact is reflected in numerous sayings. The kingdom is something to be sought here and now (Matt 6:33) and to be received as children receive a gift (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:16, 17) (Ladd 1988:1275-1276).

Love points out that, because Jesus casts out demons, "the expulsion of demons describes kingdom ministry as deliverance" (2000:41). However, the binding of Satan, "a common theme in Jewish thought" which could be taken metaphorically "was linked to the future coming of the kingdom" (2000:41) and "nevertheless depicts in some real sense a victory over Satan and present curbing of his power" (2000:41). As such, asserts Love (2000:42), "this binding or curbing of Satan's power is both a concrete manifestation of the kingdom of God in Jesus' earthly ministry and a foretaste of the future, when Satan is defeated at the cross (Col 2:15) and forever destroyed" when the millennium is ended, and Satan and all the wicked in rebellion against God (Gog and Magog; the beast and the false prophet) are consumed by the fire which came from heaven them (Rev 19:11-20:7-10).

Physical dimension of the kingdom of God theme

Based on Luke 13:16 "So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound–think of it–for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" Illnesses, infirmities etc. "may be described as a bondage to Satan" (Ladd 1988:1274). Insights from many Bible texts, such as Matt 932-33; Matt 12:22; 17:14-19, Mark 9:17-18; Luke 11:14; Acts 10:38 portray Satan as "a source of sickness" (Love 2000:44). Hence, Jesus' ministry was more focused on "healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). Thus, "when Jesus drove out demons or healed the sick, he advanced the kingdom of God by pushing back the kingdom of Satan" (Love 2000:44).

Thus, although, the "kingdom of God is a spiritual realm" its physical and present dimensions expose us to a present experience of "the blessings of the future age" (2000:45). Consequently, "Salvation, healing and power over demons are part of the "already" of the kingdom" (2000:45). Hiebert et al. talk in this context about "the theology of power and the

cross" (1999:371). They argue that, because "most folk religions seek power as the key to prosperity, health, success, and control over life", Christians need a "biblical theology of power" (1999:371). Hiebert and his colleagues further argue that:

> God is the God Almighty (*El Shaddai*, Gen. 17:1), who created and sustains all things by his power (Gen. 1), who defeated Satan and his hosts (John 16:33), and who will bring all things into subjection to himself (Eph. 1:22). Moreover, by his might he saves those who turn to him and gives them power to become like him and bear witness to his greatness. All this must be affirmed (Hiebert et al. 1999:373).

The spiritual dimension of the kingdom of God theme

As Ladd notes, the present generation is "hostile to the kingdom of God" (1988:1273). The contrast between "the children of this world" with "the children of light" according to Luke 16:8 is one of the central topics in Jesus' teaching (1988:1273). Hence, Christ taught his disciple to pray for God's kingdom to come (Matt 6:10). This sovereign reign of God was to be invited and prayed for in every disciple's prayer so that the ministry Christ initiated will be "consummated when the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev 11:15)." (Ladd 1988:1278).

Hiebert et al. regard the need for a Christian "theology of worship and submission" in order to reinforce the biblical principle of submission to the will of God taught by Christ in the Lord's prayer. They point out that Christ' teachings reject an "ego-centered religion and a magical mentality" because the centre of Christ' message is "God and what he does" (Hiebert et al. 1999:1971). Hence, the gospel "calls humans to submit themselves to God, and to live not by control but by faith in his plan (Isa 8:19–22; Jer 27:9–10; Gal 5:20; Rev 21:8). This change from self-centredness to God-centredness is one of the most difficult for humans to make" (1999:1971).

- **Kingdom of God in the mission of the church**

As seen above, the doctrine of the *missio Dei* is understood today first to mean the movement between the persons of the trinity (the Godhead) and its repercussion on the church. God the Father is the initiator of the movement. He first sends the Son, and with the Son they send the Holy Spirit. Then, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit send the church into the world" (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:290; Bosch 1991:390; Goodall 1953:243 cited in Glasser et al. 2003:244; Ott et al. 2010:61; Wright, 2006:24). Thus, the sending of the church is the last movement of the set of four missionary movements initiated by God or the 'godhead'. Darrell Guder (Guder 2000:47-48 cited in Bevans & Schroeder 2003:294) calls this movement of the church the "missionary ecclesiology". Guder argues that the church is the "apostolic community" that shapes and continues God's missionary movement (2000:47-48 cited in Bevans & Schroeder 2003:294). As such, observe Bevans and Schroeder, while Guder and Van Gelder urge "the church to be aware of its missionary nature through its partnership with God in the world" (Bevans & Schroeder 2003:294).

However, the challenge of the church to carry on such missionary endeavour resides on the debates in some Christian circles on the theological implications of different understandings of the kingdom of God and the mission of the church. As mentioned above, the Greek expression *basileia tou theou,* translated "kingdom of God" in the New Testament (NT), renders different meanings among NT scholars. Ladd (1993:123) points out that, for some scholars, "the *basileia* is the 'eschaton'–the final eschatological order" (Kümmel 1957 cited in Ladd 1993:123). Commenting on Kümmel's eschatological understanding of the *basileia,* that is to only expect the fulness of the kingdom of God in future, at the second coming of Christ, Ladd argues:

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If this is taken as the point of departure, it is difficult to see how the eschaton can be both future and present; it must be exclusively future. However, the Hebrew word has the abstract dynamic or idea of reign, rule, or dominion. "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and tell of thy power…. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endures throughout all generations" (Ps. 145:11,13). "The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all" (Ps. 103:19). (Ladd 1964 cited in Ladd 1993:123).

Thus, Ladd contends, an eschatological view of the kingdom of God cannot be a good point of departure for the mission of the church. According to Ladd, "it is difficult to see how the eschaton can be both future and present; it must be exclusively future" (1993:123). Consequently, for Ladd, only a present view of the *basileia,* even though incomplete in nature, could be "the best point of departure for understanding the Gospels" (1993:123). Accordingly, Ladd notes that Matt 6:10; Luke 19:12, 22:29, 23:4-2; John 18:36; Rev 17:12, etc. all contain a present dimension of the *basileia* in terms of kingship, kingly power, reign, rule or royal rule (Bauer et al. 1979:134; Ladd 1962:230-238, 1964:43ff; cited in Ladd 1993:123-124).

Ladd's view is the position of this chapter as seen above in the section: The present dimension of the kingdom of God. This chapter assumes that "Jesus' statement to his disciples, 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you' (John 20:21b), is the most explicit biblical basis" for understanding the present nature of the kingdom of God and by implication the mission of the church to preach and make real the attributes of God's kingdom among the nations (Ott et al. 2010:61). Ott and others further comment:

As the sending will of God was realized in the sending of the Son, so Jesus now sends the church. Through God's sending of the Spirit, the church is empowered to become his agents of mission. indeed, the whole story of the Bible can be understood in terms of God's sending activity. Rightly understood, grounding mission in the *missio Dei* does not reduce the importance of scriptural commands, nor does it excuse Christians from the joyful and sacrificial obligation of mission work. Rather, it reframes our understanding of mission in terms of God's own character and prerogative. The

mission of the church is embedded in the great drama of God's mission (Ott et al. 2010:61).

- **Love's four aspects of kingdom theology in contrast with Kraft's three encounters' model**

Mission "in terms of ministry to the whole person" should be holistic–that means integral and transformative (Ott et al. 2010:137). Whereas Kraft associates holistic Christian witness with three encounters, namely allegiance encounter, truth encounter, and power encounter (Kraft 1991b, 1992a, 2005, 2009), Love, on the other hand, asserts that holistic mission is through the four aspects of kingdom theology–truth encounter; power encounter; moral encounter; and cultural encounter (Love 2000).

Kraft regards these three encounters or dimensions of Christian experience and witness as the only balanced approach to "the experience and communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (2005:99). Kraft's argument for his conviction expressed above is that each of these three dimensions touches relationship, understanding, and freedom, which are key crucial elements in a "God-connected life" (2005:99). Hence, Kraft advocates for theories of contextualization in each of these three dimensions (2005:99).

Allegiance encounter

According to Kraft, the "allegiance" or "commitment-relationship" dimension of Christian experience and communication of the gospel of Christ is "the first and most important of the three dimensions" (Kraft 2005a:103). Contending that knowledge or power cannot make anyone a Christian otherwise Satan or demons would have been Christian, because they have the required knowledge about God and his power (James 2:19), yet, they lack the relationship with God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit that is essential for salvation (Kraft

2005a:105). Kraft puts this dimension at the centre of the three dimensions (2005a:103). Kraft points out that the other two dimensions are intended to support the relationship dimension, which he describes as conversion, that is, the initial commitment Christians have to Christ, which with time grows in intimacy and Christlikeness (2005:104). Hence, Kraft argues that "Our allegiance to Christ and the ensuing relationship is to replace any other allegiance/relationship that is primary in one's life" (2005a:104).

Truth encounter

Kraft puts truth encounter second in his hierarchy of encounters. This aspect of transmitting or acquiring knowledge and understanding, according to Kraft, is the most familiar to Christian experience and communication of the gospel (2005:106). Like Christ, Christians spend time and energy in teaching and emphasizing theological truth about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, Kraft contends that Christians are not good apprentices of their master Jesus Christ. Why, because, argues Kraft, unlike Jesus, Christians' "Bible schools, colleges, seminaries, and churches tend to focus strongly on knowledge about some aspect of Christian life rather than on actually experiencing that aspect" (2005a:106). Hence, Kraft challenges Christians to follow Christ's example honestly and totally by teaching truth by example like Jesus who taught his twelve disciples "experiential knowledge and truth" in His earthly ministry in "the context of the day-in, day-out activities of living" (2005a:107).

Love's view of truth encounter combines Kraft's first two encounters. According to Love, Kraft's first two encounters (allegiance encounter and truth encounter) could be considered as only one encounter. Love argues that Kraft's description of the three encounters in 1992 admits a "strong overlap in the two concepts" (2000:97). Kraft's 1992 definition, used by Love, asserts that:

Commitment encounters, involving the exercise of the will in commitment and obedience to the Lord, are the most important of the encounters. For without commitment and obedience to Jesus, there is no spiritual life.... Initial commitment and the relationship that proceeds from it are tightly linked to truth, both because they are developed within the truth encounter and because relationship with God is the true reason for human existence (Kraft 1992c:74-75 cited in Love 2000:97).

Love contends that the distinction Charles Kraft usually makes between the personal and propositional nature or dimensions of truth could be considered as "truth encounter" and not two distinct concepts as "truth" and "allegiance" encounters (2000:97). This researcher agrees with Love that separating the personal and propositional nature of truth gives two entities of truth that cannot really stand independently. Because truth, as a proposition, a cognitive appeal to reason, is just philosophical, pure knowledge without any personal commitment (allegiance) to the theory, or the philosophy. As mentioned above, Kraft himself challenges Christians to present experimental truth. In other words, Kraft is inviting Christians to stop hoping that people will just convert, repent, be faithful or be reconciled with God by hearing sermons on these topics (Kraft 2005a:107). Obviously, it does not work like that. Another aspect of the gospel truth is what the Holy Spirit does in the heart of the listener. On the road to Emmaus after hearing Christ and recognizing Him, the disciples said to one another: "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32). This means that intellectual knowledge without any relationship with the source of that knowledge leads nowhere. The two have to be together and not separated. Elwell and Beitzel assert that:

> While a general account of truth may be inferred from biblical data, the focus of Scripture is upon soteriology, the revealed truth in the gospel of God's redeeming grace through Christ. This is the truth which Christ and the apostles proclaimed (John 8:44–46; 18:37; Rom 9:1; 2 Cor 4:2), which was foreshadowed in the OT (1 Pt 1:10–12), and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). God's revelation in Christ may be true in contrast to the OT

teaching, not because the OT teaching is false, but because it is shadowy and incomplete in comparison with the NT. So, Christ brings the truth (John 1:17) and the Holy Spirit leads into all truth (John 16:13) (Elwell and Beitzel 1988:2108).

Hence, the soteriological aspect of truth in mission is capital as clearly outlined by Elwell and Beitzel. As Love articulates, not only truth encounter is personal, because grounded in the person of Jesus who is the truth (John 14:6), but it is also propositional because believers are invited to believe in the gospel of Jesus-Christ (Love 2000:90, 91). Ritzema concurs when he states that:

> The most common term for "truth" in the Old Testament is אֱמֶת (*emeth*). The semantic range of אֱמֶת (*emeth*) includes factuality and validity as well as faithfulness, firmness and reliability. In the Septuagint, it is most often translated using ἀλήθεια (*alētheia*). πίστις (*pistis*) or δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosynē*) are also occasionally used. Truth can be predicated of people as well as propositions (Ritzema 2016).

Thus, the propositional aspect of truth and personal dimension are just like the two sides of a coin. They are certainly distinct, yet part of the same coin. As such, Love's understanding of the truth encounter is used in the next section.

According to Love, Christian witness through a kingdom approach "begins with truth encounter" (2000:90). Love first advocates truth encounter that describes Satan as a "defeated foe" (2000:89). This aspect of truth encounter in the context of ministry among folk Muslims is the proclamation and a confrontation of popular Islam with the Good News that belief in Christ assures faith to defeat fear and confidence to defeat concerns and anxieties of daily life (2000:89). Because Christ (Michael) defeated Satan in Heaven (Rev 12:7-9) and in the wilderness (Matt 4:10-11), He is able to defeat Him again in the lives of those who believe in Him. And because God's power was "…worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power

and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Eph 1:21-22 cited in Love 2000:89), Love argues that not only is truth encounter personal because it is grounded in the person of Jesus who is the truth (John 14:6), but it is also propositional because believers are invited to believe in the gospel of Jesus-Christ (Love 2000:90, 91). Hence, points out Love, "truth encounter involves an encounter with the living person, Jesus" (2000:91). Consequently, Love further contends, according to folk Muslims' felt needs, they should first hear in our witnessing "the rescue dimension of the gospel–God's ability to bring them from the darkness into the light" (2000:91). Love adds:

> In other words, church planting among unreached peoples involves encountering the kingdom of darkness. Folk Muslims use charms, practice magic and fear evil spirits for a good reason. Dark angels are diabolically plotting to destroy humanity. To understand the plight of folk Muslims and prepare for spiritual battle, church planters must understand what the New Testament teaches about the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness (Love 2000:91).

Love's second axe of truth encounter is about Christ as "a liberating Lord" (2000:98). Love demonstrates that the gospel truth about Jesus for mission among folk Muslims is Christ's power to save folk Muslims from fear, spells, illnesses, *jinn*, witches and sorcerers, and darkness, and bring them to his light, to his "forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18 cited in Love 2000:91). Love asserts that "ministry among folk Muslims must be understood in terms of spiritual warfare with the powers of darkness" (2000:96). Thus, folk Muslims should receive the inviting message to come to a liberating Lord. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" He says (Matt 11:28). Here, in the context of folk Muslims, Christ offers rest from fear of *jinn* and fear of the future. Such text in the scriptures and many others will counter ignorance, error and fatalism and bring hope and assurance in the Jesus Muslims know already in the Qur'an as

a powerful messenger of God well esteemed in this world and in the next to come (Surah 2:87; 3:45).

This message of Christ as a liberating Lord to be preached to folk Muslims fits the felt need approach. Love acknowledges that he did not succeed and even get the attention of his folk Muslim friends when he preached the standard Western message on Jesus' mission to take away humanity's sins with the emphasis on forgiveness (1 John 3:5 cited in Love 2000:100). But he had their "undivided attention" when he preached on Jesus' power to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8 cited in Love 2000:100). Such biblical truth clearly reflects the "rescue view of salvation" in Paul's writings with the emphasis on deliverance and redemption (2000:100).

Power encounter

In Love's view, the term power encounter was coined by Alan Tippett in the 1970s while working as a missionary in the South Pacific (2000:112). Love asserts that originally, Tippett understood power encounter in the context of evangelism, and it meant the encounter between tribal peoples' old traditional god and their new Christian God (2000:112). This encounter of gods was evidently to be in a confrontation of powers for the old gods to keep their former subjects who "are making a commitment to Christ or have just made one" and for the new Christian God to protect them and assure them safety under his wings. Thus, power encounter is "the demonstration of God's power, through God's servants, over the work of Satan and demons, based on the work of Christ, the Great Commission and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to overcome the work of Satan and demons resulting in the salvation of the lost, the upbuilding of the Body and the glory of God" (Love 2000:113). Kraft comments on Tippett (1973 in these terms: "In the beginnings of Christianity in the South Pacific, power encounters

often involved the challenging of the traditional gods by their priests or chiefs who had converted to Christ. These were initiated by cultural insiders, the converted priests or chiefs, perhaps under the influence of the missionaries (Kraft 2005:113 cited in Tippett 1973).

Power encounter is the last of Charles Kraft's three encounters. It is also, according to Kraft, the encounter not only missing in most Christian witness, but less understood among evangelicals (Kraft 1991b, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2005a, 2005b 2008, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2017). For instance, Kraft points out that the gospel truth can't be received and understood if people's minds are still the captive of the enemy's spiritual power; in that same reasoning, their commitment to their Lord Jesus-Christ will be impossible if their wills are still captive (Kraft 2009:448). Kraft urges evangelicals to understand this dimension of the Christian commitment and witness (2005:103). Kraft complains that "many in the West fail to see either the extent of the satanic blinding (mentioned in 2 Cor 4:4) or the possibility of breaking through that blinding by using the power Jesus gave us" (2000:103). Hence, Kraft reminds Christians that if they are to imitate their Lord and Master Jesus, their ministries' and witnessings' should be "filled with instances of healing and deliverance with authoritative praying and teaching" (Kraft 2000:109). Kraft insists that:

> Jesus said He came to set captives free (Luke 4:18). In making such a statement, He implied both that there is one who has captured many people and that people need the freedom God offers. People need freedom so badly that He, Jesus, came to earth to offer this freedom. He then demonstrated throughout His ministry what He meant by this statement. … Thus He showed us how we should go about our lives as participants in the Kingdom of God that Jesus planted in the middle of Satan's kingdom. He gave to us the same Holy Spirit under Whom He worked, saying that whoever has faith in Him will do the same things He did, and more (John 14:12) … When Jesus left, He gave us power in His name. We, then, are to operate in His authority to bring about the same ends He came to bring. We are to focus on bringing people into a relationship with God as Jesus did. But we to recognize, as He did, that many are in captivity and,

therefore, in need of freedom from the hold of the enemy. (Kraft 2005:108, 109).

According to Kraft, until this dimension of the Christian commitment and witness is not equally understood and used as the other two and especially the truth dimension, Christian mission will not be holistic (2005:102). Consequently, Kraft pleads for a balanced approach to Christian witness, "a balance that goes three ways" and "subjects for contextualization" (2005:102, 111). Wimber and Springer (2009:49) concur and claim that "any system or force that must be overcome for the gospel to be believed is cause for a power encounter".

In the context of ministry among folk Muslims, Hiebert's comments on power encounter also builds on Allan Tippett's experience. Hiebert writes:

> At the level of actual conversion from paganism. . .no matter how many elements may be woven into the conversion complex in communal society, the group action (which is not mass, but **multi-individual**) must fix itself in encounter at some material locus of power at some specific point in time. There must be a **psychological moment or experience** when the persons involved actually turn from the old god(s) to the new. There ought to be **some ocular demonstration of this encounter, some specific act of faith**. Both Christian and pagan alike frequently demand some such act to indicate the bona fide nature of conversion (Tippett 1973:169 cited in Hiebert 1989:52).

Hiebert concurs with Tippett and points out that folk Muslims need to see an ocular demonstration of God's power over spirits' power and witchcraft, over *jinn*, the evil eye, "amulets, medicines and other magical paraphernalia", that is how Christians "challenge the structures and beliefs of existing religious systems" as they "invite their followers to turn to Christ" (1989:56). Hiebert also believes that "our invitations to Muslims to follow Christ should include demonstrations of God's power. These may include healing of those who are sick, and provision for those who are destitute. And they should surely include the more permanent signs of righteousness and transformed lives" (1989:56).

But, Hiebert warns that power encounter among folk Muslims needs to be done with discernment as signs and wonders exist in all religions and "reports of glossolalia, healings, miracles and resurrections are common in folk Islam" (1989:57). Hence, the demonstration of God's power does not lead everyone to faith. Some will answer with hostility, "particularly those representing the religious establishment" (Hiebert 1989:56). Consequently, Shenk points to the powers of evil "in human institutions and structures" (1989:8). Shenk argues that human structures such as Muslims' *ummah* "present major obstacles to the Gospel" (1989:8). As such, Shenk also sees the need to confront God's power with "persons or structures which oppose the Gospel" (1989:8). Hiebert concurs and contends that folk Muslims with their power-oriented worldview need to hear the affirmation of God as a God of power (1989:55). According to Hiebert, Christian missionaries "must affirm the mighty works of God in the lives of his people" (1989:55). However, Hiebert reminds Christians that from the record of scriptures, "God uses his power is the way of the cross" of suffering (I Cor 1:18-25) and not of the sword (1989:55). Thus, Shenk warns that, as in the book of Acts, "confrontation with demons, idols and the occult … always brought suffering to the church" (1989:8). Hence, asserts Shenk, "power encounter with demons or humans is effectuated through the suffering and triumph of the cross" (Shenk 1989:8). Nevertheless, Paul Hiebert further argues that "power encounters provide no easy victory" (Hiebert 1989:56). Hence, Love suggests to missionaries working among power-oriented cultures a twofold use of power encounters: defensive resistance use and offensive use (2000:111-163).

Power encounter as defense and resistance

Love begins his book with the offensive use of power encounter, but this study by preference, start with the defensive resistance use of power encounter, because it is believed

that many missionaries left their mission field too early because they were not taught some of these insights. In Benin where the researcher and his family worked for ten years among folk Muslims, they faced many attacks of the enemy starting only two weeks after arrival. Strange accidents and illnesses hit them before they were even able to settle. The researcher was told that many missionaries from different Christian denominations had to leave the country (Benin, the birth place of voodoo) for such reasons. But they stayed for ten years, firstly because of God's grace, but also because the researcher had some understanding of spiritual warfare and how to use it defensively as God's power to resist attacks from the enemy. Love concurs with many similar accounts of missionaries who had to defend themselves and resist the "mental, moral and physical" attacks of Satan in the field (2000:150-154).

For instance, Love tells of his own family's experience with spiritual attack in the mission field. He and his wife noticed that, immediately after moving to the mission field, they "began to argue much more intensely" than they used to in the United states. Love explains:

> We chalked up our arguments to culture stress, and I'm sure some of it was. However, we also started seeing fleeting shadows around the house, but both of us were embarrassed to talk about it. After a month, we finally admitted our suspicions. We concluded that we were experiencing demonic attack. We needed to pray over our house and to have what some call "house cleansing." After we prayed and resisted the devil, according to James 4:7, our intense arguments stopped immediately (Love 2000:153).

Unfortunately, regrets Love, "most missionaries are not prepared to deal with these issues" (2000:153). Thus, Love calls missionaries in general and Western missionaries in particular, to remember that scriptures emphasize our defence and resistance (Eph 6:10-20), a defense and resistance which will be done easily if we are empowered through an "intimate, ongoing, cleansing communion with the heavenly Father" (2000:151-153). This means not only

to pray for deliverance daily as Christ taught us "deliver us from the evil one" (Matt 6:13), but most importantly to resist the devil's "mental, moral and physical attacks" (James 4:7).

Power encounter as offensive attacks

Power encounter as offensive attacks is about exposing and silencing Satan's agent who is interfering with the gospel proclamation. As it was for the apostles, so it will be for us engaged in gospel ministry today. Satan will bring his human agents to counter our work, distract and challenge us and even destroy us. That was the case when Simon the magician offered money to Peter to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18-19), and with Elymas the magician who opposed Paul's ministry overtly and energetic (Acts 13:8-12). Thus, as we read these two stories, power encounter in ministry is not a matter of either/or when facing attacks from the enemy, because "the kingdom of darkness stands behind magicians" who will try to hinder the spread of the gospel. We must be "filled with the Holy Spirit" for any confrontation with Satan's agents (Love 2000:125). As Moses confronted the Egyptian magicians (Ex 7:10-22), Elijah the prophets of Baal (1 Ki 18:20-40), Peter Simon the magician, and Paul Elymas the magician, so are believers expected to exercise their "spiritual authority over the powers of darkness" in mission (Love 2000:128).

Thus, Love contends that power encounter as an offensive attack could be summarized as "prohibition and prediction" (Love 2000:114). Firstly as prohibition, because Moses linked "his great predictions of the coming prophet, Jesus, with prohibitions against magic and witchcraft" (2000:117). And, as Moses, missionaries are called to help identify and eliminate with the assistance of their local people those beliefs and practices that offend their (and our)

creator, the living God. Secondly, as prediction, because "true deliverance for folk Muslims depends on submission to the true prophet and true God, Jesus Christ" (2000:117).

5.2.5.1. Practical Christian responses to the Dendi fear-power worldview

1. Christian missionaries to the Dendi should be liberated from the Western influence of dualism that led previous missionaries to deny the realities of witchcraft, spirit possession, and magic in the power-oriented cultures where they served. This mentality, unfortunately, resulted in many Western Christian missionaries failing to provide biblical answers to the fears and spiritualistic needs of their target people (Hiebert 2000:169).

2. Christian missionaries engaged in ministry among folk Muslims need "to include spiritual power encounter through the power of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ" (Shenk 1989:8). In such witness, the missionary must "express and communicate the Messiah as the one who is triumphant over all demons and who is indeed the great physician" (1989:8).

3. Christian missionaries desperately need a spiritual warfare mentality in order to talk, exhibit and pray to demonstrate God's power in their daily lives while at power places (cities, tomb of Shaikh, holy places), talking with powerful people (*imams, alfas, marabouts, shamans*), looking at or touching power objects (food, water, plants, incense from a saint grave, amulet/talisman, Qur'anic verses for protection in homes etc.), being at power rituals (chanting of the Qur'an, some prayers and fasting, the different Muslims feasts) or in power times (Muhammad's birthday, small and big pilgrimages) (Love 2000:28-36).

4. Christian missionaries among folk Muslims should confront evil wherever they find it in a Christlike manner "whether demonic, systemic, or personal" (Hiebert 2000:176).

5. Christian missionaries need to present a biblical conception of fear which embraces Godly fear "characterized by total allegiance to the one true God" (Sacks 1988:783).

However, Sacks argues that the issue is not with a legitimate fear of God in the "lower, anxious sense", since Jesus commands believers in Luke 12:4, 5 not to fear those who can only hurt or destroy their physical body, but who have no power over their salvation (witches, sorcerers, *jinn*, etc.), rather, believers should fear God "who has power to cast into hell"; as such, "fear has a constructive role to play in enabling men to realize both the degeneracy of their souls and their need of divine forgiveness" (Sacks 1988:782-783).

- **Dreams and visions**

According to Love, dreams and visions could be more or less classified under the topic of power encounter (2000:156). But they fit totally among the themes associated with ministry to Muslims in general and with mission among folk Muslims in particular. When people face life challenges and they want to hear a way out from the supernatural, dreams are particularly welcome. In some folk cultures, people go to temples or holy places "to sleep in order to have a dream that would show them the best decision to make. The dreams of common people were important to the recipients, but the dreams of kings and of holy men or women were important on a national or international scale" (Bean 2003:442-443). Seeing Gods and angels was a common phenomenon among Arabs before the rise of Islam (Campo 2009; Hosein 2019; Mirza 2012; Sirriyeh 2015). Campo asserts that:

> Dreams and visions (Arabic: *ruya* or *manam*) occupy a special place in Islam as in many ancient Near Eastern religions, since such experiences are considered intimately linked to prophecy. In the Quran (as in the Bible), God communicates to his prophets through dreams and visions, and many prophets are endowed with the power of dream interpretation. Several hadith manifest Muhammad's affirmation of the relation between dreams and prophethood; for example, "The divine revelation comes to prophets in waking as well as in sleep." Given the qur'anic precedent and the importance that Muhammad attached to dreams, the early Muslims greatly esteemed oneiromancy, the pre-Islamic science of dream classification and interpretation. The belief in the divinely inspired "good dream" (*ruya hasana*)–as distinguished from

demonic-inspired "muddled dreams" (*adghath al-ahlam*)–has provided a paradigm for the social acceptance of dreams and visions as authoritative in Islamicate societies up until the modern period (Campo 2009:202-203).

Working with such a worldview, God has been giving specific dreams with salvific values in recent years to Muslims around the world (Doyle 2012; Houssney 2010; Musk 1988; Pierce 2012; Trousdale 2012). Doyle, for instance, argues that:

> The phenomenon is not limited to a few isolated locations. It's not happening in just one or two African nations. There're not just one of several hundred people groups affected in India. He's not simply visiting some lucky town in the Middle East. What we see is Jesus presenting Himself to Muslims everywhere. Dozens of Islamic countries and countless Muslim cultures have been invaded by Jesus' love." (Doyle 2012:xiii-xiv).

Muslims' cultural and religious background predispose them to be anxious to know the meaning of their dreams (Musk 1988:59). Musk points out that "good Muslims" have the religious duty from Qur'anic verses and *hadiths* "to attend to their dreams and their prophetic significance" for guidance (1988:59). Dreams, mentioned about 200 times in the Bible, have been frequently used by God in communicating messages to man of "impending misfortune or good fortune" (Roberts 2016), warning, guidance, and encouragement. These include Jacob (Ge 28:12; 31:10), Abimelech (Ge 20:3), Laban (Ge 31:24), Joseph (Ge 37:9–11), Pharaoh's chief butler and baker (Ge 40:5), Pharaoh (Ge 41:1–8), Gideon (Jdg 7), the Midianites (Jdg 7:13), Solomon (1 Ki 3:5), Nebuchadnezzar (Da 2:1; 4:10, 18), Joseph (Matt 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19), the wise men from the east (Matt 2:12), Pilate's wife (Matt 27:19), and Paul (Acts 16:9; 18:9; 27:23-24).

From the insights above, Christian missionaries should understand Muslims' attitude toward dreams and vision. As it was in biblical times where dreams and visions were God's means to warn, encourage, or reveal a particular message–generally the time of future events either good or bad–the interpretations generally called for decisions and action. Similarly,

Muslims are interested in knowing the meaning of their dreams in order to determine what course of action they should take, especially when such dreams involve Jesus and Christians. Hence, many Christian missions currently have ministries with a particular focus on Muslims' dreams about the person in whiteTrousdale writes:

> In the last seven years, we have heard hundreds of stories like Yusuf's, and we have learned much about the dreams that God is using to reach Muslim people:
>   o Of the former Muslim leaders who are now making disciples and planting churches, about 40 per cent reported a dream or vision of Jesus that prompted them to begin a search to know more about Isa al Masih (Jesus the Messiah). And the remarkable thing is that all of those dreams were unique to them. Even if many of the dreams include similar themes, the context and message are always different and relevant to each person having the dream. We have not recorded exactly the same dream twice.
>   o Many of the dreams were visions of Jesus appearing and encouraging the person to follow Him.
>   o Some of the dreams compared the Qur'an with the Bible in very stark and powerfully contrasting images. Some of the dreams were pictures of heaven and hell, with a warning that the dreamer's life was going in the wrong direction.
>   o God also uses dreams to reach Christians. In one case, a Christian reported a dream in which he saw Muslim people living in worn-out tents, lined up to get dirty water to drink. A mighty wind came along and blew away the tents, replacing them with a pure-white tent from which pure water flowed. This dream was a vivid calling for the Christian to go out to serve Muslims (Trousdale 2012:133-134).

Thus, the phenomenon of dreams and visions being observed more and more frequently today in the Muslim world presents a great mission opportunity. God is at work in cultures and lives in ways Christians often have no idea of. This was the case with Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10). With this in mind, Christian missionaries should be more intentional in their prayers and conversation with their Muslims friends regarding this phenomenon and its related miracles. As Trousdale points out, most Muslims "come to God's Word by dramatic means, through dreams and visions, or as a result of seeing miracles. Men and women are being healed of physical

disabilities and addictions, bands of hardened rebels are voluntarily laying down their arms, and thousands are seeing the power of God's Spirit in their lives" (2012:13).

- **Moral encounter**

The moral encounter is Love's third encounter. According to Love, it needs to be a distinct encounter, because, as Christians, we cannot present truth and power encounters even in the name of Jesus without any ethic principle (Love 2000:166-176). Love argues that 'love' and 'peace' are the "two important most vital" ethical components of mission work (2000:169). They were among the main characteristics of Christ's early ministry. Citing Kraft (1989:138), Love contends that "If ministry is not done in love, it is not done in God's way" (2000:166), because love is "one of the most central aspects of kingdom ethics" (2000:169). Referring to Morris (1981), Love observes that the "command to love" clearly expounded in the gospel is "the most pervasive theme in New Testament ethics". Not only do Jesus and Paul highlight the importance of love in their teachings, but they make it the summary of the Old Testament message (Matt 22.34-40; Gal 5:14 cited in Love 2000:169). James 2:8 says "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' you do well".

Love's emphasis on moral encounter in mission is based on mission stories where missionaries' exemplary moral lives served as a bridge for mission (2000:169). Hence, Love contends that "moral encounter opened the door to truth encounter" (2000:169). Peace is the twin sister of love in the concept of "kingdom ethics" (2000:171). Thus, asserts Love, while "the law of the kingdom is love (James 2.8)", the "fruit of the kingdom is peace (Rom 14:17)", consequently "blessed are the church planters who are also peacemakers!" (2000:175).

Christians are to surrender their thoughts and actions to Christ's righteousness and lordship (Ott et al. 2010:88). Ott et al. call such Christian life "becoming Christ to the people one serves" (2010:98). Ott and others observe that Paul in Eph 6:15 command believers to put on their feet "the gospel of peace" as shoes in "all armor of God" (2010:49). And according to them "verse 15 is translated in the NRSV,"as: "As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace." Thus, Ott et al. (2010:146) assert that mission has "an ethical mandate"–the obligation for Christians "to demonstrate love and compassion as well as work toward justice for all as a sign of the kingdom and a reflection of God's character". Similarly, Lamin Sanneh (Sanneh 1989:158 cited in Ott et al. 2010:56), asserts that "the central premise of missionary preaching is the reality of God: Creator, Sustainer, Judge, and Redeemer". This means that to portray God's character and attributes should be the central goal of missionary work.

- **Cultural encounter**

Love introduces cultural encounter as the fourth aspect of the kingdom theology. Love proposes that cultural encounter, which he asserts consists of creating rituals culturally appropriate for folk Muslims and theologically faithful to the scripture, is a "must" for church planters and the emerging church in ministry to folk Muslims (2000:177, 178). Love asserts that using "ceremonies and rituals are not optional" in ministry to folk Muslims because "folk Muslims' lives progress through formal traditions and well-defined rituals" which are prevalent in their lives (2000:177). A ritual for Love is "anything from the etiquette of daily greetings to the solemnity of sacred ceremonies" (2000:178). Love's simple definition of ritual, such as shaking hands, bowing, or embracing when meeting friends, to complex religious ceremonies in which people leave the mundane world to relate to the sacred (1999:284). Hence, according

to Hiebert et al., at the heart of folk religions are rituals such as "fiestas, New Year celebrations, fairs, festivals, weddings, funerals, masked dances, sacrifices, pilgrimages, and memorial days." (1999:283).

According to Lehman and Myers, ritual is "the heart of religious behavior the meat [of] which goes on the bones of ... beliefs" (Lehman & Myers 1985:50 cited in Love 2000:178). David Burnett (1988:93-106 cited in Love 2000:178) asserts that there are three types of religious rituals: life-cycle rituals; calendar rituals; crisis rituals. Love explains that the life-cycle rituals emphasize biological and social stages of human life, such as birth, puberty, circumcision, initiation, marriage, and funerals (2000:178). Love argues that life cycle rituals contribute to making "people understanding of the spirit real" (2000:179). The calendar rituals, on the other hand, deal with the Islamic calendar for folk Muslims, including the *mawlid* (prophet Muhammad's birthday), the *Id ul-fitr* (the celebration at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan), the *Id ul-adha* (the animal sacrifice at the end of the *hajj*), and the farming cycle in other cultures (Love 2000:178). Love points out that, unlike the first two rituals (life-cycle and calendar rituals), which are predictable, crisis rituals are not and cannot be predicted, because they are conducted when the normal personal life, or the normal social and cultural orders of the community, are disrupted by a crisis or danger (Love 2000:179 Hiebert et al. 1999:316). Hiebert and others (1999:302) also discuss crisis rituals, but identify the other two types of rituals as "rites of transformation" which, according to them, exist "to create new order and move individuals and groups through life", and "rites of intensification", which they see necessary "to reinforce existing order". Either life cycle ritual, as the term used by Love, or rites of transformation, as used by Hiebert and others, refer to the same social events, since Hiebert and others include rites of transformation in their lifecycle rituals as such rites (1999:308).

So, crisis rituals (Love 2000:178) or rites of crisis (Hiebert et al. 1999:316-319), exist according to Hiebert and others "to enable people to survive emergency situations." Consequently, they argue each of these rites "serves an important function in the life of communities and individuals" (1999:302).

- **Cultural encounter and the C1-C6 spectrum**

Love's argument on the importance of cultural encounter in mission among folk Muslims dialogues with John Travis' C1-C6 contextualization spectrum among Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). Travis bases his spectrum on the use of local language and local cultural and religious forms (Travis 1998). Travis' continuum of contextualization among MBBs describes, compares, and contrasts levels of contextualization of Christianity. Travis's spectrum also measures the use or influence of local language, the cultural identity (style of dress, worship forms and buildings, the degree of freedom to worship with others, etc.).

Basically, Love argues that, because C1 and C2 models use traditional Western church forms and not the target people group's heart language (only in C1, because C2 tried to do so), these two models have rejected contextualization (Love 2000:187). Love recommends the C3 contextualization model for Muslim ministry in general, because, he contends, the model is a contextualization that avoids "both Western and Islamic forms" (2000:187). However, admitting that C3 contextualization will be challenging in the Arab world–because Islam and Arab cultures are obviously the same thing–Love notes that in other parts of the world, C3 contextualization could use "traditional rituals, ceremonies, arts and aspects of culture" distinct from Islamic belief or practice as "contextual possibilities for the C3 church planter" (2000:187).

Love observes that C4 contextualization "not only adapts to culture, but also adopts biblically acceptable Islamic forms and traditions" (2000:189). Hence, Love acknowledges that C4 contextualization forces church planters among Muslims to ask deep theological questions (2000:189). Yet, Love recommends the C3 model for ministry among Muslims as indicated above. The researcher believes that Love is cautious with the C4 contextualization model because of the C4/C5 controversies among evangelicals. Parshall, for instance, sees C5 as dangerous, because crossing many lines might eventually end up in syncretism (Parshall 1998:404-410). Others, such as Eenigenburg (1997:310-315) and Williams (2003:75-90) have also been very critical toward the C4/C5 models (Hwang 2019:2-10; Parshall 2004:288-292).

As to C5, Love wonders if converts in this model are "Christians or Muslims?" (Love 2000:185). C5 believers, according to Travis, "remain legally and socially within the community of Islam" (1998:407). This means that C5 believers continue practicing Islam's five pillars in order to retain their social place and legal privileges among Muslims, among the Islamic *ummah*. Hwang disputes Travis' distinction between C4 and C5 in these terms:

> As Travis distinguishes C5 from C4 on the C-scale, the IM (C5) can be viewed as a Muslim contextualization model which moves one step away from C4 in the C-continuum. One of the major distinctions between C4 and C5 is in the matter of maintaining former religious identity as Muslims. In the C4 model, Muslim background believers (MBBs) are eventually not capable of remaining within the Islamic community after being identified as non-Muslims, despite their intention to remain within the sociocultural community. The unwanted outcome is the loss of an evangelistic momentum through a preexisting social network. In the C5 model, on the other hand, Muslim followers of Jesus remain within the Islamic community because they maintain their identity as Muslims and continue to participate in Islamic religious practices as before (Hwang 2019:7).

Similarly, Tennent (2006:101-15 cited in Hwang 2019:10-11) contends that "Most of the argumentation in favor of C-5 is decidedly ad hoc and is developed as a reaction against criticism which has been posed, rather than an independent case which biblically, theologically,

historically and contextually sets forth the necessary arguments". Apparently, Love did not want to engage in the controversy as pro or con, and in almost a defensive tone for Travis' C spectrum (Travis is his friend after all), states: "The C1-C6 range is not exhaustive, nor does it place value judgments on any one form. It has been created primarily as a point of reference for ongoing discussion and development of strategies" (Love 2000:188). As announced earlier, this study will not engage in any critical evaluation of Travis' C1-C6 continuum. The Dendi people live in a Christian dominated country, and their Islam is influenced more by animism than Arab culture. Therefore, C3 has been the contextualization approach during the ten years spent among the Dendi people. However, Love has implicitly rejected C4-C6 by recommending C3 for ministry among Muslims. While Love admits that, even though the C6 contextualization model exists, "it should never be an intentional strategy" (2000:192-193). The "secret believers" or "underground believers" of the C6 cluster "have little if any contact with other Christians" (Love 2000:188), because of isolation, persecution, confiscation of property or other legal denial.

Finally, Love suggests a chart that can "help determine what level of contextualization is appropriate for what context" (2000:193). With two perpendicular lines creating four quadrants like in an orthonormal basis, Love points out that the four quadrants describe the four different ways folk Muslims perceive themselves (2000:193). As with coordinates in an orthonormal basis, each quadrant represents different "Islamic identity and practice among folk Muslims" (2000:193). The four quadrants represent: folk Muslims with "low identity but high practice;" folk Muslims with "high identity and high practice;" folk Muslims with "low identity and low practice;" and folk Muslims with "high identity but low practice" (Love 2000:193-194).
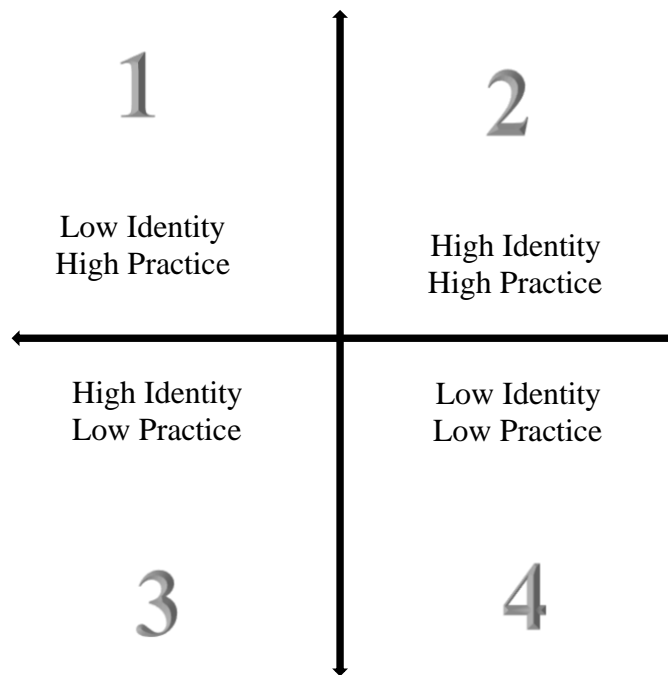
Figure 10: Islamic identity and practice among folk Muslims
(Source Love 200:1993)

Love comments that Quadrant 1 "is more a theoretical possibility than a practical reality" because it represents folk Muslims with no emotional identity with Islam, but with high Islamic practices (2000:193). Quadrant 2, according to Love, stands for both orthodox and reserved folk Muslims with a high identity with Islam and a high practice of Islam as well (2000:193). Love believes that C5 contextualization might be appropriate for this type of Muslims (2000:194), while quadrants 3 and 4 represent folk Muslims with only nominal identity with Islam characterized by little faith in Islam and a low practice of the religion and the faith (2000:194). Love puts in this category of Islam practice, "Muslims in the former Soviet Republics, such as the Kazaks or Tajiks" (2000:194).

It is worth noticing that the four quadrants are opposed two by two in cross symmetries. Hence, Quadrant 1 is the opposite of Quadrant 4 and Quadrant 2 and Quadrant 3 are opposites.

In Quadrant 4 are Muslims who highly profess Islam publicly, but who have a low practice of the Islam religion (2000:194). Love puts a good number of Muslims in Southeast Asia in this group and recommends a C4-C5 contextualization model for them (2000:194). The researcher sees the Dendi in this fourth quadrant but advocates a C3 contextualization model for them. As mentioned in previous chapters in this study, the Dendi have a high identity with Islam as a religion (Adjeran 2018:21; De Souza 2014:103, 228). This is visible in their adoption of an Arab-Muslim anthroponomic system based on birth order, the day or place of delivery, Qur'anic verses, and Islam prophets' names (Igué 1998:49 cited in Adjeran 2018:21). Nonetheless, "Islam merely introduced new elements to their culture and left the underlying framework of custom and tradition virtually untouched" (Joshua Project 2016; Bierschenk & De Sardan 1998:107; Gosselain & Smolderen 2013). C3 avoids "both Western and Islamic forms". This means respectively avoid using Western style dressing and liturgical forms and services, and using Islamic religious elements, such as the five pillars of Islam and the Qur'an, etc. (Love 2000:187; Travis 1998; Travis & Travis 2005).

After the implementation of the first three steps in Love's five-step contextualization model, namely a cultural understanding of the local people's beliefs and customs; an exegesis of relevant biblical texts addressing the identified local beliefs; and an evaluation of the local beliefs and customs, the next section addresses the fourth and fifth steps of Love's five-step contextualization model, namely a suggestion of new created forms experimented to replace the old local systems; and a formalization of the new redeemed forms (Love 2000:57-65).

5.3. Christian exorcism ritual: A substitution to Dendi adorcism and *ruqyah*

5.3.1. *Ruqyah* and adorcism as crisis rituals

This study has shown that the Dendi on the one hand keep on practicing their pre-Islamic crisis ritual of *Danfou,* an adorcism ritual carried out by the Dendi in order to address individual or community times of great distress (Bello & Giannotti 2017:5, 111, 125, 127, 138, 151), and on the other hand, as identified in the field research findings, some Dendi seek an Islamic crisis ritual, *ruqyah,* when facing spirit possession, one of the major life crises for the Dendi people. Spirit possession is believed among the Dendi to bring or cause bad luck, chronic illnesses, repeated accidents, curses, strange events and even unexpected death (Bello 2005; Bello & Giannotti 2017; Joshua Project 2016; Mauranges 2005). Hence, David Burnett (1988), Hiebert et al. (1999), and Love (2000) argue that ministry among folk Muslims is unconceivable without rituals.

Fatovic (2018:426) defines rituals as "usually socially prescribed symbolic behaviors that are formal, structured, and repetitive, such as worship, singing, recitation, manipulation of sacred objects, or dance". Fatovic points out that people of different religions use these sacred customs and ceremonial rituals fixed by their tradition to "enact their beliefs and make them real" (2018:426). However, among the three types of rituals mentioned earlier, crisis rituals is the focus of the next section. Love and Hiebert et al. qualify solar eclipses, flood, famine, epidemic, chronic illnesses, repeated accidents, curses, droughts, unexpected death, spirit possession, or strange events, as crises (Love 2000:179; Hiebert et al. 1999:316). Crisis rituals or rites of crises specifically target imminent danger or predicaments threatening individual's lives or the community life (Hiebert et al. 1999:316). In some cultures, animal sacrifices are a

major component of crisis rituals in order "to placate the gods, ancestors, or spirits" (1999:316).

These rituals have many functions. Hiebert et al. list a few general functions of rituals:

1   Rituals are remembrance of festivals.

2   Rituals recreate the disturbed order of the world.

3   Rituals unify the community.

4   Rituals are social catharses; this means that they serve in the resolution of conflicts as emotional and affective expressions.

5   Rituals create the communion with the divinities.

6   Rituals are moments of indoctrination, etc. (1999:300-302).

In the case of the Islamic ritual of *ruqyah,* some forms of the ritual are permitted and others with pre-Islamic tones are prohibited in orthodox Islam. As defined in Chapter 4, r*uqya* or *ruqyah* is Islamic exorcism. It comprises the recitation of "Sûrat Al-Fitihah or any other *Sūrah* of the Qur'an and then blow one's breath with saliva over a sick person's body-part" (Yazeed & Al-Qazwini 2007:510). Considered divine speech, the incantations of *ruqyah* serve like a spell with curative power over any type of illness (2007:510). Hence, due to the influence of animism on Islam, from its inception in the Arabian Peninsula as early as in the time of the prophet Muhammad (Musk 1989; Parshall 1983; Zwemer 1920), *hadith* caution against certain forms of *ruqyah.* For instance:

> The Sharīʿah ruling on incantations (ruqyah) is that some are permitted: this refers to the supplications (adʿiyyah) which have been transmitted and established from the Prophet; likewise, performing ruqyah with the verses of the Noble Qur'ān is also permissible. However, some forms of ruqyah are not permitted: this refers to the practices of the Time of Ignorance (Jaliyah), and the erroneous practices and magic which are incompatible with sound faith (īmān) and complete trust in Allāh. Pessimism (tashā'um) and perceiving omens (taṭayyur) are also prohibited. (Muh.yī ad-Dīn, Sharaf an-Nawawī &Yaḥya 2017:76-77).

According to Muh.yī ad-Dīn et al. the text above encourages Muslims to value the virtue of trusting (*tawakkul*) "in Allāh Most High and reliance (*iʿtimād*) upon Him in repelling harm and attaining benefits" (2017:76). In other words, it is a fact that many Muslims have been seeking protection and deliverance from other sources as confirmed by findings in the field research discussed in Chapter 4. This dependence on pre-Islamic beliefs and practices such as adorcism are strongly reinforced, according to the field research findings, by the local *Sufi* order practices of *ruqyah*, which is a syncretic ritual of the Dendi cultural adorcism with many Islamic components.

Adorcism, as discussed in Chapter 4, is the ritualistic invitation of "entities whose presence is deemed valuable to the possessed persons and their communities" (Openshaw 2020:6). Love (2000:94) mentions the case of his friend, Uthman, who "welcomes ancestor spirits", because he receives assistances from their presence. This is what the Dendi practice during their cultural *danfou* rituals, and this is also the approach of the local Islamic *ruqyah* in cases of spirit possession where the local exorcism team has one of their team members as a volunteer host for the spirits when they are summoned to leave an individual who does not support their presence.

5.3.2. Christian exorcism ritual to replace the Dendi r*uqyah* and adorcism

Hiebert argues that Protestant Christians in the West "tend to be antiritual" (2008:322). Hiebert believe that this attitude of Protestants is due to "antiritual bias" related to pejorative connotations of the word ritual among Protestants in the West (2008:322). Many Protestants see some rituals, healing, and exorcism rituals particularly, as "dead, meaningless forms of idolatry and magic" (2008:322). Because Protestants accept other rituals, such as dedication of children, baptism, holy communion or marriage, some have qualified the antiritual bias in some

Protestant circles as a subjective and inappropriate fear of ritual that needs to be conquered (Hiebert 2008:322; Fatovic 2018:427). Fatovic, for instance, contends that:

> Religious reformations or revitalization movements often interpret their own work as a reaction to the ritual expressions of another group–which they term "dead rituals"–and see their own activity as a total rejection of ritual, but this notion is mistaken…, in fact, their own services have many rituals, even though the participants usually do not recognize them as such (Fatovic 2018:427).

A Christian healing and exorcism/deliverance prayer ministry or strategy to minister to folk religion, and folk Muslims in particular, has been considered in the past (Guest 2018:366, 370, 381; Kottak 2011:170, 299; Hiebert 1989; Hiebert et al. 1999; Love 2000, 2013; Stacey 1989). For Hiebert et al. the practice or ritual of exorcism/deliverance from spiritual entities exists in most cultures. It is the means used by local practitioners "to free people believed to be attacked and possessed by spirits" (Hiebert et al. 1999:147). It should be used by missionaries working among those practicing folk religions. Hiebert et al. suggest three steps in dealing with spirt possession in the mission field.

1   They caution for discernment. Hiebert et al. invite the missionary, if possible, to work with a diagnosing team of physicians, psychologists etc. in order to rule out other mental health issues and other medical causes with similar symptoms to spirit possessions (Augsberger 1986, 307 cited in Hiebert et al. 1999:171). For Hiebert et al. (1999:171) it is important and critical for the missionary to be certain that he/she is dealing with a genuine case of spirit possession (ontology) rather than wasting his/her time with a medical condition and thereby making the case worse (phenomenology).

2   Hiebert and his colleagues state that the missionary's preparation for the exorcism is the next important step. They emphasize that a missionary considering exorcism should avoid sensationalism, triumphalism, or a curious or experimental mentality; such a missionary should be honest and repentant with no resentment, but must be objective, with a "right heart before God" because demons sometimes "know the

hidden sins and inner secrets" of the exorcist (Acts 19:13–16 cited in Hiebert et al. 1999:171). Hiebert and others note that the missionary should include the assurance of a clear consent of the demonized person in his/her preparation (Hiebert et al. 1999:171).

3   According to Hiebert et al., exorcism must be done in prayers (1999:171). Prayers for discernment, for protection, and for the exorcism ministry (1999:171). They write:

> We are powerless, it is God who must drive out the spirits. Consequently, we should speak primarily to God, not with the spirits…We must avoid all magical tendencies in the deliverance process…It is not dependent on the use of special words or right gestures. The deliverance is by Christ and the Holy Spirit, not by our actions. Deliverance is most effective when it involves a holistic pastoral ministry that leads the delivered to faith and maturity in Christ (Hiebert et al. 1999:171-172).

Viviane Stacey, for instance, who has worked among folk Muslims and used exorcism as a ministry tool, has the question of the expressed desire of the subject to "be released" in her list of eight questions before any exorcism (1989:298). Love also concurs on the importance of the consent of any demonized subject before any ministry. Love asserts that healings and exorcisms work best in theory and practice in terms of the kingdom theology, that is, when subjects acknowledge and accept the rule and sovereignty of God in their lives (2000:17; 161,162).

Consequently, Hiebert and others point out that spirit possession is real (1999:172). Speaking particularly to their Western audience, they exhort missionaries not to fear demon possession, but to pity demonized people as they would have sympathy for sick people (1999:172). Hiebert encourages missionaries to develop living rituals which are "nondiscursive" (2008:322). In other words, missionaries should include in their cognitive teaching of Christian doctrine rituals, not necessarily expressed with words, but which could be

expressed through bodily movements. In Hiebert's view, rituals "speak of the transcendent–of our deepest beliefs, feelings, and values–which cannot be reduced to words" (2008:322).

Thus, Hiebert further warns that overlooking the importance of rituals in worldview transformation is "divorcing realities, forms, and meanings from signs" and trying to reduce "these elements to simple verbal communication" (2008:266). Therefore, the right approach to rituals, in Hiebert's view, is not "to do away with rituals" because they are dead or idolatrous, but to consciously create appropriate living rituals that will "affirm our deepest beliefs, feelings, and morals, which lead to new lives in a new community and in the world" (2008:324). Consequently, Love calls Christians involved in folk Muslim mission to "express the reality of the kingdom through culturally relevant rituals" (2000:17).

5.3.3. Critical evaluation of the Christian exorcism ritual

Craffert points out that "belief in possession is found in 77% of a sample of 488 societies" (Bourguignon 2004a:137 cited in Craffert 2015:3). As such, Craffert observes, there will be different beliefs and types of spirit possessions (Cohen & Barrett 2008:25; Salman 1968:197 cited in Craffert 2015:3). Hence, Craffert asserts that spirit possession could be defined in three ways. Firstly, as "a collective term for what is a wide range of phenomena" either due to "illness or misfortune" or to a human dissociative phenomenon; secondly, spirit possession could be considered as "a complex neuro-cultural processes"; and, thirdly, spirit possession could be viewed as the "ethnographic…response or solution to other underlying problems" (Craffert 2015:1). Therefore, Craffert contends that some of the demon possession cases in the New Testament (Mark 9:14–28–"the mute spirit"; Matt 17:14–21–"the boy with epilepsy/moonstruck"; Luke 9:37–43–"the unclean spirit") could be considered elsewhere as "common illnesses" (Cohen 2008:5 cited in Craffert 2015:3).

Craffert further argues that voluntary spirit possession in rituals such as adorcism rituals do not need exorcism. According to Craffert, exorcism has been "consistently and pejoratively employed as a solution to" spirit possession in some "particular traditions" (2015:7). Craffert here has in mind the three monotheist religions which are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Craffert writes: "The Christian tradition (like the Jewish and Muslim traditions) sees possession mostly in negative terms as a disease with demonic or hostile forces that require exorcism or the driving out of the invading entities as the cure" (Bourguignon 2004a:141; 2004b:562; Sluhovsky 2011:78 cited in Craffert 2015:2). Hence, Craffert notes that for these religions, "demons are bad news and exorcism is a good thing; possession is the disease or problem and exorcism is the solution or cure" (Craffert 2015:2). In Craffert's view, such unilateral view of exorcism is wrong, because, based on cultural and ethnographic reasons, adorcism, like exorcism, is considered in some cultures as a therapeutic process with the same aim as exorcism–that is, address the problem of spirit possession (Bourguignon 2004b:560, 562; Csordas 1994:176; Lewis 2003:29 cited in Craffert 2015:7). Lewis, for instance, contends that exorcism seems to appeal to men in a "dominant male religious establishment", while adorcism seems to be "more attritive to women" (1996:123). Hence, Lewis points out that women abuse is a potential danger in exorcism.

Craffert asserts that some spirit possessions could just be an "instance of dissociation" and should not be treated as spirit possession (2015:4). On the other hand, Craffert (2015:4) acknowledges the limited categorizations of western medicine, which traditionally categorize "demon or spirit possession under the dissociative syndromes described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)." This means at least that Craffert admits the existence of genuine spirit possession. Nevertheless, while referring to the ethnographic works

of authors, such as Bourguignon 1968, 2004a; Salman 1968; Giles 2004, Cohen and Barrett 2008, Cohen 2008, etc., Craffert contends that exorcism should not be considered as a "clear-cut and worthy of emulation" therapeutic approach, considering such diverse beliefs and definitions of spirit possession (2015:1). Although the above-mentioned point made by Craffert seems fair, because the baptism of the Holy Spirit known in Christianity could be considered a form of adorcism (Openshaw 2020:6), Christians do not see such spirit possession as a problem to address. This could be the focus of another paper altogether. However, this chapter argued earlier that discernment between mental illness and spirit possession is one of the first steps in a practical approach to exorcism. This study refers to exorcism/deliverance with the assumption that the missionary's diagnosis with the help of medical professionals would have to rule out any mental health issues in the case at hand. In that same line of argument, a licensed psychologist, writes "science and medicine alone are inadequate to deal" with the "supernatural evil" which can "impact mental or physical health" (Hamel 2015:74-75). For Hamel, there need to be a distinct Christian service for people in "bondage to supernatural evil" (2015:75).

5.4.   Conversion and worldview transformation

5.4.1. Conversion

Contextualization and conversion could be considered in mission as two inseparable and continuous processes. Chapter 2 summarized the plethoric existing definitions of contextualization with Gilliland's (2000:215) assertion that the process of contextualization is "the capacity to respond meaningfully to the gospel within the framework of one's situation". The topic of religious conversion or religious change is a major issue within the world's major religions in general, and Christianity in particular (Buckser & Glazier 2003; Gillespie 1979;

Hefner 1993; Hiebert 2008; Kling 2020; Rambo & Farhadian 2014; Rambo 1993; Skreslet 2012). David Kling considers conversion as "a subject worthy of academic inquiry in its own right" (2020:xiv). In his impressive work *History of Christian conversion*, Kling covers the narration of Christian conversion from the New Testament time in the Roman world from 50 AD to 100 AD, to conversion in Africa from 1800 until the present. Kling retraces the topic in the early Christian church through Constantine (100–337 AD); he refers to the conversion of Jews and pagans by coercion (2020:157-158); he reviews conversion in medieval and early modern Europe (500-1500 and 1517-1750); and conversion in the Americas (380-476 AD), China (449-464 AD) and India (564-579 AD). Thus, Kling's anatomy of Christian conversion is worthy of our attention. Through a recall of its etymological, lexical roots, and historical record and context Kling asserts that:

> Conversion–both as word and concept–is central to Christianity. New Testament writers employ the Greek terms epistrephō ("to turn back," "to turn around," "to return") and metanoeō ("to think again," "to change mentality," "to repent") to characterize a radical change of perspective or transformation in one's outlook. "New birth," "new creation," and "born from above" (or "born again") also are part of the vocabulary of New Testament conversion. The Acts of the Apostles narrates the early history of Christian conversions, some described in spectacular terms and others in ordinary ways. The apostle Paul refers to abandoning old loyalties ("flee from the worship of idols"; 1 Cor. 10:14) for a new life (faith in Christ) signaled by initiation into the Christian community (baptism). The first Gentile converts generally followed this three-part progression, and throughout early Christian history, conversion comprised these acts of forsaking, embracing, and incorporation. For some, conversion was instantaneous; for others, conversion was gradual. For some, conversion was a solitary intellectual affair; for others, conversion was a visibly emotional event in a communal setting. Whatever the particular circumstances, the phenomenon of turning from former attitudes, loyalties, and practices to a new allegiance to God's saving activity in Jesus Christ forms the basic storyline in Christian history (Kling 2020:1).

Furthermore, while quoting from Abraham Malherbe (1998:238 cited in Kling 2000:1)

Kling argues that, by the time of Paul, the Greek term "*epistrephein* had become a technical

Christian term for conversion" (Kling 2020:1). Hence, referring to the Old Testament Hebrew word *shubh,* which Kling translates as "to turn back," "to repent," "to return," "to restore" (2020:1 cf. Hiebert 2008:310), Kling compares the twin role of chiding and pleading of God's Old Testament prophets with the imperative tone of the term *epistrephein* in the New Testament and concludes that the universality of the conversion concept is a call to a "radical change of perspective" in "a language of turning and repentance" (2020:1). Consequently, conversion for Kling could be characterized by an intellectual turn back, a social repent, a psychological return, a moral restoration or a combination of these different changes (2020:1). For Kling, the context of any conversion, either as an event or a process, calls for different "theological content, ritual expression, and behavioral expectations" (2020:2). As Rambo and Farhadian (2014:599 cited in Kling 2020:2) point out, each context determines "metaphors, images, expectations, and patterns for conversion." It "encompasses the modes of access and transmission … and also contains sources of resistance." This insight on conversion shared by Rambo and Farhadian is summarized with three concepts of conversion in their 2014 work on Religious conversion, namely conversion is assumed to occur in all directions (2014:1); conversion is never a neutral act (2014:2); and conversion establishes new boundaries (2014:2). Rambo and Farhadian summarize the reality of religious conversion dynamics and varieties. Thus, for them conversion is not only the negative byproduct of colonial or missionary intrusion–people confronting new religions (2014:7)–but also people's experience of an "intensification of commitment within the same religious tradition" (2014:8). Hence, conversion could be termed as "deconversion, apostasy, or disaffiliation as certain attitudes, beliefs, and practices are abandoned or curtailed in the process of adopting a new orientation" (2014:8). All these themes in conversion denote

the complexity of not only a personal, but also a communal phenomenon that has profoundly influenced individuals and their cultures throughout the world.

According to Rambo, the initial stage of context in his seven-stage[75] model of conversion is capital, as is any beginning of a process (Kling 2020:11; cf. Rambo 1993:22). For Rambo, the context of conversion is not just a stage, but the whole milieu of the conversion process–in other words the interconnection of the three spheres of the micro (family, friends, religious and social community, and tribe or cultural region), meso (in-between the micro and the macro context), and macro (total as in the context of globalization today) context (1993:22), since context provides "metaphors, images, expectations, and patterns for conversion." It "encompasses the modes of access and transmission … and also contains sources of resistance" (Rambo & Farhadian 2014:599 cited in Kling 2020:2). These sources of resistance to conversion are more visible in the types of conversion Rambo calls the "tradition transition," or the conversion of people from a non-Christian religious background to Christianity in his proposed typology[76] of conversion (1993:13-14; Kling 2020:11,12).

As seen above, religious conversion is one of the constants among missiology specific interests (Skreslet 2012:13). Nonetheless, the processes of religious conversion or change, involves "enormous implications" (2012:14). Skreslet argues that missionaries and missiologist have to refer to social sciences such as anthropology in order to "better understand the processes

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[75] Lewis Rambo's seven-stage framework for conversion analysis identifies the followings: contextcrisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences. (1993:165-168). Although, these seven stages may sound sequential, Rambo's graphical representation of their relationship conveys more an interrelationship rather than a sequence (Rambo 1993:216).

[76] Lewis Rambo's proposed typology of conversion identifies 1) tradition transition, which is conversion from "non-Christian religion to Christianity"; 2) institutional transition which refers to "intra-conversion," or conversion "from one Christian community to another"; 3) affiliation, meaning conversion "from no or little religious commitment to involvement with a Christian community"; 4) intensification, which is "a revitalized commitment to the Christian faith"; and apostasy, defection, or deconversion, meaning "the rejection of one's Christian commitment" (Kling 2020:11 cited in Rambo 1993 *Understanding religious conversion*, 13-17).

of social and religious change" (2012:8). In Skreslet's view, missionaries "avidly embraced" any insights that applied anthropology and sociology could offer to better understand the "complex processes of religious change" among particular people groups (Skreslet 2012:8, 57). Thus, Skreslet further comments "there can be no doubt that missiology as a whole has much to gain" from the different social scientific research available "from scholarly projects that succeed in bringing together anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and missiologists for the purpose of studying religious and cultural change" (Skreslet 2012:58).

Paul Hiebert could be one of the missiologists who Skreslet might be referring to above. Although surprised that Hiebert does not quote from Rambo in his 1994 (here it is logical with the close/overlapping publication dates with Rambo 1993) and 2008 work, it was noticed that he shares some of Rambo's insights. Early enough, Hiebert, as an accomplished anthropologist, has emphasized the issue of context in conversion in his different publications on the topic (Hiebert 1978, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1997, 1992, 1994, 2005, 2008). As presented in Chapter 2, Hiebert (2008:311) argues that "a ratio or fuzzy intrinsic-set approach to missions solves" the problems of conversion in mission, because, emphasizes Hiebert, transformation is a dynamic process. Hiebert notes that context influences individual decisions toward conversion. As Kraft rightly observes, the relationship between culture and human beings is similar in many respects to that between water and fish, because "humans are understood to be totally, inextricably immersed in culture" (Kraft 2005:38). In other words, the fish worldview cannot be analyzed outside the realities of water. Kraft further points out that "Societies pattern perceptions of reality into conceptualizations of what reality can or should be, what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible, and impossible"–this is the worldview of any given culture to which the members of the society assent (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system

(Kraft 2005:38, 43). Thus, in the context of conversion, it could be several significant progressive choices which, "taken cumulatively, make the person a Christian" and not just a single decisive decision (Hiebert 2008:311), while for others "the process of maintaining true faith in this world and age is ongoing, for each generation must learn anew to think biblically about being Christian in its particular context" (2008:326). As Paul, while using the terms "*sarx*, *archeon*, and *eon*" refers to "the contexts in which we live", Christians are reminded that they "live in this world, but not to be of the world" (2008;326).

5.4.2. Worldview and cultural change or transformation

Anthropologists Jacoby and Kibbee (2007:121) acknowledge that cultural change could happen through "rapid transformation of rural groups into city dwellers," or "voluntary associations" which "facilitate adjustment" and transformation. Since the completion of some anthropological field studies between the 1950s and 1970s, anthropologists have, in some ways, been scientifically in awe of the "studies of economic, religious, and linguistic change" (Guest 2018:42-52, 367-385). Guest argues that such studies have demonstrated that "culture is not fixed nor bounded", rather, culture could be transformed because culture can be "invented, changed, contested, and negotiated" (2018:52). In the context of missiology, Kraft contends Jesus knew how to obtain culture change. He writes that:

> Solid culture change is a matter of changes in the worldview of a culture. Just as anything that affects the roots of a tree influences the fruit of the tree, so anything that affects a culture's worldview will affect the whole culture and, of course, the people that operate in terms of that culture. Jesus knew this. When He wanted to get across important points, He aimed at the worldview level (Kraft 1996:65).

In Charles Kraft's view, Jesus expected change in his listeners' religious system and culture by challenging their basic known beliefs and practices (1996:65). For example, Kraft

refers to Jesus' illustration with the parable of the good Samaritan when a certain lawyer in mission, to tempt Jesus, asked Him "Who is my neighbor?" (Matt 10:29). Kraft argues that by the good Samaritan parable and Jesus' questions "who was being neighborly?", Jesus "was leading them to reconsider and, hopefully, change a basic value down deep in their system" (1996:65). Hence, Kraft points out that changes in a culture can "flow from worldview throughout the culture" or from the culture to the worldview when there are forces such as coercion that could lead to changes in peripheral customs (1996:65). Kraft gives the example of Nigerian Christians' journey from polygamy to monogamy, African Christians' "change from indigenous medicine to western medicine", and calls such changes "undirected worldview change" or mandated change that are not locally considered "irrational or farfetched" (1996:66-67).

Paul Hiebert concurs with Kraft's analysis. As indicated in Chapter 2, Hiebert notes that worldviews change in two major ways: firstly, when there is new information and people grow in awareness, that is, through growth in knowledge, and secondly, when crises or special events in life call for radical shifts–paradigm shifts (2008:316). Hiebert calls the former normal change" because of the influence of "conscious beliefs and practices over time" (2008:319), and the latter abnormal or forced change–"radical reorganization in the internal configurations of the worldview" (2008:319). Hiebert also points out that three factors can precipitate normal worldview transformation: contradictions in social life–what Hiebert termed "surface contradictions"; life's dilemmas; and new experiences (2008:316). For Hiebert, these three factors could be associated with three other concepts proven useful in worldview transformation: examining worldview; exposing one worldview to other worldviews; and creating living rituals (2008:319-322). Thus, in seamless symmetry, the three factors that

precipitate worldview transformation function as questions that match the three additional ways to transform worldview, which function as answers to the three questions.

From the above analysis, worldview or cultural change in the mission field could be due to many factors. Kraft observes that effective Christian witness "is intended to bring about change at the deepest level of a people's cultural assumptions" (1996:67). Hence, Kraft argues that Christian missionaries should help local people to develop appropriate "assumptions" and "habitual behaviors" to complement their worldview and cultural changes (1996:67-68). For instance, Kraft points out that "changing from traditional types of religious rituals to western rituals often leads to worldview assumptions that regard western rituals as more powerful in a magical way than their own" (1996:67). Thus, in order to address such assumptions, Christian missionaries must be aware of the possible results of worldview and/or cultural change.

5.4.3. Possible results of worldview and cultural change

Kraft identifies eight possible results when change occurs in a cultural system. They can be combined as four pairs, namely development/decline; elaboration/simplification; specialization/generalization; and equilibrium/disequilibrium. (1996:373).

According to Kraft, development happens in a culture when "new items or practices" (borrowed or initiated) are used to "control the material, social, or spiritual forces that affect it" (1996:373). Unfortunately, when such "new items or practices" cannot be controlled or mastered there is social decline and vices, such as "crime, delinquency, intergenerational alienation" take over in changed cultures (1996:373). The "new items or practices" introduced in the changed culture mentioned above could lead to "the increase of complexity in the culture". This happens when these new elements require new knowledge and new skills to integrate them locally (elaboration); or when they are responsible for simplification–that is,

when the new elements result in social activities or cultural procedures being condensed or simplified (1996:373).

Kraft argues that Christian missionaries must avoid a social disequilibrium, which could affect every other aspect of a culture (1996:65). According to Kraft, an example of a social event that could create a community disequilibrium is "defeat in war" (1996:65, 374). Hence, Kraft encourages missionaries to give careful attention to a society's equilibrium and sense of security when working toward cultural and worldview change (1996:374). Thus, too many disruptive changes, or rapid or forced changes and the like should be avoided (1996:374). As such, if missionaries' concern is a society's equilibrium, "demoralization, and psychological and social breakdown" of people can be avoided (1996:374), because demoralization leads to extinction "if a demoralized society does not regain its cohesion" (1996:438). This is the worst response to "pressure for worldview change." On the other hand, the response to "pressure for worldview change" generally expected by missionaries is "submersion and conversion" (1996:438). Tippett points out that factors with "significant cultural stress" that lead to either submersion or conversion are often from the outside and could be called "a reservoir of tension" which, according to Tippett, "may be an intellectual, emotional, or spiritual build-up, or a complex of them all" (Tippett 1987:287–88 cited in Kraft 1996:436-437).

However, instead of the responses identified above, namely demoralization and extinction or submersion and conversion, an unexpected result such as revitalization could be the result of "pressure for worldview change." (1996:375). Kraft contends that:

> If the members of the society recognize the inadequacy of their system to deal with the crisis at hand, and if they possess a will to survive, the stage is set for revitalization. They are then able to discover a new paradigm, a new worldview allegiance, around which to reorganize themselves and their culture. Very often the new paradigm, the impetus and pattern for reorganization, will be supernaturalistic in nature (Kraft 1996:439).

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Consequently, Kraft argues that "when there is a conscious effort to rebuild a workable sense of cohesion, revitalization can occur" (1996:375). Kraft observes that people experiencing revitalization not only acknowledge that "their cultural system has become inoperable and deliberately seek to rebuild a more satisfying cultural system," but they become determined and engage in dynamic reasoning such as: "This can't happen to us. We will not allow ourselves and our way of life to disintegrate." (1996:439). Thus, although any cross-cultural mission "is [an] agent of cultural as well as spiritual change" (Kraft 1996:374), the well-known barrier to cultural and worldview change is "the human will" (1996:433). And as Stendahl rightly puts it "Our vision is more obstructed by what we think we know than by our lack of knowledge" (Stendahl 1976:7 cited in Kraft 1996:433).

5.5. Theological pitfalls in mission to the Dendi people

Hiebert et al. warn against seven theological pitfalls, which could be classified into two groups: syncretic and heretic pitfalls in the mission field (1999:377). The seven theological pitfalls are: syncretism, human-centeredness, experience-based theology, reinforcing secularism, generating false guilt, imbalance, and exalting the leader (1999:377-381). While syncretism stands alone in its category, the other six pitfalls could be grouped in the category of unorthodox or heretic teaching or practices that could trap new churches in the mission field. As Hiebert and others note "the danger in responding to folk religions is not so much heresy as it is syncretism" (1999:378). Hence, human-centredness; experience-based theology; reinforcing secularism; generating false guilt; being imbalanced; and exalting the leader, are grouped more on the heresy side. In other words, these six theological pitfalls threaten the missiological endeavour more when there are local converts and local leadership training.

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Hiebert and his colleagues, for instance, observe that, with the issue of human-centredness in mission, new believers come to Christianity with their expectations and interests–the mark of "self-centeredness to self-deification, the first and most fundamental of human sin[s]" (1999:379). The consequence of such human-centredness is "authoritarian leadership, competition, divisions, and spiritual pride" (1999:379). The opposing attitude expected in church leadership is Christ-centeredness, which results in humility (Ro 15:1–2; 1 Cor 10:12 cited in Hiebert et al. 1999:379). As such, human-centredness has the same consequences as exalting the leader, since such practices "often appear in young churches" (1999:381). Consequently, many agree that syncretism is the first concern of missionaries in the mission field (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:49, 61; Hiebert 1985:13, 212-215, 224; 2008:10, 122, 195, 251, 314, 326; Ott et al. 2010:275, 276, 286; Pierce 2012; Pocock et al. 2005:151; Tippett 1979:400-421). This study contends that if syncretism is timeously and properly addressed, the impending danger of the other six pitfalls could be avoided or minimized.

Syncretism in general is defined as "the attempt to mix two otherwise incompatible elements in a single new reality. It is usually unintentional, a by-product of two or more distinct movements rubbing against each other and coming to a blended compromise" (Pocock et al. 2005:151). In theology of mission, syncretism is "the replacement or dilution of the essential truths of the gospel through the incorporation of non-Christian elements" (Moreau 2000b:924 cited in Ott et al. 2010:275; Pocock et al. 2005:331). A Russian proverb rightly illustrates syncretism in this way: "You cannot sit on two chairs" (Pierce 2012). The implication of this Russian proverb in mission is that, as you might not know exactly which chair is carrying more of your weight than the other, the warning in the Russian proverb calls for a missionary's

awareness of factors that can lead to syncretism. Thus, Ott et al. suggest three guards against syncretism in the process of contextualization in mission.

First guard: the missionary should be careful not to make "authenticity to the context" become their first and most important goal (Ott et al. 2010:276). This means that the missionary should emphasize the teachings of scriptures as the primary source for their application of theological principles; in other words, scripture "must be the control for acceptable belief and behavior in any context" (2010:276). Before them, Bevans and Schroeder in 2004 pointed out that syncretism is the result of "compromise and infidelity to the gospel" (2004:61), while Hiebert et al. argued in 1999 already that the gospel must not be "subject to another worldview, but to its own worldview" (Hiebert et al. 1999:378).

The *second guard* concerns missionaries' duty to give to the local church the right to theologize–that is the "fourth self" added by Hiebert (1985:193–224 cited in Ott et al. 2010:276). However, caution should be taken so that no local theology becomes "incongruent with the theology of the church around the world and throughout the centuries" (Ott et al. 2010:276; cf. Pocock et al. 2005:151). In Bevans and Schroeder's view, "ethno-theology", if not balanced, "might easily be trapped in syncretism and become instead expressions of "Christopaganism" (Tippett 1979:400 in Bevans and Schroeder 2004:49).

The *third guard* suggested by Ott and others against syncretism is "comprehensive, critical contextualization, which addresses the most deeply felt needs of a culture" (Ott et al. 2010:276). The authors mean by comprehensive critical contextualization the missionaries' efforts to meet the "everyday needs for protection, blessing, healing, and spiritual power" of their people group or target culture (2010:276). If such needs are not met, argues Bauer, "people are likely to blend their old religious practices with their new faith in Christ" (Bauer 2008 cited

in Ott et al. 2010:276).). Ott and others further note that syncretism is due most of the time to "a failure of the gospel to penetrate the inner worldview of a culture" (Ott et al. 2010:275), what Hesselgrave calls "devoting too much attention to the outer layers of culture and not enough attention to its inner core or worldview" (Hesselgrave 2006:76 cited in Ott et al. 2010:275).

5.6.   Conclusion

This chapter's main goal was to provide an answer to the major felt needs of the Dendi identified in the findings of the field research. The missiological suggestions presented in this chapter in order to reach a contextualized mission strategy for ministry among the Dendi were articulated around two mission objectives: firstly, respond theologically to the Dendi beliefs and practices, and secondly make some missiological suggestions toward their felt needs. In the domain of the Dendi beliefs, issues of their fear-power, shame-guilt/honour worldviews were addressed. Secondly, the Dendi practice of folk Islamic *ruqyah* and pre-Islamic cultural ritual of adorcism were discussed and critically evaluated with suggestions for replacing existing beliefs, practices and living rituals with biblically balanced and culturally relevant ones. The combination of Hiebert and other's four-step critical contextualization model (1999:22) with that of Love's five-steps to contextualization among folk Muslims (2000:57-65) made the process of contextualization among the Dendi folk Muslims a holistic missiological strategy.

Thus, to answer the Dendi's fear of *jinn* and use of a talisman for protection, this chapter has critically suggested a theology of the kingdom of God, which has its basis in the Old Testament and which is grounded in the three major motifs of Scripture–the covenant, the promise, and the salvation history approach, all linked solely with the acts of God in redemptive history–a macro-theological model, summarizing the full counsel of God (Love 2000:40).

Consequently, the concept of the kingdom of God was discussed under the terms of *missio Dei* and *missio Trinitatis*, which appear in the New Testament as the central point in the teachings of Jesus and especially in his mandate to the Church. The chapter based its arguments on classic authors on the subject of the kingdom of God, such as Arthur Glasser (2003), John Bright (1953, 1981, 2000), George Ladd (1959, 1993), etc.

In order to put the implications of the concept of the kingdom of God in contextualization among the Dendi in context, this chapter explored Love's four aspects of kingdom theology (2000:169-178) in contrast with Kraft's Five encounters' model (1992, 2005), namely allegiance encounter, truth encounter, power encounter, moral encounter, and cultural encounter. The chapter referred briefly to John Travis' C1-C6 spectrum as it relates to the six possible ways a Christian church among the Dendi could be contextualized (Love 2000:187-194; cf. Travis 1998:407-408). Consequently, this chapter suggested a C3 contextualization model for mission among the Dendi, because, as Love recommends C3 for Muslim ministry in general (2000:187), C3 contextualization avoids "both Western and Islamic forms" (2000:187). Love's chart helps to better determine "what level of contextualization is appropriate for what context" (2000:193).

Finally, this chapter recommended a holistic Christian exorcism ritual to replace the Dendi r*uqyah* and adorcism rituals, and warned missionaries working among folk religion in general and the Dendi people in particular that the risk of syncretism was a possible pitfall that could challenge any mission endeavour among folk religionists.

Chapter 6: General conclusion and recommendations

6.1.   Introduction

This thesis examined the contribution of Paul Hiebert to the study and understanding of folk religion. With the goal to investigate Hiebert's unique contribution to mission among folk religionists, this study sought to put Hiebert's mission principles and five seminal missiology concepts into the context of the Dendi people of North-East Benin who practice folk Islam.

This concluding chapter firstly presents a summary of the research and the answers to the research questions; secondly, it points to the potential contribution of this research to Christian mission; and finally, makes recommendations for further studies, and suggestions on how to practically implement some of the findings of the field research.

6.2.   Summary of the research

The basis for this research was Hiebert's contention in his classic essay on the "excluded middle" that Christian mission has failed or not been very effective among folk religionists, because of the ignorance of the folk religion worldview exhibited by many of the early Western Christian missionaries (Hiebert 1982a:35-47). Hence, this study discussed Hiebert's understanding of folk religion and his critical contextualization in contrast with approaches suggested by Rick Love, Charles Kraft, Phil Parshall and Bill Musk.

6.2.1. Review of the first and second chapters

Chapter 1 indicated that the problem being addressed in this study is the polemical, apologetical and dialogical approaches to Islam used in Christian mission from the nineteenth

century up to the early decades of the twentieth century, which were not very successful (Skreslet 2012:126-127), because they focused on orthodox Islam, whereas 75-80% of the Islam practiced worldwide is folk Islam (McCurry 1980, Parshall 1983:16 cited in Love 1994:87).

With the Dendi people of North-East Benin and their folk Islam as the context of the empirical study, this research used the analytical framework of Hiebert et al. to develop a mission strategy. Paul Hiebert's new concept and paradigm for cross-cultural mission–a three-tiered view of the universe (1982a:44-47)–was one of the main points of the chapter. Thus, with Hiebert's insights on the importance of the middle zone for folk religion (1982a:40), mission among folk religion gains a new mission paradigm and avoids a major blind spot in past Christian missions (Hiebert et al. 1999:29). Hence, this chapter demonstrated that only a comprehensive "*missio Dei*" to folk religion, as argued by Hiebert, can meet the felt needs of folk religionists (Hiebert 1989:61; Hiebert et al. 1999:77; cf. Ott et al. 2010:276). As Hiebert and his colleagues rightly point out, the challenge with folk religion is urgent and constant for Christian mission, because animistic beliefs and practices do not easily die out (Hiebert et al. 1999:88).

Chapter 2 covered Paul Hiebert's life and legacy. The chapter's goal was to summarize Hiebert's five seminal concepts in chronological order and recognize how they influenced Hiebert's contribution to understanding folk religion. Hence, Chapter 2 discussed from his strong Anabaptist-Mennonite Christian family background and his missiological background as a third generation Mennonite missionary to India, to his excellent academic training in anthropology and theology.

Hiebert's five seminal concepts, summarized and addressed in Chapter 2 are: The flaw of the excluded middle (1967, 1971, 1982a); self-theology, global theology, missional theology

(1973); bounded, centered, and fuzzy set theory (1978-2008); critical contextualization models (1984-1999); and legacy of a worldview (1989-2008). Chapter 2 thus presents Paul G. Hiebert, the Christian anthropologist, missiologist, and third generation Mennonite missionary to India and a picture of how Hiebert's seminal ideas led him ultimately to his major contribution to Christian mission.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Hiebert's concepts contribute to holistic Christian mission. Hence, mission among folk religion is the focus of Hiebert's first concept "the flaw of the excluded middle" and his last concept, "worldview transformation."

6.2.2. Review of the third and fourth chapters

Chapter 3 focused on Dendi folk religion. Using the first step in Paul Hiebert's four-step model of critical contextualization, namely phenomenological analysis; ontological reflections; critical evaluation; and missiological transformations (Hiebert et al. 1999:21-29), Chapter 3 described phenomenologically the Dendi folk Islam without passing judgement on its mixed and bewildering collection of rites, celebrations, beliefs, practitioners, music, and spirit possession rituals.

The chapter followed Hiebert et al.'s recommendation that a phenomenological study of folk religion should be the first step in a biblical response to popular religiosity (1999:31). Hence, Chapter 3 provided a detailed description of the Dendi folk Islam beliefs and practices based on the Maliki Sunni teachings of Islam; thus, the local syncretistic connotation of the mixture of the Tidjaniyya Sufism and the Songhay traditional pre-Islamic beliefs and practices (Bello 2001, 2005, Bello & Giannotti 2017; Bierschenk & De Sardan 1998:107; Gosselain & Smolderen 2013:5, 109; Joshua Project 2016; Page & Davis 2005:117).

Chapter 3 clearly illustrated the internal logics, assumptions and experiences in the practice of the Dendi folk Islam by the people and the religious leaders and why it is important to study folk religion from a systematic approach (Hiebert et al. 1999:36). The chapter demonstrated the persisting pre-Islamic beliefs in different powers and different spheres of action of the Dendi folk religion with organic and mechanical entities, such as God, angels, gods, goddesses, spirits, and impersonal forces, such as lightning, thunder, rain, stones etc. Hiebert et al. point out that "only as people respond to their beliefs and feelings do these become a living religion in their lives" (1999:37).

Chapter 4 discussed the qualitative field data that addressed and answered the research questions. Hence, the chapter also described the design and methodology used in this study for the field research. Reasons for choosing the grounded theory method for the empirical research were given as well as reasons for choosing to combine open-ended questions with affirmative and negative (yes and no) questions. (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault 2016:202).

The questionnaire was administered in Kandi and Malanville among twenty-eight (28) randomly selected Dendi. With ethical protocols in mind, data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted with the assistance of ATLAS.ti 9, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). The findings of the empirical research offer some answers to the research questions.

6.2.3. Review of the fifth chapter

Chapter 5's main objective was to put the research questions carried throughout Chapter 1 to Chapter 3, their suggested answers in Chapter 4, and the implications of those answers on mission to the Dendi people, in a dynamic relationship. Hence, Chapter 5 suggested Christian responses to the Dendi felt needs identified in the findings of the field research.

In so doing, Chapter 5 addressed the Dendi fear-power, shame-guilt/honour worldviews, the Dendi practice of *ruqyah,* and adorcism. Accordingly, two theological concepts, a theology of the invisible and a theology of the kingdom of God (*missio Dei* and *missio Trinitatis*), were emphasized in the discussion of the theology of the kingdom of God (Bright 1953, 1981, 2000; Glasser et al. 2003; Ladd 1959, 1993).

Chapter 5 contended that a Christian exorcism ritual is necessary to replace the Dendi *ruqyah* and adorcism rituals. A Christian approach to spirt possession was presented in the chapter as an important rite of crisis for a worldview transformation and culture change. Finally, Chapter 5 cautioned against syncretism (Bevans & Schroeder 2004:49, 61; Hiebert 1985:13, 212-215, 224; 2008:10, 122, 195, 251, 314, 326; Hiebert et al. 1999:377-381; Ott et al. 2010:275, 276, 286; Pierce 2012; Pocock et al. 2005:151, 331; Tippett 1979:400-421).

6.2.4. Answers to the research central questions

As indicated earlier, Merriam (2009:16, 23-24, 171) argues that findings or categories/themes, which are recurring patterns developed from the data analysis, are answers to the researcher's study question(s). In the context of this study, the two central research questions were:

1. How can the persisting pre-Islamic beliefs and practices of the Dendi be addressed in mission? What are the dominant beliefs and practices of the Dendi people?
2. What mission strategy will result in the most affirmative response by the Dendi, given their cognitive, affective, and evaluative folk religion needs?

The answers to the first central question of the research and its subquestion are described in Chapter 5 under the headings:

1. Christian response to the Dendi guilt-shame worldview matters.

2   Christian response to the Dendi shame-honour worldview difficulties.

3   Christian response to the Dendi fear-power worldview issues.

4   Christian theology of the invisible.

5   Christian theology of the kingdom of God.

6   Christian theology of suffering and death; and

7   Christian exorcism as a ritual of crisis.

With regard to the second central question of the research, the answer is in Hiebert et al.'s assertion. They argue that "until the invisible world becomes a living reality in the lives of Christians, they (missionaries) will not be able to deal with the questions folk religions raise" (1999:371). In other words, Christian mission will continue to fail among folk religionists if a three-tiered view of the universe is not considered in Christian mission strategies (Hiebert 1982, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1994, 1999). Peterson concurs with his earlier writings and alleges that:

> Most of the reality with which we deal is invisible. Most of what makes up human existence is inaccessible to our five senses: emotions, thoughts, dreams, love, hope, character, purpose, belief. Even what makes up most of the basic physical existence is out of the range of our unassisted senses: molecules and atoms, neutrons and protons, the air we breathe, the ancestors we derive from, the angels who protect us. We live immersed in these immense invisibles. And more than anything else, we are dealing with God "whom no one has seen at any time" (Peterson 1994:89–90 cited in Hiebert et al. 1999:370).

Thus, a mission strategy that focuses on the people's felt needs will be most efficient among the Dendi people. Hiebert et al. recommend God's mission (*missio Dei*) to any culture, because it resides in meeting the felt needs of the people of that culture (1999:77). Likewise, Love contends that only the "rescue dimension of the gospel–"God's ability to bring people from darkness into light" can meet folk Muslims' felt needs in Christian witness (2000:91). Similarly, Ott et al. (2010:276) suggest a "comprehensive, critical contextualization, which addresses the most deeply felt needs of a culture." White (1905:143) originally argued that "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with

men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"

6.3. Study contribution to the field of missiology

Carefully orchestrated responses to the phenomenon of dreams and visions in the folk Islam of the Dendi people could open the door to introducing them to Jesus. These current realities have been explored within the context of power encounter (Hiebert 1989; Love 2000; Musk 1988, 2005; Parshall 1975, 1980, 1983, 1994, 2003, 2006; Stacey 1986, 1989; Woodberry 1989, 2008; etc.). However, only a few authors have given a Christian response to the recurring phenomenon of spirit possessions among folk Muslims (Hiebert 1989; Love 2000; Stacey 1986, 1989).

Hence, this research set out to advance scholarship in mission among folk religions in general and folk Muslims in particular with regard to the recurring phenomenon of spirit possession. Although the folk Islam of the Dendi of North-East Benin in West Africa was the context of this empirical study, the conclusions of this research could be used in other parts of Africa and the world where folk Islam is dominant. Christian mission among Muslims is still an urgent need. Since the majority of Muslims in the world are folk Muslims, Christian mission among Muslims means logically, mission among folk Islam.

6.4. General recommendations: Further studies and practical implications

6.4.1. Recommendation for practical implications of the study

Folk religious beliefs and practices of Muslims are the dominant religious form around the world currently and they represent a major challenge to Christian missions (Hiebert et al.

1999:77). Below are a few suggestions deduced from the study and believed to be useful to achieve efficient Christian mission among folk religion.

1. Hiebert et al.'s insights on understanding folk religion need to be carefully considered. When possible, their suggested Christian responses to folk religion must be implemented.

2. Spirit possession is real, especially among folk religion (Hiebert et al. 1999:172). Missionaries need to receive adequate literature while preparing for mission service and they will especially need hands-on training in the treatment of actual cases of spirit possession before launching to the mission field.

3. Non-Charismatic or non-Pentecostal Christian missionaries should approach exorcism in the mission field as the manifestation of God's power and the emphasis of his dominant authority and power over Satan and his agents as part of his nature in relationship with his creation. This should be a matter of faithfulness to God, the owner of the mission, for every missionary (Hiebert 1989:55; Matt 10:1, 8; Luke 10:17-20).

4. Christian living rituals, such as baptism, holy communion, and anointing with oil could be used as rites of crises.

6.4.2. Recommendation for further studies

Firstly, there is still room for a more comprehensive study of folk religion based on the other elements of folk religion mentioned by Hiebert et al. , but not covered in this study (e.g., using myths and their importance in ministry (Hiebert et al. 1999:27-32, 66, 83, 99-13, 120-122, 136-137, 201) and using sacred signs and their role in contextualizing the Gospel (1999:144, 213, 322), etc.) Complementary studies on these important themes in folk religion and many more could offer a more balanced Christian response to folk religion.

Secondly, this study briefly introduced Christian exorcism as a rite or ritual of crisis. Hiebert's and Love's perspective on such rites were mainly addressed. However, Christians

have many other rites, as indicated above, e.g., baptism, holy communion, anointing, etc. Unfortunately, Christians disagree on "the names or terms used to describe the sacred rites, or even their number" (Donkor 2012:62). What types of rites these are and how to use them effectively in mission to folk religions in general and folk Islam in particular could be a rewarding topic for additional study.

Thirdly, comparative studies among the different types of folk Islam could be the focus of future research. For instance, it would be interesting to compare and contrast the folk Islam practiced in North Africa and West Africa influenced by the *Maliki Sunni* Islam and its Islamic traditions or school of laws, and the folk Islam practiced in East Africa and the neighbouring Arabian Peninsula influenced by *Shafii Sunni* Islam. Missionaries working among these folk Islam cultures might want to know if one group is more resistant than the other.

6.5.   Conclusion

Mission is at the heart of the triune God. *Missio Dei* or *missio Trinitatis* or Mission according to God's providence, God's attributes or God's three persons is first of all mission with soteriological motives, that is, to save individuals from eternal damnation (Bosch ([1991], 2011:380). As such, Christian mission mainly is to firstly introduce people to God's sovereignty over all nations and all people (this is "the center of mission" (Ott et al. 2010:86)), and secondly presenting Scriptures in response to people's felt needs.

This felt and unfelt need approach to mission among folk Muslims has been discarded by most Christian missions because "it is far easier to construct cognitive apologetic arguments that highlight doctrinal differences than to formulate approaches that empathize with the feelings, fears, and superstitions of everyday people" (Hadaway 2010:280). Unfortunately,

presenting the errors and faults of Islam did not challenge Muslims in their faith. Rather, these polemical, apologetical and dialogical methods to present the Gospel to Muslims have been with great difficulty and relative paucity (Skreslet 2012:126-127).

Based on both the research outcomes and the literature reviewed the conclusion of this dissertation is to underscore the importance of Christological missiology, that is to first meet the felt needs of the people and then invite them to follow Jesus, whom to know is to emulate and love (Ott et al. 2010:276; Love 2000:91; White 1905:143). It is with assurance that this researcher can say that a mission strategy faithful to Christ's approach to mission will certainly bring about holistic mission, which will lead to worldview transformation and conversion.

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Appendix A

FIELD RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH VERSION)

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON DENDI RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES
FOCUS ON THE 5 PILLARS AND THE 6 ARTICLES OF FAITH**

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

Name of participant: _____Language: _____ Age: ___Sex: _____
Marital status: M / S / W _____Social status: _____
Relationship with the guide (if applicable): _____

I. PRAYER

1. Do you say your five daily prayers? Yes [] No [] Why? _____
2. Do you say more than one prayer each day? Yes [] No [] Why? _____

II. JINN, EVIL EYE, TALISMANS

3. Do you believe jinn exist? Yes [] No [] Why? _____
4. Have you ever seen a jinn? Yes [] No [] Where? _____When? _____
5. Do you devote or make offerings to jinn? Yes [] No [] Why? _____
6. Is it okay from Islam perspective to make offerings to jinn? Yes [] No [] Why? _____
7. Are you afraid of jinn? Yes [] No Why?_____
8. Do you believe in witchcraft? Yes [] No [] Why? _____
9. Do you have talismans in your house to protect you from witchcraft? Yes [] No [] Why? _____
10. Do you post Qur'anic verses in your home to ward off the evil eye? Yes [] No [] Why?
11. Have you ever seen an exorcism? Yes [] No [] Where? _____

III. TRADITIONAL & OTHER RELIGIOUS HEALERS

12. Do you use traditional religious healers when you or your family members are sick? Yes [] No
[] Why? _____ When?_____
13. Do you know the prophet Isa Al Masih (pbuh)?   Yes [] No [] Where?_What do you know
about him?_____
14. Do you know Isa Al Masih's healing power and miracles? Yes [] No [] Why? _____
15. Would you accept healing prayers or prayer for exorcism from a Christian in the name of Īsā
ibn Maryam? Yes [] No [] Why? In which circumstance? _____
_____

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(English version)

Introduction & Information

The interview you are being asked to participate in is part of a research study being conducted by Mr. Michée B. Badé, a PhD in Missiology student at the University of the Free State. The study is focused on examining issues related to spirit possession among the Dendi people. The researcher is also interested in the factors that motivate victims of spirit manifestation to seek help, and where they obtain such help.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the phenomena of spirit manifestation and spirit possession among the Dendi people, and how these phenomena affect the lives of victims.

Another purpose of the study is to analyse the implications of missiologist Paul Hiebert's view on the phenomenon of spirit influence on the Dendi people. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated.

What you will do in this research: Your participation in this study will consist of an interview lasting approximately one hour. You will be asked a series of questions about your beleifs and practices spirit manifestation in your life experience. You are not required to answer the questions. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. You may notify the researcher if you would like to stop the interview or your participation in the study at any time. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation.

Risks of the interview: This study poses little to no risk to its participants. The interview questions are related to the common life issues of the Dendi people. No risks are anticipated.

Benefits of the interview: You will have an opportunity to share your story. You will be assisted with prayer for healing and deliverance.

Compensation in participating in the interview: Please note that no monetary compensation will be provided.

Indemnity Agreement: The University of the Free State, the Department of Practical and Missional Theology, and the Researcher are not responsible for damages to or loss of personal property, nor for any physical condition of participants not directly resulting from the activities of the research.

Confidentiality: * Your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. At no time will your actual identity be revealed.

- You will be assigned a random numerical code. Anyone who helps transcribe responses will only know you by this code. Your name will be concealed at all times, both during the recording of activities and during the possible publication of research outcomes.
- The recording will be erased after my dissertation has been accepted. The transcript, without your name, will be kept until the research is complete.
- The data you give me will be used for articles or presentations in the future.
- All sensitive issues will be handled with confidentiality. In the case of possible publication, care will be taken to conceal the identity of individuals whose case studies are directly referenced.

Participation and withdrawal: * Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled.
- You may skip any question during the interview, but continue to participate in the rest of the study.

Consent
- Interviews will be conducted and recorded or noted.
- Debrief will be done where needed.
- I agree to participate in this study, and I understand it will be submitted to the University of the Free State, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that all data collected will be limited to this use or other research-related usage as authorized by the University of the Free State.
- I understand that I will not be identified by name in the final product.
- I am aware that all records will be kept confidential in the secure possession of the researcher.
- I can ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods being used.
- I can ask that the recorder be turned off at any time if I feel uncomfortable with the recording.

The methods
- One-on-one interviews
- Mini discussion groups of two or three participants

Agreement of participation
The nature and purpose of this research have been sufficiently explained and I agree to participate in this study. By signing this consent form I certify that I agree to the terms of this agreement.
Name of participant:…………………… Signature ……………………………….Date……...
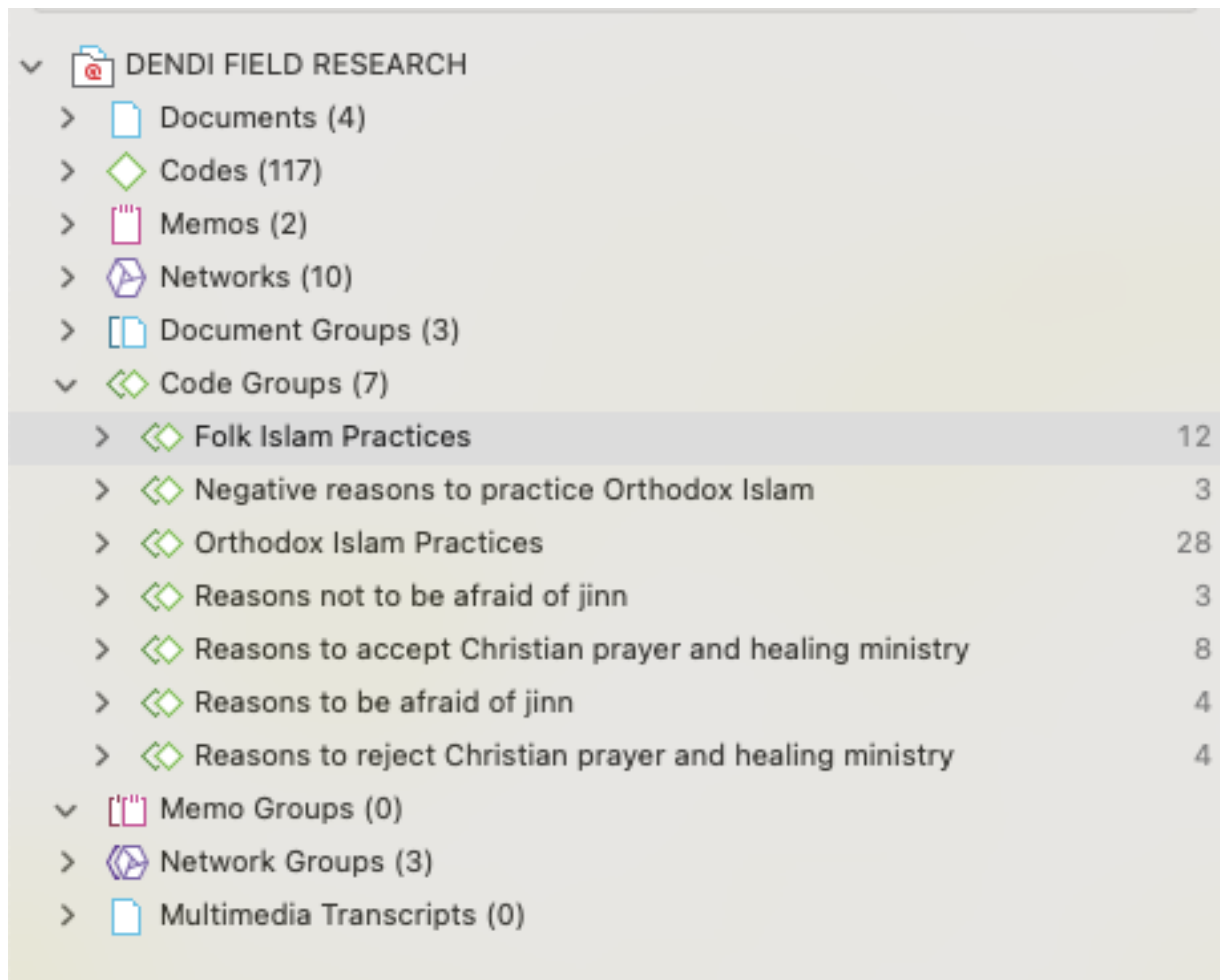
Name of researcher………………………Signature ……………………………….Date……..

Appendix C

<u>Overview of the Qualitative Data Analysis with Atlasti.9 Mac</u>