

# Contextualization and the Ovahimba Christian Youth

Gideon P. Petersen

Presented in fulfillment for the course

Master of Arts in the  
Faculty of Theology,  
Department of Missiology  
University of the Free State

Supervisor: Prof. Pieter Verster

January 2006

Declaration

I, Gideon Phillip Petersen, the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any other institution of Higher education for a degree. I cede the copyright of this thesis to the University of the Free State.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Gideon P. Petersen

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: Opuwo, Namibia

## Abstract

As a missionary to the Ovahimba, in north Kunene Region (Namibia), this researcher has discovered that although the Christian Church has had a presence for five decades it has not been able to establish roots in the Ovahimba community. In these five decades of ministry the Christian mission concentrated on teaching the children and/or youth about the gospel. This implied uprooting the children from their cultural moorings and introducing new and different moorings. Yet when family and friends challenged their Christian allegiance they returned to their traditional life experience. Jesus became an appendage to their ancestor-mediators. Jesus was just another helper. The underlying worldview of the person remained the same.

The premise of this study suggests that mission belongs to God (*Missio Dei*). It starts with God and it ends with Him. He desires to have humanity in His presence. Based upon this premise it becomes imperative that the Christian community find a way to share the Biblical message so as to draw the Ovahimba into that mindset. To achieve this the thesis recommends the principle of critical contextualization that will enable the Bible to remain the focal point of a localized Christian community. However, such localization would need to remain within the local community yet be part of the universal Church. This is not a dilemma but represents the oneness of the body of Christ. It is not a unity in diversity but unity despite diversity.

This study therefore proposes that contextualization is vital to planting a Christian Church within this community. To achieve a deep-rooted transformation the study suggests a model of understanding culture. This model is then recommended to the Christian community to help identify the Ovahimba worldview so effective transformation can take place.

## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of two inspirational  
ambassadors,  
The late Michael Isaac Bougaardt and Winifred Evelyn Bougaardt  
(nee Heeger), my maternal grandparents  
And to a dynamic supporter, encourager and prayer warrior  
Margaret (Meg) Dorothy Wright (nee Ives), my wife's paternal  
grandmother

“The Fear-of-God builds up confidence,  
and makes a world safe for your children.”

- Proverbs 14[:26] (The Message)

## Acknowledgements

This thesis has been a major undertaking. Without health and mental capacity it would not have materialized. I would therefore like to give praise and honor to my Creator and Sustainer for affording me the ability to complete this task. *Sola Gloria!*

I would like to thank my project supervisor, Professor Pieter Verster, for his guidance through this project. His insights and experience has helped to develop this project into a good missiological thesis.

For any such undertaking family is important. I would like to acknowledge the role of my beloved wife, Pam Petersen, for her patience, sacrifice and support through my years of study. She not only gave her support but also her wise counsel.

The Seventh-day Adventist mission agency, Adventist Frontier Missions, has made it possible for me to be working among the Ovahimba of north Kunene Region, Namibia. To the many donors who form part of this network I am indebted. Thank you all for your support and your encouragement.

Finally, as one passes through life many people crosses one's path. The following individuals have inspired, encouraged, guided and shaped my theological and missiological thinking.

For their inspiration: Ps. Glen Africa, John Petersen (my late father), Lydia Petersen (my mother), Joy Wright (my mother-in-law) and Dr. Izak van Zyl

For stretching my thinking: Fritz and Adelheid Radda, Dr. Russell Staples, Dr. Deleyse Steyn and Dr. John W. Webster

For proof-reading and advice: Dr. Sinval Kahn and Rodney Wright (my father-in-law)

## Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Abstract	3
Dedication	4
Acknowledgements	5
Part One: Background to the study and the study objectives	12
Chapter One: General Introduction	13
1.1. Introduction	13
1.2. Background to the study	13
1.3. Motivation	15
1.4. Problem Statement	16
1.5. Hypothesis	16
1.6. Goal of the study	16
1.7. Objectives of the study	16
1.8. Study Outline	17
1.9. Research Methodology	17
1.10. Scope of the study	19
1.11. Conclusion	19
Part Two: Literature and Empirical research	20
Chapter Two: An African Response to the Essence of Mission	21
2.1. Introduction	21
2.2. The Essence of Mission	21
2.3. Mission at creation	22
2.4. God's missionary people	23
2.4.1. Pre-Israel Missionaries	24
2.4.2. Israel – God's agent in the world	24
2.4.3. The Gentile ambassadors	26
2.5. An African response	28

2.5.1. African Initiated Churches	28
2.5.2. African Christian Theology	29
2.5.3. Black Theology	30
2.6. God has a dream: A 21 <sup>st</sup> century African response	32
2.6.1. A continent in despair	32
2.6.2. God has a dream	33
2.6.2.1. God has a dream to give hope	34
2.6.2.2. God has a dream to establish new people	35
2.7. Conclusion	36
Chapter Three: The Ovahimba of Namibia: Traditions and Culture	38
3.1. Introduction	38
3.2. Lifestyle and Environment	38
3.3. Ovahimba Culture	39
3.3.1. Core Values	40
3.3.1.1. Cattle	40
3.3.1.2. Family & Ancestors	41
3.3.1.3. The sacred shrine ( <i>okuruwo</i> )	42
3.3.2. Fundamental Beliefs	43
3.3.2.1. Witchcraft	43
3.3.2.2. Trust	44
3.3.2.3. Authority of the ancestor	44
3.3.2.4. Blessings and Curses	46
3.3.3. Behavior	46
3.3.3.1. Clothing	46
3.3.3.2. Jewelry	47
3.3.3.3. Hairstyles	47
3.3.3.4. Okati	47
3.3.3.5. Entertainment	48
3.4. Roles	49
3.4.1. Children	49

3.4.2. Teenagers	51
3.4.2.1. Teen girls	51
3.4.2.2. Teen boys	52
3.4.3. Married Women and Men	53
3.4.4. The elderly	57
3.4.5. The ancestors	57
3.5. Influences impacting on the roles of the Ovahimba community	59
3.5.1. Modern Hunting Laws	59
3.5.2. Shops	60
3.5.3. Modern Education	61
3.5.4. New Religions	64
3.6. Conclusion	65
Chapter Four: Empirical Research about the Christian Church in Kaokoland	66
4.1. Introduction	66
4.2. A brief history of Christianity in Kaokoland	66
4.3. Challenges identified by church leaders	73
4.3.1. Witchcraft	73
4.3.2. Rituals	74
4.3.3. Sacred Shrine	75
4.3.4. Nurturing Nomads	75
4.3.5. Poverty alleviation	76
4.4. Youth challenges identified by Church leaders	78
4.4.1. Modernity	78
4.4.2. Immorality	79
4.4.3. Modern entertainment	80
4.4.4. Economic independence	80
4.4.5. Modern education	81
4.4.6. Family pressures/responsibilities	82
4.4.7. Alcohol and drugs	83
4.4.8. Westernization	83

4.4.9. Imitators of others	84
4.4.10. Leaving the safety of the home Church	84
4.4.11. Bible knowledge	85
4.4.12. Unemployment	85
4.5. The Youth and Christianity	85
4.5.1. Church and school	86
4.5.2. Church is for the youth	86
4.5.3. Church as an attraction for a while	87
4.6. Conclusion	88
Chapter Five: Contextualization	90
5.1. Introduction	90
5.2. Contextualization and Inculturation define	90
5.3. Advantages of Contextualization	92
5.3.1. Mission as contextualization affirms God's turning to the world	92
5.3.2. Contextualization balances orthopraxis with orthodoxy	93
5.3.3. Contextualization deals with worldview issues	93
5.3.4. Contextualization is an holistic approach to mission	94
5.4. Pitfalls of Contextualization	94
5.4.1. Contextualization as an end in itself	94
5.4.2. Contextualization and traditional Christian forms in tension	95
5.4.3. Naïve contextualization	95
5.4.4. Syncretism	96
5.5. Applying the principle of contextualization	97
5.6. Contextualization and the Missionary	99
5.7. A model for understanding culture	102
5.7.1. Hiebert's model of culture and worldview	102

5.7.2. A worldview-building model	105
5.7.3. A critique	107
5.8. Conclusion	107
Part Three: Research findings, Recommendations and Conclusion	109
Chapter Six: Research findings	110
6.1. Introduction	110
6.2. What is contextualization?	110
6.3. Why is there a need to contextualize the gospel message for the Ovahimba Christian youth to hear it?	111
6.3.1. Key Contextualization issues	111
6.3.2. Key Contextualization challenges	111
6.3.2.1. Worldview challenges	112
6.3.2.2. Communication challenges	114
6.3.2.3. Ecclesiological challenges	116
6.4. Conclusion	118
Chapter Seven: Recommendations	119
7.1. Introduction	119
7.2. The Grape Vine model	119
7.3. How can the gospel be contextualized without losing a Biblical focus?	124
7.3.1. Applying the Grape Vine model – Cultural research	124
7.3.2. Applying the Grape Vine model – worldview	125
7.3.3. Applying the Grape Vine model – communication	126
7.3.4. Applying the Grape Vine model – ecclesiology	128
7.4. Conclusion	129
Chapter Eight: Conclusion	130
Appendix 1A: An Ongano – The Jackal and the Wolf	132

Appendix 1B: An Ongano – The Jackal rides a Lion	133
Appendix 2A: Ovahimba male and female dress	135
Appendix 2B: Ovahimba jewelry	136
Appendix 2C: Ovahimba male and female hairstyles	137
Bibliography	138
Books and Articles	138
Personal Interviews	142
Group Interviews	143
Figures	
Figure 3.1 – God-ancestor dilemma	45
Figure 5.1 – The three dimensions of culture	103
Figure 5.2 – A model of culture	104
Figure 5.3 – A model of worldview	104
Figure 5.4 – The worldview-building model of cultural research	106
Figure 7.1 – The grape vine model	120

**Part One:**

**Background to the study and the study objectives**

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The Ovahimba community has been exposed to Christianity for well over a century. However, fulltime mission only came to Kaokoland in the 1950s. Thus for five decades now the Ovahimba community has been exposed to intensive Christian evangelism. The evangelistic thrust was primarily directed at the youth.

This chapter discusses the background to this study and it gives an outline of motivation, scope, research methodology as well as presenting the hypothesis and the problem statement.

#### 1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Ovahimba of north Kunene Region (the former Kaokoland) are self-sufficient and have very little need of outside assistance. With modernization and globalization intruding upon the Namibian society the Ovahimba are being compelled to join the modern world.

As semi-nomadic pastoralists they live in extended family units or clans. As a clan they depend upon the father who is the patriarch and who acts as the family priest. The Ovahimba believe in a Creator God, who made the world but who cannot be involved with humanity unless an intercessor is present. This intercessor is usually made up of all the ancestors of the family priest. Thus the priest acts as intercessor for the family and he in turn speaks to the ancestors who act as the intercessor to God.

This has been challenged for the past fifty years by the Christian influence in the community. There have been two forms of Christianity introduced. These forms arrived

in Kaokoland around the same time. The first to arrive, the Oruano Church, was a syncretistic form of Christianity that allowed traditional religion to continue while adopting some aspects of Christianity. A second form of Christianity followed shortly and suggested that the Ovahimba relinquish their traditional forms of religion and accept the Christian religion. This has generally been the teaching of the various mainline churches in the area.

The Ovahimba community is in a process of transition. Rapid change has impacted the lives of young and old. The youth are struggling to transcend from being traditional (that is, what they have learnt from their parents) to being modern (that is, what they have learnt at the modern educational institutions). The challenge facing them is how do they create an identity that bridges both worlds. This inner conflict has created a feeling of hopelessness in many. The older generation has resisted change as they value their lifestyle. They realize change is inevitable but are stubbornly resisting it. They are unprepared to relinquish their self-sufficient and self-reliant lifestyles.

Missionary activity is perceived as a change initiator. It is equated with modernity and westernization, and thus rejected and persistently resisted. The ambiguous context of the youth has robbed them of a meaningful religious home. Though still under the traditional religious influence of their parents, traditional religion cannot fulfill their needs or provide answers and guidance in the decisions they must make. They have no true religious home. Christianity is appealing to the youth as a means to equip them in negotiating the transition to modernity. Yet it appears to be a means to an end and not the end in itself.

This thesis suggests that neither syncretism nor western-style Christianity is the answer. This thesis proposes an alternative methodology of introducing the Christian message and in so doing helping the youth accept Jesus as Lord and Savior within their context. This methodology is referred to as contextualization.

The Ovahimba community has experienced Christianity for five decades. In this study the impact Christianity has had on the youth will be examined and why it is still only the youth that are primarily attracted to Christianity. It will be recommended that the Christian church can work towards a contextualization of the gospel message. Thus making it more relevant to the youth as they reach adulthood. The three questions that will be answered are: What is contextualization? Why is there a need to contextualize the gospel message for them to hear it? How can the gospel be contextualized without losing a Biblical focus? The Ovahimba Christian youth will be examined as an example of what the church has done and how the church could reach them with a contextualized message.

### **1.3. MOTIVATION**

The Ovahimba request, “come teach our children about Jesus” is reflected in the churches in the Region. In 1995 the congregation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church consisted of about 6 adults, 3 earliteen girls and around 60 children. Other younger churches had congregations that also consisted mainly of children and youth. Only the older (mainline) churches had some adults attending. Ten years later, adults are still the minority in most congregations.

The question that prompted this research was, “why?” Why did the older generation ask for the children and youth to be taught about Jesus? What was their motivation? What were the implications? What was the unspoken statement being made? Why do children and youth accept Christianity and experience God yet reject it as adults? What is their motivation for becoming Christians? What are the implications for the church among the Ovahimba? What underlying issues are not being addressed by the message of the Christian Church? These questions are explored in the relevant parts of the thesis.

Would a contextualized gospel build a bridge between youth and adulthood? Thus enabling the youth to maintain their Ovahimba identity and fulfill their family

responsibilities and at the same time be born again Christians, actively involved in God's mission.

#### **1.4. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Christian mission is in its fifth decade among the Ovahimba of north Kunene Region. Yet it would appear that the Ovahimba continue to resist Christianity. This study seeks to explore the dynamics involved in sharing Christianity in a contextualized manner. Why do children and youth "accept" Christianity, yet return to their traditional religion as they reach adulthood? Would contextualization make Christianity more relevant to young adults? What contextualization challenges does the Christian church encounter in this community?

#### **1.5. HYPOTHESIS**

The children and youth find themselves in a spiritual vacuum during their schooling and therefore find Christianity attractive *for a while* as it provides a spiritual home while they are away from home. Adults perceive Christianity as part of westernization and therefore do not want to change. Christianity doesn't provide a relevant worldview and lifestyle to address the problems/questions they face as adults. The traditional beliefs do.

#### **1.6. GOAL OF THE STUDY**

The goal of this study is to analyze the impact of the Christian church on the youth in the former Kaokoland. The events will be studied because of their "intrinsic interest" and in terms of their "internal context".

#### **1.7. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To achieve the goal the following factors will be explored:

- The intrinsic interest it bears on the context

- The role of the contextualization of the gospel in reaching the Ovahimba youth
- To explore ways to help the youth to transition their new Christian faith into adulthood
- To establish a workable model of transitional contextualization
- To explore feasible solutions for challenges facing the Christian leadership
- To explore the significance of the Ovahimba understanding that Christianity is only for children

### **1.8. STUDY OUTLINE**

The research is divided into three parts. Part one deal's with the background to the study and the objectives that will be explored.

Part two deal's with the literature and empirical research. Chapter two explores the meaning of mission. It states that mission starts and ends with God, He is the alpha and the omega of mission. This suggests that Christians are His instruments to accomplish His intended mission. For Africans this concept implies that God be real in every circumstance of life. Chapter three briefly presents a background to the Ovahimba culture and traditions. The fourth chapter outlines the empirical study undertaken. The fifth chapter presents an understanding of what contextualization is.

The third and final part of this study deals with the research findings, recommendations and conclusions, which are respectively, discussed in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

### **1.9. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study has the primary research goal of describing and exploring the impact of the Christian church on the youth in the former Kaokoland. The events will be studied because of their "intrinsic interest" and in terms of their "internal context" (Mouton and Marais, 1990:51). Thus, using Mouton and Marais' categories for research strategy, the strategy will be that of "contextual interest". The methodology of field research will be

used, specifically, participant observer and in-depth interviews. A historical analysis will also be conducted to describe the development of the Christian church in the Kaokoland (ibid, 1990:121, 122).

The researcher has lived among the Ovahimba as a Christian worker and gospel teacher since 1995; therefore, the primary method of research has been that of participant observer. This was unstructured direct and indirect observation. The bulk of the ten years spent among the Ovahimba has been spent learning about the culture and customs: taking time to learn the culture not merely through literature but through active participation in the daily lives of the people. For example, the researcher spent a number of days out at a cattle-post with some youth and actually helped drive cattle from cattle-post to the primary homestead. Having accomplished this the renewed respect received from the family has given the researcher a new status in the family and the community. The researcher has also spent much time in participating in diverse cultural activities such as weddings (which happen over three days or more), funerals (the initial mourning period is one month at the home of the deceased), building houses, traditional celebrations and so forth.

Besides learning the culture the researcher has also made learning the language a priority. Although not fluent, the researcher is able to participate in Otjiherero meetings and make contributions where necessary.

To deal with subjectivity this study will undertake in-depth unstructured interviews. Mainline and Charismatic church leaders, and especially church pioneers, were interviewed. Some interviews were group sessions at youth meetings. Individual interviews were also conducted with young people. Christian workers, mostly young people, were interviewed individually. The majority of the interviewees are from the actual Himba tribe. There are one or two interviewees who have lived most of their lives among the Ovahimba and are spiritual leaders. Then some of the young people from various tribes who have grown up in Opuwo were also interviewed. Traditional leaders

(or kings)<sup>1</sup> have also been interviewed and have provided valuable insights and observations.

Literature and *biblio* research has also been utilized to provide the framework from which to evaluate findings. It has also been used to provide the theoretical foundation for the research.

### **1.10. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study focuses on how the gospel can be critically contextualized amongst the Ovahimba youth of the former Kaokoland (north Kunene Region) without losing its Biblical message.

### **1.11. CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the importance of why the Ovahimba adults are keen to allow their children and youth to learn about God. Conversely it also points out that when the youth become adults they are inclined to lose their Christian experience. Thus the study focuses on critically contextualizing the gospel message. This suggests that the Ovahimba youth need to transition their Christian faith into adulthood.

Chapter two highlights the African understanding and response to God's invitation to reunite with Him as His children.

---

<sup>1</sup> Chief JK Thom is the king of the Ovandamuranda group. Chief Paulus Tjavara is the king of the Ovatjimba/Ovahimba group.

Part two:  
Literature and empirical research

## CHAPTER TWO

### AN AFRICAN RESPONSE TO THE ESSENCE OF MISSION

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

The first chapter presented a general overview of the study. It focused on giving the reader an introduction to why the gospel should be contextualized for the Ovahimba youth to remain committed Christians into adulthood. This chapter explores the meaning of mission and what it means in the African context.

#### **2.2. THE ESSENCE OF MISSION**

“Mission” comes from the Latin word *missio* which means to send or be sent “by a superior” (Kaiser, 2000:11; Bosch, 1991:1). The word “mission” speaks about movement, a “going to” or a “moving towards”. This movement can be directed in various ways. It can be a physical movement, a change of location. More often, though, the word denotes a philosophical movement. Mission, whether physical or philosophical, aims to achieve a goal and to introduce change.

In this study the word mission concerns the Christian mission that is, God's movement through His representatives to reconcile the world to Himself. Thus it concerns the movement of humanity from being alienated from God to being transformed by Him into His son or daughter. That is, taking His name or His character.

A human being is a complex being. The complexity is compounded by the diverse life circumstances people experience. No two people have the same life experience. A commonly used illustration is that of butter and clay placed in the sun. While both are exposed to the same source of energy, they respond differently. The butter melts and the clay hardens. Each individual's life experience is unique, so each one views the world through a different lens. It is for this reason that some people perceive mission to be a

witnessing process. Others perceive mission to be revolutionary (liberation). Still others perceive mission as preaching the word and doing evangelism. Each of these speaks about how the converted can share God's love with others. If, however, mission belongs to God then '*Missio Dei* purifies the church (Bosch, 1991:519).' Mission is God's activity among His people. That is, it is God transforming His people from their natural tendencies to being new people in their communities. The church, therefore, no longer exists "over" or "against the world" but is "sent into the world" and therefore exists "for the sake of the world." So mission becomes the "serving, healing, and reconciling a divided, wounded humanity" to the Creator (Bosch, 1991:493-494).

Christian mission, coined in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, is a relatively modern concept. The concept of mission, though, finds its roots in the beginning of time, from creation. Van Engen (1996:71ff) highlights that "the covenant of grace in the Old and New Testaments provides clues for our understanding how God's revealed hiddenness may be expressed in new (*kainos*) ways that are different from, yet in continuity with, all past moments of God's self-disclosure throughout human history." Thus to understand the essence of Christian mission one needs to start at the beginning, at creation.

### **2.3. MISSION AT CREATION**

At creation the universality of God's mission, which has rippled to become the Christian mission, is demonstrated. Humanity was the climax of God's mission to create for Himself a friend with whom He could commune, someone like Himself (Genesis 1:26-27; Shea, 2000:424; Cairus, 2000:207). This goal was accomplished on the sixth day of creation when God made the first humans, a man and a woman, who understood the meaning of communication. The essence of God's mission was to be with mankind. It is this mission that is so vital to the heart of our humanity.

Although this mission was accomplished at creation, circumstances altered its fulfillment. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. They did this by tasting the forbidden fruit. Indirectly they rejected the presence and fellowship of their Creator by distrusting Him.

Mankind would forever be marred and carry the scar of disobedience. There would be no best side to evil.

At this point the essence of God's mission is demonstrated. He does not reject mankind. Neither does He run from mankind. He does the opposite. God, in His holiness, seeks to come as close as possible to mankind without destroying His rebellious creature (Romans 5:10). God, in His awesome holiness, cannot associate with evil, but in His love He stretches out His hand to fallen, sinful mankind and He desires to reconnect. He is not prepared to let go (Hosea 11:8). He has no desire to loose His steward. He will not give up that easily. In this act of grace and love the essence of Christian mission is most profoundly displayed. Instead of allowing the curiosity of the progenitors of mankind to take it's natural course, moving from distrust to alienation to death, God steps in. He intercedes for mankind. He intervenes and demonstrates grace and special favor when it was not demanded of Him (John 3:16).

Adam and Eve decided to hide from God. Through this action they demonstrate even deeper, that they have no way to reconnect with the Creator. Feelings of rejection, loneliness, lostness, and separation from the Creator were the fruits of their disobedience. But God does not abandon His mission – to have a friend in mankind. Sin demands an added dimension to God's mission, reconciliation. He needed to regain the trust of mankind, but deeper still He needed a plan to reconcile His friend. This has become the essence of the Christian mission. The history of mankind records the attempts to reconnect with God, that is to re-establish the trust relationship that existed at the beginning of time (Guthrie, 1981:105, 464-465, 186-187; Carius, 2000:222-223).

#### **2.4. GOD'S MISSIONARY PEOPLE**

Through the ages of time God has always had members of Adams family who would be reconciled to Him and who would demonstrate being new people in their environment. This section shares a brief overview of God's missionary people.

### **2.4.1. Pre-Israel Missionaries**

Mankind, according to the Biblical account, initially lived for centuries before the flood. During this period God used the patriarchal system to establish a covenant. Through the patriarch, God spoke to the family or clan about His desire to rebuild an open communication with His creation. The family patriarch ensured the message filtered to the next generation. Living such long lives the patriarch could easily help many generations learn about God's desire to reunite with His creation (Walton, 1978:34).

Adam having the initial connection with God was allowed to see a number of generations and share with each the glory of God. In sharing about God and His plan for mankind Adam was the first person sent to demonstrate God's desire to reconcile with humanity. Adam was sent to remind his family to return from the folly that he had started. This must have been an awesome responsibility. Informing one's own descendants of the mistake one had made and helping them to see the bigger picture of reuniting with God must have been daunting. Taking such ownership for his own actions, demonstrated Adam's trust in God and His ability to bring about reconciliation.

### **2.4.2. Israel – God's agent in the world**

In an oral society it is common to identify a special person who will “keep” the family history. It is often a child chosen to which the father feels a special attachment.<sup>2</sup> This child will be favored for various reasons. It could be his firstborn child. Sometimes it is because the father sees something in the child that makes the child special. It is this child who receives the family genealogy: where the family came from, how they came to a specific area, who brought them to the area, under what circumstances and so forth. Added to this he or she (often it is a male child) receives the details of the heroes of the family and how these heroes gained their inspiration. In addition to the family history, this individual also receives instruction on the spiritual heritage of the family. The onus is then on this child to keep the family connected spiritually.

---

<sup>2</sup> In the Ovahimba tradition this child is called *omuhuze*.

As the world's population drastically increased over time and became scattered across the face of the globe, God called His “favored child”, Abram and blessed him (Genesis 12:1). God set Abram aside for a special work to all his brothers and sisters not only of his clan but all mankind. The history of mankind was entrusted to Abram. Through Abram and his descendants God preserved knowledge of Himself for all humanity (Kaiser, 2000:9, 18; also Bavinck, 1960:13). Most importantly God says; “All the families on earth will pray to be blessed as you are blessed (Gen. 12:3).” Kaiser (2000:19) states that the blessing was for all people starting with the family extending to the nations. Thus God is not being exclusivist. Neither is God blessing Abram at the exclusion of other peoples. He wants to bless Abram, his favored child, so the whole human family can receive the promised blessing of entering once again the presence of the holy God. God entrusts Abram with the promise, and through Abram all will receive the promised blessing.

Throughout the history of Israel God calls them to be a light to the nations (Is. 42:6-7). They are to bring the promised blessing to all their brothers and sisters of other tribes and nations (Is. 49:6). They were not to be mere Zionists and keep to themselves (Guthrie, 1981:706; Bavinck, 1960:16)<sup>3</sup>. The Israelite nation is endowed with a promise that is universal. As a people they become a type that God wants to bring all people to Himself. He wants to dwell with mankind as He dwells with the children of Israel. Their focus was therefore to present their experience with God so others would want to join in the experience. He wants to be their God and He desires them to be His people.

Israel became an exclusive people. In carefully studying the Old Testament it becomes clear that the future of the nations is highlighted (Bavinck, 1960:11). The Israelite heritage became more important than the work assigned to them. The prophet Samuel said to the first king, Saul, of the nation: “To obey is better than sacrifice... (1 Sam. 15:22).” Here the general attitude of Israel can be seen. Through various rituals they demonstrated their connection to God. Yet they seldom moved beyond their allegiance to rituals to the reality of a personal God who desired a love-based relationship with both

---

<sup>3</sup> Guthrie uses the word “nationalism”.

them and other peoples. The Creator, God, was exclusively theirs. As many Old Testament theologians argue, the Old Testament is an attempt to demonstrate which god was the strongest or it symbolizes “the humbling of their gods (Bavinck, 1960:13).”

God, in His desire to help Israel see the bigger picture, intervened. Looking at the decree of Nebuchednezzar one sees the intervention of God. Although Nebuchednezzar was the conqueror and his god perceived to be superior, the king acknowledged that true worship belongs alone to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3:28-29). Later Darius the Mede was humbled into the same recognition, that the God of Daniel was alone worthy of worship (Daniel 6:26-27).

The goal of making Abram a nation was not merely for nationhood but it was so he and his descendants could be the custodians of hope for the world. Unfortunately they failed to reconcile God with Adam’s children (Guthrie, 1981:706).

### **2.4.3. The Gentile Ambassadors**

The coming of Jesus of Nazareth introduced a new dimension. Through His death the world (Jew and Gentile) is drawn to God (John 12:32). Here type meets anti-type. The lamb was slain and the entire world received freedom. The apostles, however, were reluctant to include the Gentiles in their mission. Slowly they reached out. Peter received a vision that the Gentile people were a part of His family and responded to a call for help (Acts 10; Kaiser, 2000:76). Stephen became a Gentile ambassador of the King (Acts 9). Saul, the Pharisee, became the apostle to the Gentile peoples (and Jews). Gentiles excitedly embraced the hope they received.

The Gentiles, the despised people, have now become reconcilers of the kingdom of God. They have joined the custodians of hope. Finally, God’s covenant with Abram to bless the people of the world is fulfilled.

Throughout the Christian era the custodians of hope have remained in the hands of the world's "super powers". That is, those who dominated the world culturally. Initially the message was Hellenized. When Rome controlled the world their influence became strong among the Gentile ambassadors. Then Europe took control of the world. Here Christianity received a new face as just about everyone in the world was a Christian and under European rule.

The European age of discovery and industrialization took her peoples to new frontiers. Through this enlightenment age the Church authority was questioned. This resulted in a division in the Church that previously did not exist. Through this power struggle kings aligned with different spiritual powers. As these political powers tussled for power in the new frontiers these allegiances became important, as it was through their religious affiliation that the European powers perceived themselves superior to the nations of the world. In doing this European powers forced their religion on the other peoples of the world (cf. Biko, 2004:60; Van der Walt, 2003:24ff). Echoing the theme of the Old Testament "whose God is the strongest".

With Christianity extended across the globe, Sanneh's (2003) question is relevant: "Whose religion is Christianity?" The question is not merely a philosophical discussion about theological terms or methods of doing Church. The question extends to: "Who should be involved in God's mission?"

This question presupposes that the Gentile ambassadors have accepted the mission as belonging to God and not to an organization neither to a specific people. That is, God has called the people of the earth to Himself and He sends them into their world. Besides asking the above question the still unasked question is, "How should the 21<sup>st</sup> century Gentile conduct God's mission?"

## **2.5. AN AFRICAN RESPONSE**

The mission of God is clear – He desires to be with mankind. Helping people through the cultural maze to an understanding of such an invitation, it becomes imperative that God should address people in their context. He cannot speak to the Tamil in Hindi. Neither can He speak to the Hebrew in Arabic nor to the French in English. God draws people to Himself and then sends them back into their communities to be transformers of their own society.

### **2.5.1. The African Initiated Churches**

The African community responded positively to the Christian message of reconciliation. However, the European community who introduced sub-Saharan Africa to the gospel wanted the African to become not only Christian but also European. It is against this that the African people rebelled. They wanted the Creator to speak to them directly in ways that they could understand, not through the European cultural milieu (it was not only foreign but unknown). This meant they had first to learn the missionary's culture, before they could receive the Divine invitation (Mbiti, 1969:309; Van der Walt, 2003:27).

Communication in an African setting is about interacting and building relationships. One cannot build relationships using foreign styles of communication. The Christian missionary spoke about a relationship with God. This relationship remained an enigma for many, as they had to learn a new way of communicating. Traditional African religions involve complicated system of rituals and forms that stems from their worldview and lifestyle. Their connection with God affected every aspect of their lives, as well as their relationships with others. The Christian missionaries ignored or condemned these rituals and forms while introducing new forms, which were limited to a time and place that is to a church building once a week. This new religion did not impact many of the daily activities or responsibilities and was thus unable to impact their (new) Christian worldview and lifestyle.

The desire to want to experience God using familiar forms and worship from the soul gave rise to the African Initiated Churches. The African Initiated Churches decided to have local leadership as opposed to foreign leadership in the church. It also wanted to express worship in familiar forms that is to allow God to speak in African cultural terms (Crafford, 1996:23; Mbiti, 1969:304ff). The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa is an example of such a movement. The Oruano Church in Namibia is an example of an African Initiated Church among a specific people group, the Ovaherero. Mbiti (1969:307) points out that revelation and healing played an important role in separating from the “mission churches”. Primarily because the mission churches had not “penetrated sufficiently deep into the African religiosity (ibid. 1969:305).”

### **2.5.2. African Christian Theology**

Many of those who remained in the mission churches also desired independence. Nolan (1988:3) suggests these Christians sought freedom from “white domination” and “western customs”. Some mission leaders in the propagation of the three-self movement further encouraged this independence. However, this was a struggle for many European and/or American institutions who peered through their mono-cultural lens (ethnocentrism). Often the African people were perceived to be illiterate, uneducated or incapable of being leaders and administrators without foreign assistance. This made self-support or self-sufficiency a non-starter. It took many decades for various mission organizations and denominations to allow independence in the African church (cf. Hiebert, Shaw and Tiéno, 1999:343). Since the 1960s independence has really become an important subject for many denominations whose founders are non-African. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, for example, this has come very late. Although the church structures were in place for local leadership (that is southern Africa) these were often filled by foreigners.<sup>4</sup> It took a full century (from 1901 to 2000)<sup>5</sup> for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Namibia to receive local leadership.

---

<sup>4</sup> Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church reorganization took place in 1901, paving the way for local leadership. Although the primary goal of the 1901 reorganization of the structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was not for the sole purpose of local leadership but more about representation. This reorganization was instrumental in allowing for local leadership within this faith community (see Neufeld,

African Christians have responded to the essence of mission by trying to make Christianity African. They do not desire to make Christianity per se African but the praxis on the continent needs to speak to the African psyche. Theologians such as John Mbiti, Gabriel Setiloane, Harry Sindima and others have attempted to address this issue. These would like an African Christian Theology much like the Systematic Theology of the West (cf. Muzorewa, 1990:170). This group is primarily concerned with using African thought patterns and African imagery in the Christian context. When first speaking to the Ovahimba about the Bible one insightful chief stated: “You read from Matthew, Luke, Samuel... These people are dead but they speak to you today... We speak to our ancestors ... they are dead and they help us because they know us and our needs... We do not know: David, Jesus, and Matthew... But we do know our ancestors and they know us... (Muhenye, 1995)” This wise old chief was asking indirectly; “Should we change our dead for your dead... Should we change our history for your foreign history...?” It is this ancestor veneration that some African theologians attempt to bridge by introducing Christian ancestors. Yet in the words of this old chief the question remains: “Why change whom we know for whom we don't know?”

### **2.5.3. Black Theology**

Another group of African theologians primarily from South Africa speak about a Black Theology. This school of thought is of the opinion that the Black person has had a difficult experience and liberation is the theme for most black people. Throughout the Christian experience in sub-Saharan Africa, Christians have oppressed Black people, yet Christianity should not be oppressive but liberating. These theologians (Desmond Tutu, Alan Boesak, Manas Buthelezi, Frank Chikane and others) accept Christianity as a religion for blacks but it needs to be inclusive of all oppressed and marginalized peoples.

---

1966:938 & 940).

<sup>5</sup>The Seventh-day Adventist work in Namibia began in the 1920s and only at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> millennium did they receive local leadership across the country (see Neufeld, 1966:1226; Buys & Nambala, 2003:130 & 137).

The title Black Theology was a response to the apartheid policy of establishing a “white” and a “non-white” community. The apartheid government and its supporters would not recognize people for who they are. It tried to perceive people of color as non-entities thus calling them “non-whites”. The prophetic voices rose to be a moral conscience of the apartheid ideology that was based on biblical theology. It was also a reaction to the crescendo of the Black Consciousness Movement. Wanting to “enable blacks not only to retain their Christian faith, but also to discover resources in the gospel for the struggle against apartheid (De Grughy, 1985:93).” Nolan (1988:4) states Black Theology was the “theological reflection upon the meaning of Black Consciousness.” Black Theology tried to bring good news for the oppressed masses of South Africa and other oppressed peoples of the earth. Black Theology was perceived to be a political statement of the injustice of white people against people of color. In reality it stepped beyond this narrow view. Black Theology was a theology of the masses highlighting to oppressive Christians within their context that their beliefs were contrary to the God they said they served. Thus it was a prophetic movement and call to Christian oppressors to relinquish their unchristian response to humanity because it was a contradiction of terms.<sup>6</sup> Black Theology was therefore a double-edged sword. It attempted to give dignity to the oppressed and it attempted to awaken the oppressors and their supporters to be morally responsible to all people.

Being a prophetic voice of moral consciousness, Black Theology was time bound. A prophet speaks to a specific situation at a specific time. Although these prophets spoke about the “preferential option for the poor” they spoke about it in the context of white racism (cf. Nolan, 1985:190). Kumalo (2005:99-110) asks where all the prophetic voices of the struggle have gone? The answer suggests the voices of the struggle have joined the establishment. Prophetic voices are always required. However, prophets come and prophets go as the context changes. It is at this point that the 21<sup>st</sup> century African theologian transcends the response of the 20<sup>th</sup> century African theologian.

---

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the oppressive regime silenced the prophetic voice by labeling the propagators as communists and/or terrorists. In so doing the white community turned a deaf ear. The treatment of Beyers

## **2.6. GOD HAS A DREAM: A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AFRICAN RESPONSE**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is the age of African liberation. Countries across the continent have moved away from dictatorships towards democracy. This is epitomized by the change of name from the Organization of African Unity, which was a liberation organization for the peoples of Africa to what was established in 2002 as the African Union. The African Union speaks of a new dispensation across the continent. It seeks to introduce an African establishment by African peoples. With this the African age of democracy and liberation – the renewal of Africa has come. From a Christian perspective, for the African Renaissance to become a reality, it is imperative that the Christian mission in Africa brings hope. The archbishop emeritus of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu (2004) says: “God has a dream...” for everyone in any situation. God wants the best for every person. That is, He dreams of growing His children to reach their full potential.

### **2.6.1. A continent in despair**

The Oxford dictionary (2001) defines despair as “the absence or complete loss of hope.” This is not confined to economics. A loss of hope speaks of an attitude, something from within a person. The experience of life whether one is rich or poor can cause one to experience despair. Despair therefore becomes a spiritual response to one’s context.

The African cities are in despair as many live in squalor. The expectations of the common man are not being met. Many of the traditional income generating resources are disappearing with consequent job losses. Many cities are in transition and despair greets many as they try to transition from an agrarian society to an information and technological society. Many cannot acquire the new skills. People are hopeless and seek hope (cf. Verster, 2000:23).

HIV/AIDS and other diseases have introduced a further cause for despair. Families are no longer safe havens for many. Children have become parents. Grandparents have

---

Naude by his own faith community and people best illustrates this.

become nursing homes for their children and grandchildren. Villages have become orphanages with no preceptors. The face of the African family has been transformed with the disintegration of the traditional family structure. Hope is gone.

Contributing to the despair in Africa is the false hope that came with western development after independence in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Van der Walt (2003:437) boldly states it as “one of the greatest failures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” Western development organizations over the past decades have come with strings attached. Goudzwaard and De Lange (1995:11) state, “since 1982 the rising standard of living of the wealthy countries has been partially subsidized by the developing countries.” Development was based on the colonial mindset of boss and slave, of rich helping or handing out to the poor, of giving where no one was itching. Development had the opposite effect of its intended purpose. Although communities developed, the growth in debt was proportional, thus the receiver became more subservient to the giver (ibid. 7-17).

Van der Walt (2003:407) devotes a chapter to the issue of corruption. He states: “a more fundamental cause (than the socio-economic- political) is the lack of moral character of both officials and members of the public who seek favors.” The recent (June 2005) sacking of the Deputy President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, and the dynamic aggression of the Namibian government (under President Pohamba) on corruption are evidences of the need to address these issues. In making these issues part of the public debate, a measure of hope is extended to the people. For many, however, these will prove to be empty hopes as public opinion is used as a tool to polarize and manipulate sentiment for political and other reasons. At the recent Seventh-day Adventist world general conference session the leadership addressed corruption on a spiritual level. Corruption is prevalent in the Church as some officials or Church leaders misuse their authority. When these issues are addressed publicly, hope is on the horizon.

### **2.6.2. God has a dream**

With the coming of the new world order where the death of the cold war implied liberation for many in Africa, there is now a concerted effort to develop partnerships as opposed to receiving handouts. Partnerships are what the African Renaissance attempts to engender in the psyche of both the west and the African people. Through partnerships, genuine development needs can be addressed.<sup>7</sup> Yet this is not God's dream for His people.

#### *2.6.2.1. God has a dream to give hope*

Africa needs Jesus, the hope of all mankind. African theologians of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have turned the social gospel of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the Black Theology of the 1980s into dynamic points of departure and are calling on African Christians to boldly stand in their communities and be counted as agents of change and transformation. Verster (2000:53) argues, “[T]he church can be in, to, or with the city.” He continues, “If the church sees itself as with the city, it is an incarnational approach.” This approach suggests the church is not merely an observer or helper. It is an active participant in the community, affected by the despair, yet introducing hope for all.

Hope is two-pronged. It speaks of despair, and therefore dangers, yet simultaneously it speaks about a longing to achieve a goal. That is, it is a warning beacon and an encourager (Kanyoro, 1998:97). It is this second prong of hope that is so important to those in despair. Many do not have answers to their despair. Others have answers but are enslaved and need encouragement to get out. As agents of hope engaged in the community, the church can establish partnerships with business, government and other interested parties. Yet adhering to Verster's (2000:55) warning that the church should not be the dominant structure in society but the “activator of activity.” This hope then becomes a grassroots movement initiated by Christians who are God's agents of hope.

---

<sup>7</sup> Thabo Mbeki (2002:188), the South African President and a major architect of the renewal of Africa states: “We call on the rest of the world to partner with us.” In this address the President appeals to Africans as well as for a commitment from foreign powers to work with Africans in introduce a way forward in bringing development.

### 2.6.2.2. *God has a dream to establish new people*

The apostle Paul states: “To the Jew I became as a Jew...(1 Cor. 9:20)” The question is asked: Was Paul not Jewish by birth? Was he not of the Pharisaical sect? Was he not a Benjamite...? How could Paul being a Jew say: “I become as a Jew to win the Jew...”? We have thrown off our ethnic heritage not that we loose our ethnic identity. We should never loose our ethnic identity. We always remain Tamil, Xhosa, Welsh, and so forth. However, in Christ this identity receives new meaning. We are first ambassadors of the King of heaven, then we are children of our parents, and lastly we are citizens of our nation. Our identity is found in Jesus, not only our personal identity but also the identity of the other person. In God we can all be new creatures<sup>8</sup>. We do not serve others in the light of self-gain. Newness is what others experience because of our rebirth. Although the apostle Paul was a Jew by birth and socialization, when he became a follower of the Nazarene, he became a new person. Verster (2000:48) argues that unless the people of God become new people in their environment, they cannot contribute to alleviating the despair that surrounds the community.

Here the new generation of African theologians step beyond Black Theology. Black Theology, as a prophetic voice was time bound. The 21<sup>st</sup> century African theology is about praxis, applying Christian principles to a context. The focus is on living a new life within the community. African Christian Theology was an attempt to iron out the Europeanisms. Today missiologists want to empower Christians to understand how to be Christian each day. Verster (2000:48-61; Bosch, 1991:519) suggests that there is a movement away from theoretical or prophetic movements to a theology of praxis.

This movement to become new extends to Nolan’s (1988:200) idea of being born again. However, the significance of a “fresh start” which Kirill (1998:80) suggests is because

---

<sup>8</sup> Albert Nolan (1988:200) suggests that the Christian life is not a renewal but a rebirth. He argues that to renew implies to make something old new again whereas the good news of Jesus implies making a “fresh

there is a “global crisis of personality.” Kirill is suggesting the world is in a moral conundrum. He states, “Jesus Christ as revealed to us... [is] a great reformer of the human spirit... [Jesus] spoke of a spiritual transformation and moral rebirth of person and all humanity.” It is this newness that is so essential for the rebirth of Africa<sup>9</sup>. Unless, the community perceives God’s people as having a new zeal and zest there will be little or no movement towards growing the community holistically. Excluding this moral rebirth would be trying to row a boat with one oar. As the activator of transformation, the people of God cannot address the issues of economics, education and so forth. Newbigin (1991:23, quoting Jürgen Moltmann) reminds us that the affluence of the developed world “have hoisted a sign for all to see: No future.” It becomes expedient for the people of God to look beyond the physical experience of the community and seek the deeper spiritual need as well.

## 2.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes that the essence of mission is entering the presence of the Creator. In Africa God is not experienced as He cannot be seen, that is, He is invisible. Making God tangible in everyday life is what Africa needs to experience. If God cannot be experienced in the daily life He is irrelevant. This understanding of God’s mission is dynamic and profound. It suggests a movement away from mere preaching or proclaiming the gospel and conducting certain forms and rituals to developing new people with new ways of viewing the world and in so doing applying a transformed life in one’s context. Here God is an active participant through His people and introduces hope for the “meaninglessness, dispersion, disorder and despair” of diverse situations (Davey, 2005:87). Christianity needs to answer the questions that culture and traditional religions are failing to answer. It needs to fill the gap that change has created between the old and the new. Thus providing a rationale and system to understand the tension within.

---

start, to be born again.”

<sup>9</sup> In his opening address to the African Union Thabo Mbeki (2002:186) states that Africa needs to achieve unity, economic and social integration and so forth as well as partners within society yet he strangely neglects the spiritual partner.

The next chapter will therefore focus on the Ovahimba culture and traditions. What makes them uniquely Ovahimba as one cannot minister effectively without understanding the underlying worldview of the people?

## Chapter Three

### THE OVAHIMBA OF NAMIBIA: TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

The second chapter discussed the essence of Christian mission as perceived by African Christians. This discussion further defined mission as belonging to God. However, Christianity needs to fill the gap that change has created between the old and the new worldviews. Thus providing a rationale and system to understand the tension within. This chapter provides a brief overview of the Ovahimba culture, to enhance an understanding of the dynamics of the mission work amongst the Ovahimba. The chapter discusses lifestyle, values, beliefs and behavior of the Ovahimba. The researcher's experiences and observations will also be reflected in this chapter.

#### 3.2. LIFESTYLE AND ENVIRONMENT

The Ovahimba came to Namibia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Mans, 2004:17). Davis (1999:67) suggests they came from East Africa.<sup>10</sup> According to Pool (1991:3), Vedder suggests the area was lush and green. Coming from such an environment would contradict the Ovahimba lifestyle. It would be very hard for nomadic pastoralists to live in a lush green environment.<sup>11</sup>

When one speaks to any Himba person and asks what makes a Himba to be a Himba without hesitation he or she will say, "ʔzongombe (cattle)." The Himba life centers on their animals. Their whole economy is centered on cattle, for their cattle provide: food (*omaere* – cultured milk and meat), leather for shoes, clothing, belts, headgear, jewelry and so forth. Besides the material things these animals provide, they also give one status,

---

<sup>10</sup> Luttig (\_\_\_\_:2) suggests they came from central Africa. It could be central East Africa.

<sup>11</sup> Phillips (2001:8) indicates that pastoralists are "dependent primarily on natural ecosystems". He further states; "Nomadic pastoralists are the only people to productively use the arid or semi-arid *one-third* of the earth's surface (26, original emphasis)."

as the animals themselves are the standard of wealth. It is for this reason that the animals are so highly valued (Muharuakua, E., 2003).

It is this goal of caring for their animals that make the Ovahimba to be nomadic pastoralists. The terrain in which they live is semi-arid and mountainous. Mountains allow for grazing during dry spells and encourage good range management. Semi-arid nature of the countryside imposes the rotation of the animals to various localities. Each year is different as water is not in abundance. Also proximity to water holes or grazing is important (Phillips, 2001:26)<sup>12</sup>. Thus the Ovahimba lifestyle is transitory. They are often ready to move to the next location. Although they have a main homestead to which they will always return they use makeshift abodes during these dry periods at the cattle posts (*ozohambo*). At the cattle post (*ohambo*) the diet consists of wild plants or fruit where available and the staple *omaere*.

The Ovahimba do not travel as one family. The family usually splits into smaller groups. It all depends on how dry it is. Occasionally a family can be sub-divided within the same locality. It is often the teen boys who take the cattle to various locations while the wives and children go with the goats to other areas. Cattle can move further than the goats and sheep and so go further into the mountains. This range management is vital to the survival of the family and the preservation of their wealth.

### **3.3. OVAHIMBA CULTURE**

This section will briefly explore the core values and fundamental beliefs of the Ovahimba.

According to Mbinge (2005) and Tjiimbi (2005) a difference exists between tradition and culture. In this study tradition will be defined as “passing a custom or a belief from one

---

<sup>12</sup> Phillips does not speak about the Ovahimba but speaks in general terms about nomadic pastoralists and their environment.

generation to the next (Oxford dictionary 2001).” Thereby transferring the information and knowledge from generation to generation.

Hiebert (1985:30) defines culture as “the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do.” The study will follow this definition.

The Ovahimba culture is based on a complicated dual lineage system. Both the matrilineage (*eanda*) and patrilineage (*oruzo*) provide an individual’s identity and his or her belief and value system. An individual inherits through the matrilineal line, thus it provides the material and secular belief structure. The spiritual inheritance is from the patrilineage. Thus it is vitally important for a connection with God and the spiritual world. Each patrilineage provides its members with a unique set of taboos, rituals and ceremonies to insure they gain favor with their ancestors.

### **3.3.1. Core Values**

This section will briefly present some core values of the Ovahimba. It will discuss the value the Ovahimba place on cattle, the family and the *okuruwo* (sacred shrine).

#### *3.3.1.1. Cattle*

Cattle are highly valued. Cattle give wealth, food, status, and so forth. Cattle were so important to chief Tjingee that he mentions that when the war (of the late 1800s) came, the cattle slept (Bollig, 1997:83). The value of cattle is also seen in the songs or poems people compose. Animals are often praised by their owners for the milk they give, for the animals they produce, because of an event that took place or because of its color. Status and community responsibility and leadership increase with the increase in the size of an individual’s herd of animals.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> In chief Muharukua’s sharing of the history he mentions the significance of cattle as it relates to the

Cattle and small stock are the economy of the society. It is only after an individual has established himself and built up large herds, that animals will be sold for cash to buy other material possessions. They tease each other about a man limping along with sore feet because he refuses to sell a goat to buy shoes. Though told in jest, it is a reality for many Ovahimba. A car is a luxury only well established men, with a large surplus of animals, could afford. Foreigners with new cars and material possessions are seen as very wealthy. Many believe the foreigners have a farm back home with many cattle. This impacts the perceived role and expectation they have of foreign workers and especially missionaries (Muharukua, E., 2003).

### 3.3.1.2. *Family and Ancestors*

In the Ovahimba society familial relationships are very important. It is through the family that one receives an inheritance.<sup>14</sup> Besides the material advantage of belonging to a family, family also gives protection and security. Family is a very inclusive association and includes more than the western idea of the extended family. The concept of family even extends to the concept of tribe. *Omuhoko* can mean tribe or family that is to whom one is related or that there is a common ancestor. As family one is responsible to and for each other. Family is a tie that binds one to another.

Family also extends to the dead. The ancestors form part of the family. They are given praise and thanks for many different things. It is through the ancestors that one makes contact with *Ndjambi*, God (Luttig, \_\_:36; Jacobsohn, 1995:42,108). A very sick chief Muhenye stated that although he may not continue to live much longer in this life, he felt assured that he would live with the ancestors. It is this hope of living with the ancestors that allows him not to fear death because in death he will continue to be a member of the family (Muhenye, 2005).

---

nicknames given to some Ovaherero sub-groups (Bollig, 1997:147-148).

<sup>14</sup> Chief Muharukua discusses the Ovandamuranda and Ovatjimba and the dispute about who belongs to

The ancestors are valued as they give courage to fight the enemy or dangerous wild creatures. The value of the ancestors extends to include healing, providing rain and seeing to the needs of the living family members. Some (SWAPO) freedom fighters, on returning home from exile, made it a priority to first introduce their (in some cases adult) children at the sacred shrine to the ancestors. This ceremony is necessary for membership in the family. Without this introduction the child is not a member of the family, that is he/she is not under the protection of the ancestors. This demonstrates the value and role of the ancestors in the family (Herunga, 2005).

### 3.3.1.3. *The sacred shrine (okuruwo)*

A sacred value among the Ovahimba is the *okuruwo*. The *okuruwo* gives one a connection with *Omuute Ndjambi* (the Creator God) through one's forefathers – *tate mukuru rume*. The material world centers on the animals. The Ovahimba spiritual world centers on *okuruwo*. To be an Ovahimba without an *okuruwo* would suggest one is incomplete. Having the *okuruwo* demonstrates one's connection to the ancestor-mediators.

The *okuruwo* gives one identity and a connection to the past, the present and the future. Phillips (2001:32) makes the observation that one cannot have significant status by merely having great wealth. It is also important that one have good ancestral connections. That is, people determine one's behavior through the ancestral line. Certain people in the community will either be considered brave or good hunters based on the performance of their ancestors, or they will be considered to be cowards or weaklings for the same reasons.<sup>15</sup>

Mans (2004:21) states that the *okuruwo* is the "sacred shrine". There is no real translation for the word *okuruwo* thus Mans' idea of a sacred shrine gives a better description of the place. Sacred fire (Jacobsohn, 1995:31) or holy fire (Luttig, \_\_\_\_:27)

---

Kaokoland and who does not (Bollig, 1997:138-139).

<sup>15</sup> This idea speaks of a fatalistic outlook on life.

as used by these authors merely reflect the object. According to the Oxford dictionary a shrine is a place believed to be holy because it is connected to a holy person or event. In this case the holy person is *Omuute Ndjambi* and the *tate mukuru rume*. Luttig (\_\_\_\_:38) understands that the living *tate mukuru rume* is representative of the divine.

*Okuruwo* therefore symbolizes the Ovahimba's connection to the Creator and access to His power through their forefathers. Being the Creator, He is the One who can do all things. Thus living without the *okuruwo* implies one is living without the blessing of the ancestors and access to the power of God almighty.

### **3.3.2. Fundamental Beliefs**

There are numerous beliefs that stem from the core values. Here are just the briefest of examples. Being spiritual people, the Ovahimba, have numerous beliefs that the researcher has yet to discover. Yet these beliefs are essential in understanding them as a people.

#### *3.3.2.1. Witchcraft*

Witchcraft is usually associated with evil. In the Ovahimba tradition witchcraft is associated with death. When one is bewitched it implies one will die unless a witchdoctor is consulted.

Witchcraft among the Ovahimba suggests jealousy. If one is jealous of another person one will go to a witchdoctor and ask for the person to be killed. If however, the dying person's family discovers who bewitched the person it is possible that the family will revenge by bewitching the originator or someone in his or her family. Thus bewitching becomes a round of revenge.

Various reasons are given for bewitching an individual. It could be riches. It could be that one desires the spouse of the other person. Witchcraft is therefore perceived as an assassination of the other person.

### 3.3.2.2. *Trust*

The Ovahimba have a saying: ‘*omambo ovarumendu.*’ Literally translated it means “words of men”. This idiom means the words of men are untrustworthy. The Ovahimba belief states that one needs to prove oneself trustworthy. This is not easy as often one can hear people say; “how do I know this will happen...?” Through experience they have learnt that people speak easily but carry out their talk very reluctantly (Herunga, 2005).

Combined with this belief of proving trust is the belief in or practice of deception. Through the *ongano* (fables)<sup>16</sup> children learn at an early age to get ahead of others. This is especially learnt through the jackal fables. In these stories it is seldom that the jackal gets caught for being deceptive. When he does get caught he will wiggle his way out of the situation.

The belief in deception has an added dimension as one will attempt to get whatever one can while giving as little as possible back. This also helps the deceiver to avoid responsibility for his or her actions. The person was not “clever” enough to avoid the pitfalls of deception. One needs to constantly be alert to being deceived by others and not fall into the trap. This contributes much to the Ovahimba communication skills. The Ovahimba are adept at communicating and sharing their thoughts. To refrain from a discussion suggests one can be easily deceived or misled (Mukungu, 2003).

### 3.3.2.3. *Authority of the ancestor*

A fundamental belief among the Ovahimba is the authority of the ancestor over the family. Luttig (\_\_\_\_:27, 38) suggests that the father (“priest-chief”), that is the one who

---

<sup>16</sup> See appendix for examples of *ongano*.

speaks at the *okuruwo* is a divine representative. This does not mean that the ancestors or the living father is divine. It highlights an important underlying belief among the Ovahimba. One knows by seeing. Having seen someone or something the person or thing becomes known. Phillips (2001:31) states, “[The nomadic] identity and security is in who and what they can take with them...” Having the power of *Ndjambi* accompany one is necessary. *Ndjambi* is approachable only through whom one knows. The belief that the ancestors (who know you and whom you know through your father) are the only mediators between the spirit beings and the human family is foundational among the Ovahimba. This suggests that the ancestors are not God. Because God is all-powerful (omnipotent) they believe that a known mediator is required. However, it does suggest that the Ovahimba are questioning the omniscience of God. This is understood as they do not understand that God is omnipresent. This can be illustrated in figure 3.1 below:

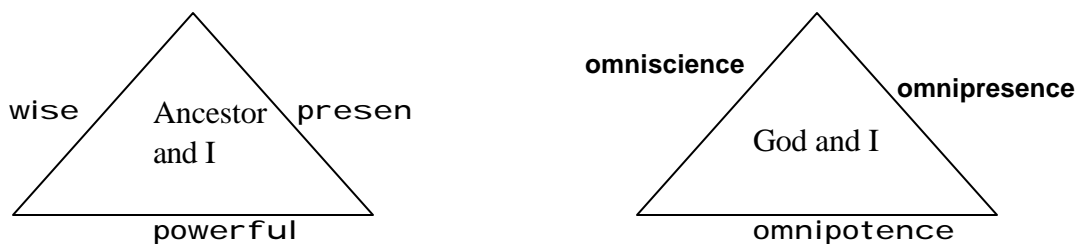


Figure 3.1: God-ancestor dilemma (source: Petersen, GP, 2005)

Phillips (2001:37) suggests that the nomadic lifestyle is “precarious, and death can often be close.” Living in nature with the wild animals protection is a necessity. The ancestors are believed to provide such protection. Without the aid of the ancestors life would be difficult. They send the rain so the animals can be fed and quench their thirst. The animals belong to the ancestors as much as to the living family. This suggests that if rain is withheld or no protection is given, that the ancestors are unhappy with something or someone in the family. This causes an imbalance in the family life and appeasement is required. It is not God who withholds but the ancestor who withholds his mediation.

This understanding of mediation is very significant to the Ovahimba. Associated with the *okuruwo* is one's *otuzo* (plural) or *oruzo* (singular). *Oruzo* is associated with the taboos of the family. Each family has a unique *oruzo* that is inherited through one's father.

#### 3.3.2.4. Blessings and Curses

The above discussion leads to a fundamental Himba belief about blessings and curses. It is believed that ancestors can bless or curse the family. The family usually perceives a curse as something imposed upon themselves by the ancestors. A curse is therefore different to being bewitched. It is at this point that the appearance of doing right is important. As long as one appears to be doing what is fundamentally expected of one, the ancestors will bless the family. When one publicly disobeys the family rules, one brings a curse upon oneself and/or the family. The blessing and curse is associated with the *oruzo* of the family. One's *oruzo* suggests one cannot have certain color animals or touch hornless animals and so forth. This highlights an important difference between a curse and being bewitched. Usually bewitching only affects the individual that is bewitched. Yet a curse can affect anyone in the family. Generally the curse affects the family as a whole.

The Ovahimba understanding of blessings and curses gives a glimpse into their understanding of God and His role in their life. Because God is so distant and spiritual He is not affected by their responses. God is not affected by what they do. God is merely the provider of life.

### 3.3.3. Behavior

Culture is often perceived by the behavior of the people. Here the following will be discussed: clothing, jewelry, hairstyles, walking stick (*okati*) and entertainment.

#### 3.3.3.1. Clothing

Among the Ovahimba there are definite men and women dress styles. The two cannot be confused. Respecting the dress style of the opposite sex is vital. It helps to define who one is. Here the dress styles include the clothing and the different hairstyles. Each society has unique styles or dress patterns as well as material used for covering the body. The Ovahimba use skins to cover the body. With modernization there is a movement away from skins to cloth as a covering. A big percentage of the population still uses skins (Mukungu, 2005 and Katundu, 2002).<sup>17</sup>

### 3.3.3.2. *Jewelry*

The Ovahimba take great pride in the jewelry that they wear. Should a foreigner dress in Himba regalia it is insisted that jewelry be added as it forms part of the dress code. Jewelry therefore, makes one's dress complete and beautiful.<sup>18</sup> With modernization one notices that traditional jewelry is changing. Often one notices young people are careful not to "dirty" themselves with *otjize*. They are inclined to wear beads and other modern jewelry.

### 3.3.3.3. *Hairstyles*

From birth girls and boys have different hairstyles<sup>19</sup>. Boys have a plait going forward while girls have two braids going forward. At puberty the boys grow their hair long and braid into one single braid backwards. Girls on the other hand have braids put in. These braids cover her eyes for one year. Thereafter, she receives her *erembe*<sup>20</sup> to signify that she is a woman. Her hairstyle never changes after this. When a young man is ready to get married he will shave his head. After marriage he will only cut his hair once he reaches the age of 50 or 60 (Mans, 2004:28, 30 and Mukungu, 2003).<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Pictures of the different styles are pictured in appendix 2a.

<sup>18</sup> See appendix 2b for pictures.

<sup>19</sup> The exception to the rule is twins. Up to puberty the one twin will be dressed as a boy and the other as a girl.

<sup>20</sup> An *erembe* is a head covering made of kid goatskin for women.

<sup>21</sup> See appendix 2c for pictures of different hairstyles.

#### 3.3.3.4. *Okati*

The pride of many a man is his stick. Without a stick a man's dress is incomplete. One needs to have some kind of stick. Living in nature as the Ovahimba do the stick has a real practical purpose. If one is threatened in any way by an unsuspecting animal one will have a ready weapon for protection. There is an Otjiherero proverb that says: "*Onguru nyoka ka i ku vaza nokati.*" The meaning says: "Do not let an old snake find you without your walking stick." That is, one must be prepared for any emergency that may arise at any time (Herunga, 2005).

#### 3.3.3.5. *Entertainment*

The Ovahimba have three forms of entertainment; dancing with singing, story telling and poetry. The Ovahimba do not have any loud musical instruments. They make music with sounds from the mouth, stamping their feet and clapping.

One of the most common forms of dance is *ondjongo*. Generally, the Ovahimba refer to *ondjongo* as a game (another word for entertainment). There is *ondjongo* for men, *ondjongo* for women and then *ondjongo* for the two together. *Ondjongo* is primarily danced in a circle or opposite lines. A song is sung about their homestead, animals or whatever they are celebrating to the rhythm of clapping. The aim is to see who can dance the best and/or make the best lyrics. Each person gets an opportunity to dance in the middle of the group and show off his or her dancing skills. There are other dance procedures such as *ombimbi*<sup>22</sup> (*omuhango*). This is used to sing the praises of brave men. These are men who have killed a wild animal or been victorious or defended bravely in war (Mukungu, 2003 and Herunga, 2005).

An important part of entertainment is story telling. Parents often share with the children stories from time past and in so doing give them a history of the family and of the people

---

<sup>22</sup> *The southern Herero speakers use the term ombimbi while the Himba uses the term omuhango.*

in the area. In the Himba way of sharing information one often hears the storyteller saying: "...that is the way I heard it said..." The researcher understands this to mean that they accept it as true based on the one who shared the information. It also protects the speaker from any variants of the story the listener may hear (Thom, 2005).

*Ongano* are fables told around the fire at night before or after a meal. Women and older siblings usually tell them exclusively for the children. Often it is the grandmother who tells the story first and others repeat it. The father does not play with the children or tell them fables. Poetry (*omiimbo*) is primarily transmitted through the father of the house. He will relate the history of the family (people) through poetry. This is crucial in the child's educational process. Knowing one's history gives one abilities to perform in society more effectively. Knowing the history of bravery within the family encourages young men to be brave like their forefathers. A primary function of sharing the history is also to give the youth good idols (heroes) to imitate. The father will also tell *omiimbo* at a funeral or other ceremonies to remember the past.

### **3.4. ROLES**

This section deals with the primary roles of men, women and children found in a semi-rural society.

#### **3.4.1. Children**

Young boys become *omuzandu etere* at circumcision. That is, boys who are well built – meaning they can now deal with issues as a male. Many are circumcised before the age of one (Talavera, 2002:31). There are a few circumcised when they are of toddler age. In rare circumstances when they are older (Mans, 2004:30).

From the time children learn to walk they are assigned tasks around the homestead. Being an oral society, learning takes place through the process of observation and

practice. Imitating others is important in the learning process. From a young age children are encouraged to imitate older children and adults (cf. Ong, 1982:43).

It is significant that considerable learning takes place through play. The older children play with the younger ones. Little children will play with older children, all under the age of six. This makes the playing together easier for all. Adults do not direct the games that are played. The children play games that imitate the adults in various ways. One of the ways that children play is to actually take kid goats and carry them around as they see their parents do. Children will also play cooking games. This includes making an actual fire. One of the most enjoyable games is *ondjongo*. Here girls and boys play separately as they imitate (and practice) music and dance styles (Mans 2004:37).

As soon as children are weaned their mothers allow the older siblings to care for the children. The weaning process can take up to three or four years, depending on the child<sup>23</sup>. The older siblings seldom care for the babies. As soon as the child learns to walk he or she learns to do things around the homestead. It is only when he is weaned from his or her mother that the child receives responsibilities around the homestead (Jacobsohn, 1995:71).

Initially the child learns to do little chores for his or her mother. Between the ages of five and twelve, boys and girls are given the task of helping their mothers who are responsible for the care of the goats and sheep. The children are herders of the small livestock. They will take them out to pasture and to the water holes. In the dry season they will go with their mothers to the cattle post and care for the goats and sheep.

In the summer the children do not neglect this responsibility. They do not go to the gardens to assist with gardening. They remain at home to care for the animals while their mothers go to the garden to ensure that the family will have food to eat for the coming year.

---

<sup>23</sup> Talavera (2002:31) notes that once the child leaves the apron strings of his mother he becomes “an autonomous individual.”

It is at this age, and especially in the dry season, the children are told *ongano* (tales) and also other stories and proverbs. These are usually done at night around the fire, while they are waiting for their food older members of the family will share stories based on the experiences of the day.

### 3.4.2. Teenagers

This section will discuss the roles of the teen girls and boys in the Ovahimba society.

#### 3.4.2.1. Teen girls

At puberty girls celebrate *ouhwame*<sup>24</sup> time. This is the time she is taught by her mother's sisters and her older sisters about being a woman. She also receives a new hairstyle of braids coming forward, called *ozondjise ozokotjipara*. She receives bracelets and other jewelry to demonstrate that she is now a woman. As with any transition in life it calls for a celebration. The girl will also be taken to the sacred shrine to receive the ancestral blessings (Talavera, 2004:37-38).

A year after the *ouhwame* time, she is called *omukazona etere* – literally translated it means a well-built woman. The idiomatic meaning would suggest that she is now a physically mature woman. It is at this time that she receives an *erembe* (a head gear). Following this she will become more involved in the gardening, collecting water and firewood, preparing of food, caring for her younger siblings and learning to do women's work such as learning how to make and mend clothing, make mortar for plastering the houses and so forth (Mans 2004:31).

Jacobsohn (1995:132) highlights that the girl changes from being fleet-footed to being slow, as her new jewelry demands a slower pace. The heavy iron jewelry and hair that

---

<sup>24</sup> Mans (2004:31) suggests this special time is when a group of girls having their first menstruation around the same time will be brought together for a special time of teaching.

covers her eyes demands that she slows down. Besides the physical change she is also required to be less manly in the sense that she must subject her thoughts and views to men. She must be submissive even though she has experience and sound knowledge of the environment.

If a girl is married prior to reaching puberty she remains with her mother until she reaches puberty.<sup>25</sup> If she does live at the house of her husband she does not function as a wife but as a daughter. She is trained or mentored by the primary wife. When she reaches puberty she will return to her mother's homestead and there learn about marriage and human sexuality (Katundu, 2002).

Usually girls are married before they reach twenty. Prior to marriage she will have one or more boyfriends and have children. Not having a husband she will live with the mother who reared her. The Ovahimba have a practice that children can be taken by the biological mother's sister (who is regarded as a mother to the child) and she can rear the child. The child will still belong to the biological father. Thus he has authority over her. For example: when Kenoo desired marriage she needed speak to her mother's sister first (as she reared Kenoo). She in turn spoke to her husband who spoke to Kenoo's biological father to ask if his daughter can marry (Kazehe, 2002).

#### 3.4.2.2. *Teen Boys*

The older brothers take the teen boys to learn how to care for cattle. They will learn about the animal diseases, how to name the animals, how to breed with the animals, how to care for the grazing and so forth. Living in nature as the Himba do, it becomes important for the men to become proficient weather forecasters. They must be able to read or interpret their environment for signs to tell the seasons and weather patterns. This "agricultural school" gives the boys the skills they need to survive in the harsh desert

---

<sup>25</sup> In his book Challenging the Namibian perception of sexuality, Talavera does not deal with the child bride. It is possible because he reports that sexual intercourse is only perceived as such when it is between sexually mature individuals. He reveals that the children play a sexual game with actual penetration but it is not regarded as sexual because they are not sexually mature (2002:34-36).

conditions.

While with their older brothers they are taught how to be a man. Here they learn to hunt, as no food is given to them when they go out to the cattle posts. They must fend for themselves. It is also out in the field that they learn about human sexuality. It is the responsibility of the older brothers to teach the younger boys about sexual encounters. Here it is no longer a game between immature children. They are encouraged to take a sexually mature girl as a partner. To help a boy overcome his shyness, a cousin may give him his first experience. She will invite him to her house or take him into the veldt and she will introduce the boy to his first sexual experience (Hepute, Mukungu and Ujaha, 2005).

It is during this time, while working with the animals, that the young boys have an opportunity to build relationships with their fathers and uncles. As they observe their fathers and others in negotiations, they learn the art of negotiating and debating. This is an important part of the Ovahimba lifestyle. It is also a stage of life where the young boys can be more visible at the sacred shrine and in the presence of men. The young men remain in the capacity as learners.

As young men approach young adulthood, they have the freedom to construct a house at the family homestead. This helps to give the young man a sense of independence. He will however, continue to eat at his mother's cooking place.

### **3.4.3. Married Women and Men**

Married women are to produce the laborers for the family. This sounds chauvinistic and sexist. However, the primary function of marriage in this community appears to be economic. Without laborers the animals cannot be cared for. Without laborers the gardens cannot be worked and harvested (Tjakuapi, 2005). In 1972 there were over 160 000 cattle in Kaokoland, making them one of the richest people in Africa. That averages to about 12 cattle per person. This does not include the small livestock. Such vast herds

require good management. The husband being the head farmer needs workers. The best worker would be his own child. Thus educating his child to become a farmer of the highest order (Jacobsohn, 1995:26).

Besides bearing children, wives are also the ones to build their own *omuriro* (fireplace). This means they are to provide for their own children. It is not their responsibility to build the house but it is their responsibility to make a home for themselves. When a wife joins her husband at his father's house she will move into the house that he used while the husband was single. Only once the couple establishes their own homestead can she build her own house. The wife is responsible for designing her house. Her husband will decide where the house will be and arrange for the sticks to be cut and have the house constructed. It has become common practice to use hired labor to construct the house. However, the wife will collect the fresh cow dung, sand and water needed to plaster the house and make the floor (Katundu, 1997).

The wife is the manager of the house. Although the animals belong to her husband, the wife is consulted when visitors arrive and the husband would like to feed them. He will ask her for "permission" to slaughter a goat. She will then prepare the animal and other food (if there is other food) and present it to her husband and his fiends. She and her children will receive a small portion of the meat. Since it is the man's job to slaughter animals, if there is no young man to do it the husband will slaughter the animal and present it to the wife to cook (ibid.).

As home executor, the wife ensures that her family (children) always has sufficient food and good clean clothes. She needs to ensure that they have *omaze* (fat) so as to keep the clothing (skins) in a good condition. *Omaze* is also used to mix with ochre to make *otjize*<sup>26</sup> to keep the body clean and looking good. In general it is the wife's duty to ensure that the children are cared for and to train them. The mother is the first teacher of the child. She will form and shape the child. It is also her responsibility to help her children

---

<sup>26</sup> *Otjize* is a mixture of fat and the mineral ochre that forms a paste (lotion) that acts as a moisturizer, sun block and cleanser.

to be respectful and respectable in the community. If the child is not it is a disgrace to the mother (ibid. and Kazahe, 2002).

As home executors, mothers are responsible for the garden and ensuring there is sufficient food from one rainy season to another. She needs to plant sufficient corn to eat and to make into seed. She needs to harvest at the right time so the family does not go hungry. With the help of her husband she till's the soil but it is her responsibility to ensure her family has food security (Katundu, 2002).

The mother plays a pivotal role in the family. It is through the mother that children inherit. Thus if one comes with a specific *eanda*<sup>27</sup> that is known to the Ovahimba, they are responsible to the individual if they are related by *eanda*. Children inherit from their mother's brothers. Some children when they are of age speak to their uncles while they are alive and request two or three cattle to give them a jump-start in life (Herunga, 2005). When the uncle dies his oldest brother will divide his belongings among all those who are entitled to inherit from him that is, all his sister's sons. It is for this reason that children are very attached to their mothers. One can live without a father but not without knowing one's mother and her family. Without the mother's family one will remain without material possessions. The Ovahimba value system will not allow one to remain without material possessions. Materialism gives one status and respect (Luttig, \_\_\_\_:100 ff; Thom, 2005).

Nieces do not inherit from their uncles<sup>28</sup>. Inheritance is primarily for the nephews. This also means that often an uncle can request a nephew to come learn about his animals. Meaning, he must come work for him so the nephew can learn the history of the animals. The uncle will also teach the nephew about the colors of the animals. The intricacies of inheritance are a primary motivator for many activities in the Ovahimba culture (Herunga, 2005).

---

<sup>27</sup> *Eanda* is one's matrilineage. Domingu Tuavere reports that as a Themba he was accepted because of his *eanda*.

<sup>28</sup> In the Ovahimba tradition a woman receives a heifer at birth of her first child from her father. She can also receive other gifts from others as she does not receive an inheritance like her brothers (Luttig, \_\_\_\_:99).

Fathers have very little to do with their children. Their primary role is to train the boys in farm management. Besides the farming, he is responsible to provide for the long-term needs of his family. He must ensure that the family has meat to eat and milk to drink.

The father's spiritual role is his primary role. The father gives the children their *oruzo*<sup>29</sup>. Having no separation between the sacred and the secular, one's *oruzo* gives one a spiritual connection. It is through one's father that one communicates with one's ancestors<sup>30</sup> and God, the Creator (*Omuute*). Without this connection one cannot have protection from illnesses or witchcraft. The ancestors are also responsible for the rain. Without rain one will die of hunger and thirst (Tjihukununa, 2005, Tjavara, 2005).

When a child is born someone needs to claim responsibility for the child. Generally, the practice is that before the child is weaned a man needs to be identified as the father of the child. This is usually done out of wedlock. If the boyfriend takes responsibility he must pay the girl's father a goat (*ongombwena*). Accepting a child does not mean the child will belong to the man. He will still need to request the child live with him (if he so desires). If the father agrees the child will receive his biological father's *oruzo*. If the lady is unmarried and her boyfriend does not take responsibility for the child, the child will automatically remain with his or her grandfather and be seen as a sibling to his or her biological mother (Thom, 2005).

Being a good farmer implies being a good manager. Men need to learn about nature. Having the knowledge of nature gives them the edge in helping the animals and family to survive. Effective managers also need to know range management (good grazing habits) and understand how to preserve the scarce water sources. The father determines the movements of the family and animals between the various cattle posts and the main homestead. He also negotiates extra pasture in other districts if their area received little

---

<sup>29</sup> *Oruzo* refers to one's patrilineage.

<sup>30</sup> Mbiti (1969:32) refers to the ancestors as the living-dead. These are the ancestors who are dead but continue to have some connection with the living. Since the dead need to be known to the living he refers to them as the living-dead. That is, they continue to exist in the memory of the living.

rain. It often appears as if the father does very little. However, he is actively looking out for the best environment for his animals and learning from others (Herunga, 2005).

Many societies have a centralized form of government. In the Ovahimba tradition governance is in the family. The father of the household is effectively the political head. He, with other men, discusses various issues that affect them and their environment. It is vital that he builds relationships and alliances to ensure their survival during drought and other distresses. Thus men do a lot of negotiating, debating and visiting. Being aware of local happenings, knowing the news, and taking time to talk about issues builds relationships and helps to strengthen the community.

#### **3.4.4. The elderly**

According to Luttig (\_\_\_:38) the owner of the sacred shrine represents the divine. The Ovahimba practice respect for their elders. One can debate with any individual but to think that one can teach an older person would be considered an insult. Pana Kakonda (2005) stated; “A child cannot teach an adult ... who has more experience in life...” She added that the youth should be subservient to the adults. The priest therefore, demands respect of his family because of his wisdom and life experience. Though inherited, he has to still earn the position of spiritual counselor and guide for the family.

Older women also have a vital role to play in the family. The younger women in learning how to deal with family issues consult them. Young married ladies are often found in the company of the elderly women, as they are the one's who are at home and available for company, guidance and help. They are also regarded as significant caregivers. Grandmothers,<sup>31</sup> *mama mukuru kaze*, are often alone at home with the (great) grandchildren caring for the toddlers while their mothers are in the urban centers or out caring for the animals. Often the grandmothers are the first teachers of the children (Muharukua, B. 2004).

---

<sup>31</sup> The *mama mukuru kaze* is usually reserved for older ladies. It is not really associated with the title of grandmother.

### 3.4.5. The ancestors

A significant role in the Ovahimba society is that of the ancestors. They are the mediators between God and the family and ensure the well being of the family. They are also consulted in distributing inheritance.

Mbiti (1969:32) refers to the dead as the *“living-dead”*. That is, those who have died but continue to exist in the memory of the living. In the Ovahimba tradition an ancestor refers to the physically dead as being in the grave but his spirit existing with God (as God gave the spirit to the person). It is the spirit of the dead that allows the people to connect with God. Because God is spirit those who speak or communicate with Him should also be spirit.

In the Ovahimba understanding, the ancestors share the family needs with God and He then intervenes on their behalf. They do not know God or have a relationship with Him. Although they accept God as the Creator and regard Him as the Father of everything, it is only possible to speak to Him through an intermediary (Tjavara, 2005). Working through an intermediary is a form of respect to God. This form of showing respect is also visible in family relationships. The mother is the mediator between the father and the children (Kuroro, 2002).

The ancestors help the family in caring for the animals, as they know the animals and the area in which the animals graze. The ancestors are always informed of all movements of the family. It is believed that unless the ancestor is informed he cannot effectively perform his duties. This even applies to the health of the children in the family. Children need to be introduced to the ancestor at each stage of development to guarantee the safety of the children (Herunga, 2005).

The primary role of the ancestors is to ensure that the family can continue to exist. They ensure that the family remains rich and increased with goods. They protect the family

against destructive behavior. They are believed to hear and see, thus it is vital to maintain the appearance of seeking to do what is right to keep the family blessed.

### **3.5. INFLUENCES IMPACTING ON THE OVAHIMBA ROLES**

Globalization is impacting every community in the world. The world has become a village in which everyone influences each other. The Ovahimba have really only been exposed to diverse cultures during the past 50 years. Previously they were merely exposed to related peoples around them such as Ovambo, Ovangambwe and so forth. In the 1950's foreign missionaries started a school and hospital. The contact with outsiders remained very limited. War further isolated the Kaokoveld until 1990 when Namibia became independent. Since 2000, Opuwo town, the largest settlement, in the area has rapidly become cosmopolitan and has a high urbanization rate.

#### **3.5.1. Modern Hunting Laws**

A little over a century ago, the Ovahimba for the first time met fire coming from metal (the gun). This new instrument was used to kill people. Being familiar with only a spear, stick, bow and arrow, this new instrument baffled them. They wondered how fire could fly and kill someone. With time the Ovahimba acquired guns. These they used for protection against wild animals and also to go hunting. Previously, they hunted with traps, spears, dogs, bows and arrows. To this repertoire they have added the gun.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century they are forced to register their guns and to keep each gun in a safe place. Living in mud houses it is not that easy to keep it out of children's reach. Besides keeping their weapons locked away it is required by law that they do not kill wild animals for the sake of eating meat. Wild animals can only be killed if the animal is a threat to the community. One man was sentenced to two years imprisonment for killing a springbok in his area. The freedoms the Ovahimba once enjoyed are slowly being eroded.

The role of the father and older brothers are slowly changing because of these new laws. It was the hunt that allowed the family to sing *ombimbi*<sup>32</sup>. This is a special praise song that the hunter and his family will sing to demonstrate his bravery. It is also used at the time of war. The bravery of the adult men is no longer visible through these new laws and new instruments. It is however, important to note that the Ovahimba still primarily use a rifle of a century ago. They do not use modern weapons as yet. Often it is a weapon that was past down (Tjambiru, 2002).

The Ovahimba men have to find new ways of expressing their bravery. It is necessary that a man be seen to be brave. If one is not brave one is regarded as a woman. One cannot eat food from *pezuko routoni* (fire of the brave).

### 3.5.2. Shops

In times past the Ovahimba made clothing from their animals hides and jewelry from various materials around them. They also made their own beds using the cowhide. Utensils were made from soft trees in the area.

It is true that through the centuries they had interaction with other tribes and they would trade various artifacts with others. The idea of trading is not new. What is new is the availability of various things. Previously because of the isolation of the area material goods were not easily accessible. Today, one can ride or hike into Opuwo and purchase items. Although ladies continue to make their own clothing. Men go to the store and purchase the ready-made clothing. The young girl who wishes to dress in modern clothing simply goes into the clothing store or street market and purchases any item she fancies.

Another commodity that has changed some roles in the society is petroleum jelly. Traditionally it is the role of the woman to prepare fat to make *otjize*. A store without

---

<sup>32</sup> *Ombimbi* is a praise song to the ancestors for making a person brave or it could just be a praise song to the brave individual. The Ovaherero (of the south) use the word *ombimbi* while the Ovahimba use the

petroleum jelly does not understand the Ovahimba need for it. Like sugar and maize meal, petroleum jelly is a definite must in any store among the Ovahimba. The art of preparing the fat is slowly being lost. Here the woman (with her children) will collect wild olive seeds, ground it and put it on metal to roast it. The roasting helps get the oil out. Once it has been roasted the oil is extracted by pounding it some more. The fat is then placed in a container for use only with ochre to make *otjize* (Ndjamba, 2001).

Shop owners and traders want to make money. Money being the primary reason for their business they will sell that, which makes good money. However, the Ovahimba continue to live “primitively”. They have very little need of modern things on a continuous basis. The Ovahimba do not need a constant supply of cash. Cash is mainly required in the city or at the shop. Normally one is allowed to pay with animals or barter with other materials one possesses. The Namibian government has taken it upon itself to ensure that every person over the age of 60 receives a pension. At pension time the village shops are full, the item of the day or week is alcohol. Many go on a drinking spree. With the shops coming to the people and with so many unemployed youth and women sitting at home one way to pass the time is to buy drinks for everyone. Previously, alcohol was only consumed at a feast. Today alcohol is freely available and many are selling their animals because they are in a constant state of drunkenness (Tjambiru, 2002).

### **3.5.3. Modern Education**

One of the greatest change contributors to the Ovahimba roles has been modern education. Being an oral society it is inevitable that modern western education will have an impact. The goal of education has always been to equip the youth with the knowledge and skills to survive within their environment. Initially, parents were hesitant to send their children to formal educational institutions. It was felt that education would take their children away from their current lifestyle and culture. The Ovahimba although isolated from the Namibian society because the South African government made Kaokoland a reserve that required a special pass to enter it, they were aware of the

educational effects on their brothers the Ovaherero down south (Bollig,197:21 ff).

Thus the foreign educational program was not embraced enthusiastically. From an outsiders point of view, it may have appeared as abuse of the children and that they were just needed as workers. When education is perceived to be training youth to live within their environment, it becomes clear that they were not mere child laborers but that they were in “school”, being trained as professional farmers. Parents knew that the children needed to learn these skills in order to survive in their environment (Mukungu, 2003).

A second reason why the Ovahimba rejected the western educational system was the emphasis on a sedentary lifestyle. As nomads the Ovahimba could not be in one place for long. For example, today it is a common practice for mothers to take their toddlers with them when they move from place to place. When the Seventh-day Adventist church opened a kindergarten in Opuwo, a child would be registered but would attend school irregularly. It was discovered the mother would take the child with her when she traveled to Angola or Oshakati or any other place (Marten, 2004).

A third point was gleaned through studying the culture and the western idea of the hostel system. Being nomadic the children would require a place to stay. It is customary in the Ovahimba culture for parents to give a child to another family member who is in need of the child. This child will be cared for by the new mother and be seen as her son or daughter. Parents will not give the child to anyone. They have to know to whom they will give the child. They need to know if there would be food security and if other needs will be provided for. The school system would need to prove trustworthy. Parents were hesitant to send their children to the hostel because they did not know what to expect.

With so many youth being trained to live in a technological society and therefore flooding into the cities, formal work opportunities are scarce. Yet, a number do not have the desire to continue farming, as they do not like the farming lifestyle. For example, a young professional man works and lives in town but also owns animals. He must hire someone to care for his animals on a daily basis. Further, this young man has built

himself a stick house at the family homestead where he has installed a gas fridge and a stove, with a battery operated music system. In doing this he wants the people to know that he is different from those who live in the homestead all year round. This is generally how the people respond to life. It is important for people to know who has riches and who does not have riches.

Education has made some people think themselves superior to other family members. Having a job gives them an income with the ability to hire individuals to care for their animals. Besides inheriting animals from their uncles they also have the finances to live differently. Many therefore live in town and have a farm<sup>33</sup> with hirelings caring for the animals. There are those who have jobs in town but who do not have their families staying with them in town. These are generally unskilled workers. They do not earn enough to sustain a family in town but they want the cash and the animals so their wives are left at the homestead to manage the farm with the hirelings while the father goes home weekends to check on the family business.

It would appear that more and more youth are not returning home once they have completed their schooling (whether they pass or fail). Living in the city has taken precedence. This could be attributed to the fact that they are being educated for a different environment. A study conducted by Frayne (2005:51-67) among the Ovambo on the food security in the city of Windhoek revealed that in the case of the unemployed or unskilled workers, residence in the city rely heavily on food being supplied from the family farm to sustain the city dwellers. All urban centers have those who depend on the rural supply of food. Without this rural supply many would go hungry and could ill afford to live in the urban center. Frayne's study demonstrates that rural households do produce surpluses of food, and that these surpluses are in turn transferred to urban households in Windhoek. This emphasizes the interdependence between rural and urban households in Namibia. This reciprocity has allowed a number of youth<sup>34</sup> the

---

<sup>33</sup> In the Ovahimba environment a farm merely means that one has a homestead and land to which one can take animals for pasture and water. A farm does not refer to a fenced in area of land.

<sup>34</sup> In Namibia schools are scattered around the vast countryside. However, high schools can only be found in urban centers

opportunity to remain in the urban areas to assist the family in their time of need. Here the roles are changing, as parents are also now becoming more dependent upon their children. In the case of Opuwo, children are looking after the family house whereas previously it would be unoccupied until such time that someone in the family needed the house. Having a literate child in town affords one the opportunity to be assisted in time of need (ibid.).

#### **3.5.4. New religions**

Education changes the mindset of people. Religion however, has a greater impact as it changes beliefs and the way one views the world. It has been customary for the Ovahimba to merely extend their religious repertoire by adding the new Christian forms to their lifestyle. However, in recent times with the coming of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Evangelical Churches this has been challenged. Having a veneer of Christianity is no longer tolerated. This has impacted many lives (De Villiers, 2005).

Although Christianity has been the only new religion in the area so far, it is not impossible for other religions to enter the area especially with a new-tarred road coming to the area and eventually Opuwo becoming the primary town en route to the coast and the new harbor at Cape Friar.<sup>35</sup>

The biggest role impacted by this is the inheritance of the sacred shrine (*okuruwo*). One young evangelical Pastor shared that he owns the family sacred shrine. His father died while he was a toddler and up to this time the sacred shrine is with an uncle but it really belongs to him. He is now of the age where he can inherit the *okuruwo*. Not taking the sacred shrine suggests one does not care about the family and their needs. Having the sacred shrine gives one the spiritual responsibility in the family. The sacred shrine symbolizes one's communication with the dead fathers and one's reliance upon them in this life (Thom, 2005 and Matundu, 2005).

---

<sup>35</sup> The Namibian government envisages building a road from Opuwo to Cape Friar to establish the harbor at Cape Friar as the primary harbor for land locked southern African states.

Besides the big challenge to this young Pastor, ordinary Christians are rejecting the sacred shrine and in so doing are rejecting the clan spiritual leadership. It is not only a rejection of the traditional spiritual leadership it is a rejection of the ancestors as being involved in one's life. It is a denial of their existence.

### **3.6. CONCLUSION**

Most cultures have unanswered questions. This chapter describes briefly who the Ovahimba are and how they relate to God. A cultural hole that they have is experiencing God in their daily lives. God although perceived as the Creator is not involved in their daily experience as He is an unknown. They therefore request their living dead to intercede on their behalf because they do not want to experience the wrath of God. Having this knowledge about the Ovahimba it is important now to see how the Church has functioned in this community over the past fifty years.

## Chapter Four

### EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN KAOKOLAND

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter two laid the foundation about mission and how the African perceives mission. The third chapter focused specifically on understanding the Ovahimba culture. This chapter discusses what the working of the Christian church in the former Kaokoland and how it is making inroads among the Ovahimba people. A general overview of the history of Christianity in Kaokoland will be provided. Then specific challenges mentioned by the interviewees will be discussed. Finally, the work among the youth and challenges facing the churches in retaining these youth will be examined.

#### **4.2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN KAOKOLAND**

Historically the inhabitants of Kaokoland were exposed to Christianity in the late 19th century. The Dorsland Trekkers stayed for a while (16 months) at Kaoko-Otavi about 40km west of Opuwo<sup>36</sup>. Back then Otjitoporo (as Opuwo was known then) was not a town or a major centre. Kaoko-Otavi was then and still is today a place where one can find a good source of perennial water. However, there is no record of these trekkers doing much evangelism. Accompanying the Trekkers were Zulu families. These Christianized Zulus trekked into Angola with their masters and returned and settled at Ehomba, Kaokoland. There they had their own worship services. Yet they did not actively evangelize in the area (cf. Buys and Nambala, 2003:76, 100).

A Herero man Vita Thom trekked into Angola as a hunter. He grew up at Otjimbingwe, the heart of Christian mission in the central region of Namibia. He arrived in Kaokoland

---

<sup>36</sup> Opuwo is the Regional capital for the Kunene Region, Namibia.

in 1916 with some returning residents (Venter, 1983:51). Vita Thom was a man of war and blood. However, he had some knowledge of the gospel and Christian beliefs with his family in Kaokoland. But it was just knowledge as he had no conversion experience and still followed the traditional religious practices of ancestral worship and the sacred shrine. He did however impress upon his clan the need to coexist with Christianity. Many of the first Christians in the area were of the Ovarandamuranda group of Herero. These descendants of chief Thom were familiar with Christianity. Chief JK Thom (the son of chief Vita Thom, 2005) states: "We were always Christian. Our father taught us to be Christian and we know that Christianity has helped us through the years."

There have been two distinct missionary evangelistic movements in Kaokoland. Both had the goal of introducing Christianity to the Ovahimba people. The first was a local initiative by the Oruuano or Protestant Unity Church and the second by foreign missionaries.

The first (foreign) missionary family arrived in the former Kaokoland; today it is referred to as the north Kunene Region, in 1955. About three years earlier a local prophet from the Oruuano Church arrived in Kaokoland. This prophet received a vision to bring the Christian message to his Ovahimba family in Kaokoland. The growth of the Christian church among the Ovahimba of north Kunene Region as presented by the foreign missionary was slow. For the Oruuano Church the growth was exponential. People came to the prophet for healing and restoration. The prophet used dreams and visions with a dose of Christian prayer and ceremony (Buys and Nambala, 2003:100, 186; Kuroro, 2002).

It can be construed that one of the key reasons for such growth is that the prophet Kanambunga was accepted and listened to because the people "knew" him. Although they never met prophet Kanambunga prior to his arrival they knew him through his *eanda* (matrilineage) and *oruzo* (patrilineage).<sup>37</sup> A common ancestral lineage, his *eanda*, gave the prophet credibility to influence the people. The foreign missionary did not have this

---

<sup>37</sup> Knowing one's *oruzo* and/or *eanda* defines the kind of person one is and how one is to relate to others.

credibility. The foreign missionary was exactly that, a foreigner. He knew very little about the people. The people had no clue where he came from which caused a great distrust of his motives.

This gives rise to a second deduction; the prophet was successful because he understood the people. He met the people on their spiritual grounds in a context they understood. Although the Himba lifestyle is closely connected to their religious beliefs it is during times of sickness that spiritual assistance is sort. Prophet Kanambunga presented his message through his acts and rituals. The message was presented as a message of restoration and reconciliation with God. Thus he provided physical and spiritual healing to the people. The foreign missionary presentation of the gospel was centered on preaching which was a foreign concept to the Ovahimba (Ngambwe, 2005). The sermon was a lecture that had no practical application to their lives. There are numerous differences between the western missionary and the Ovahimba. Firstly, the Ovahimba worldview differed dramatically from that of the foreigners. Then the western missionary thinks from cause to effect while the oral Ovahimba have a different logic. Their lifestyles were worlds apart. The Ovahimba didn't have a clue how the missionary fitted into their environment. As a religious or spiritual leader, he didn't fit into the role they had of spiritual leaders.

The prophet did not demand a weekly church service attendance. This held a major difference to the foreign approach. It implied a respect of the lifestyle of the nomadic lifestyle. Phillips (2003:47) highlights that a sedentary lifestyle is a major threat to nomads becoming Christian. Accepting the lifestyle of the Ovahimba suggested that the prophet did not consider the weekly church attendance as vital to the people choosing to become Christian. Christianity was centered in the process of healing not in the weekly church attendance or the creation of local churches. Today people still flock to Ekoto, the place of the prophet where they can receive healing (Katundu, 1997).

Hospitality among the Ovahimba is a core value. So they welcomed the strangers and created a role for them in their society. The missionaries came with material gifts. Thus

the missionaries were given the role of benefactor. Their lifestyle attested to the fact that they had many material possessions and freely would share them to help others. These first missionaries to the Ovahimba set the stage for the coming decades. The foreign missionary is perceived as one who has great possessions. And is expected to share this with others. Prophet Kanambunga was accepted as a great spiritual leader and though dead still viewed as their spiritual father (Katundu, 1997 and Kanambunga, 2005).

The foreign missionary paternal mindset, assumed that being black implied one was inferior. Seeing the Ovahimba having no "clothes" confirmed the missionaries thinking that the black people were inferior. Having never gone to school or not allowing their children the "privilege" of an education established that the people were uncultured. In the Ovahimba mind the white man's wealth confirmed he should receive a position of high status. However, having two different worldviews these were perceived differently. This also created a barrier to effective evangelism (Van der Walt, 2003:24, 25 and Buys and Nambala, 2003:301, 302).

Western philosophy separates the sacred and the secular. When the missionaries arrived in Kaokoland they were so engrained in this philosophical thought that they did not understand the idea of religion being tied to culture. The dichotomy introduced by Christianity was not well received. Isolating the sacred in the Ovahimba lifestyle would totally destroy their foundation. Yet it is the dichotomy that allows the Ovahimba to assimilate the new spiritual dynamics. It is this battle over sacred and secular that continues to rage.

Christian evangelism is based on Jesus being "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6). Jesus is the mediator between God and man. The Ovahimba believe that their ancestors are the mediator between God and the family. An ancestor is restricted to the clan. With the belief that Christianity is not a religion but the culture of the white man, Jesus is therefore the ancestor of the white man. Many accepted Christianity as an appendage. They pray, sometimes go to church and sing Christian hymns but have not fully accepted Christianity as belonging to them. It is still seen as foreign. The growth of Christianity

was propagated through the school system. Thus reinforcing its foreignness. Later local evangelists were trained. Even then the church still remained foreign, as it was a replica of the church in South Africa, that is, of another culture (Ngambwe, 2005 and Matundu, 2005).

Over time other churches entered Kaokoland. The biggest people group in Namibia is the Owambo. These also belong to the biggest church in Namibia, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia. Although Lutheranism among the Owambo started later it also originated from a different mission organization. The Finnish Mission Society established the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia. Their primary role through the years has been to introduce the gospel and to establish educational facilities as well as medical clinics to assist the people (Peltola, 2002:46; Buys and Nambala, 2003:26).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia followed its members to the northern Kunene Region. Since it is strong amongst the Ovathemba and the Owambo the worship service of this church is primarily in Oshivambo, which many Ovathemba understand because they live in close proximity. The Lutheran Church is still primarily a foreign church in the sense that the church continues to embrace the program of Europe in establishing its services. Even the American missionaries who come to assist feel at home in the church service. Although the language is unfamiliar they can follow as the order and rituals are the same (Toenjjes, 2001).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church In The Republic Of Namibia, the former Rhenish Mission, came to Kaokoland in the early 1980s. Rev. Tjakuapi, who is presently resident in Opuwo was the moderator of Otjiwarongo at the time and spearheaded the entrance of this denomination into Koakoland. The method of entry was using mature ministers of the gospel and leaders of the church. Their first trip into Kaokoland was to observe - they came on a fact-finding mission. The envoys then made recommendations to the church. One of the recommendations was for the Bishop and other leaders to personally see the challenges. This recommendation implied the church leaders come and ask permission of the local leaders. When they arrived at Opuwo, chief Mumbuu (chief of Opuwo)

requested time to consider the request. On their return they were informed that another church claiming to be Lutheran also requested land and permission to do missionary work. The chief then suggested they be given the opportunity to discuss with Evangelical Lutheran Church In Namibia how they would proceed. In the end the two Lutheran churches remained independent of each other and received permission to each establish a church in Opuwo (Tjakuapi, 2005).

These older churches in Namibia were not very successful in gaining Himba converts. Evangelical Lutheran Church In Namibia did very little work among non-Oshivambo speakers. Evangelical Lutheran Church In The Republic Of Namibia worked among the people they knew, the Herero people. The Dutch Reform Church did an extensive work amongst the Ovahimba and Ovathemba yet with few converts. The younger (newer) churches have not taken root either.

These older churches have older individuals coming into the area who can help lead the church. The newer mainly Pentecostal churches are primarily disconnected from each other although they may have similar theologies. It would appear that churches would rather be formed as opposed to connecting with existing churches. For example, the Followers of Jesus Christ Church was established in Opuwo in 2005. Previously, members of this church were connected to other Pentecostal churches.

The newer Charismatic and Pentecostal churches attract (primarily) youth to their worship services. Here the healing ministry combined with teaching has attracted the younger generation. The appeal of an entertaining service is appealing. However, the entertainment is not sufficient. As the pastors report that these youth stay for three or four years and then disappear (De Villiers, 2005; Muharukua, D., 2005). It could be because these churches imitate American worship styles, making it more appealing to youth who idolize American pop culture.

For example, the Nazarene Church reports more than 90% of their membership are under 30 years of age. The Pastor at Opuwo and Okanguati are 30 something while the others

are under 30. All their lay pastors are 20 something as well (Hipakua, 2005). The Opuwo Christian Community Church also reported a high youth membership with their associate pastor being a 20 something. Many of their evangelist/missionaries are young unemployed out of school youth (De Villiers, 2005). Mission Work for Jesus Christ also has a youthful assistant pastor of 20 something. The membership of the Apostolic Church in Namibia at Opuwo is primarily youth (Kataruya, 2005). It would seem that this is the trend for much of the church in this area. It must be highlighted that these churches are new to the area. Mission Work for Jesus Christ started in the early 1990s. The Opuwo Christian Community Church metamorphosed slowly in the 1990s although the leader states he has no desire to start a new denomination. The Apostolic Church and Nazarene Churches are also new to the area. Both only came at the turn of the century.

The Nazarene Church is a relatively new church in Namibia (1973). It was officially established in 1999 in the Kunene Region. Yet in this time it has established a dynamic and aggressive evangelistic program. The strategy is very simple. The church is propagated and developed through local members. The church provides training, materials, finances and so forth but the labor is from the grassroots. Through this program and continuous training (and in-service training) and dialogue with a mission director the church is growing. Here again it is a young church that attracts young people. The average age of the members is estimated at about 22 years of age. Being so young it is difficult to evaluate the success in retaining her membership (Hipakua, 2005, Buys and Nambala, 2003:156).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is also new in the Region. However, being the first church to enter the Caprivi Region in 1921 they have a strong following among the people there (Buys and Nambala, 2003:130). This Caprivian group forms the largest people group in that church in Namibia. Again the church merely transplanted her self into the African situation. Looking back it would appear there was little attempt to try to make the message and the practice of the religion part of the people. In Kaokoland the Seventh-day Adventist Church was challenged in its missionary approach as it found older Angolan and Caprivian Seventh-day Adventist church members in the area. These

were opposed to new approaches to conducting the church program. Though not addressing the needs of the people, these members believed the rituals to be vital for acceptance with God. The leadership found it necessary to balance Seventh-day Adventist Church tradition with new contextualized approaches.

### **4.3. CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY CHURCH LEADERS**

A wide range of church leaders was consulted in this study. These are leaders from diverse Christian persuasions. Leaders and members from the following church groups or denominations were interviewed; Apostolic Church in Namibia, Dutch Reformed Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, Followers of Jesus Christ, the Church of the Nazarene (Nazarene church), Opuwo Christian Community Church, Oruuano Church, Seventh-day Adventist Church and Uniting Reformed Church.

#### **4.3.1. Witchcraft**

Every interviewee highlighted the great challenge of witchcraft. Yet it is a challenge to which many do not have answers. Reverend Paulus Kanambunga (2005) of the Oruuano Church made a startling statement when he said: "With time the people will change. For now it is important to teach the people and let them make their own changes." In other words he feels the change should be evolutionary and not revolutionary. Reverend Tjakuapi (2005) recognised the problem in his statement; "Our people are still bound to witchcraft. They have no idea how to evade witchcraft." Others perceive this as a power struggle between God and the devil. As Pastor De Villiers (2005) commented, "We need power evangelism to deal with many issues here in Kaokoland."

Witchcraft in the Ovahimba understanding of the word deals with killing people. One bewitches another person because one is jealous and therefore asks for the person to be killed. One can also bewitch so one can inherit another persons property. It is overwhelmingly clear that this is not a Christian practice. The challenge facing the Christian church in Namibia is to address worldview issues among its members. Unless

these worldview issues are dealt with, the religion will remain a form that seeks to keep God and the ancestors happy. Juggling between the two will continue. Pastor De Villiers (2005) reported that a Himba man mentioned: "I need the cross on the grave to ensure that I am covered on all sides."

#### **4.3.2. Rituals**

Religion among the Ovaherero is primarily about form or ritual. Having form has great significance to the Ovaherero that not doing the form is tantamount to being cursed. Bringing a curse upon a family is perceived as disobeying the rules set by the ancestors and not by *Ndjambi*. On Sundays, the day of worship for some Christians, where possible it is encouraged to attend the Sunday service. Conducting the Christian form is essential in receiving a Christian blessing. Practising forms becomes ritualistic. In the Ovaherero tradition one does not worship or speak to God regularly. One primarily speaks to the ancestors in times of need, that is, in crisis situations. This method of approaching God has taken root among Ovaherero Christians. One attends church to receive blessings from God. A number of ministers reported that their congregants are not regular in attending church worship services. This suggests that each week one can preach to different audiences. It is the role of the priest or minister to speak to God on behalf of the people and he must help them to be restored. In the Oruano Church the clergy can also recommend that the member see the prophet who will use traditional healing methods and prayer to help the individual. Bewitching is something the church does not deal with. For such a process requires specialized assistance from a witchdoctor. This understanding is detrimental to the Christian understanding of spiritual war (Ephesians 6:12ff). It suggests that the Christian God (mediator) is incapable of dealing with these issues, as the mediator is not related to the family – this confirms the thinking of the people that Christianity is exclusive to white people and is not big enough to deal with such issues (Tjakuapi, 2005).

The above discussion is closely linked to the Ovahimba worldview of appeasement.

### 4.3.3. Sacred Shrine

The symbol of ancestor veneration among the Ovahimba is the *okuruwo*. For many Christians the law (ten commandments) states that one cannot worship idols, this includes ancestor veneration. Based upon this law they suggest the *okuruwo* should not be part of the Christian religion (Mukungu, 2003). Reverend Tjakuapi (2005) cautioned; "We need to be careful to understand the people and the culture and not repeat the [foreign] missionaries mentality of [perceiving] everything as heathen."

The *okuruwo* is used for every transitional phase of life. The *okuruwo* is the "hospital" and the "church" of the people. Yet for some Christian groups its symbolism is contrary to what the church teaches. A definite dialogue in understanding these deep issues is required. However, this dialogue cannot happen in a vacuum. It requires the Bible as the microscope (Muhenye, 1995).

### 4.3.4. Nurturing nomads

A Pentecostal Church in Opuwo, Mission Work for Jesus Christ, places a great emphasis on discipleship and teaching of the word of God. This is probably attributed to the Pastor coming from the Oruano Church and wanting to ensure that his members are not deceived as he was when he first became a Christian (Muharukua, D., 2005). Many of the Ovahimba are "blind to letters". Nurturing nomadic people who are "blind to letters" is a great challenge to many. The leader of the Followers of Jesus Christ Church suggested the church establish literacy classes (Kulunga, 2005).

For people "blind to letters" Mans (2004:2) argues that music plays an important role in "imparting practical skills and specialised knowledge that could facilitate survival." Professor Kavari (2000:111) states that in Kaokoland knowledge "is stored in orature." He further explains that orature is like a library for literate communities. He says, "[the] Ovaherero<sup>38</sup> regard prose, especially folktales, as belonging to childlore. But poetry is

---

<sup>38</sup> The Ovahimba are regarded as a sub-group of the Ovaherero.

highly valued... It [poetry] contains a great deal of history and culture, and deals with traditionally significant persons and events.” The different churches therefore need to experiment with different media to help nurture the scattered flock.

Many of the interviewees emphasized the need for nurturing the scattered flock. Pastor Tjiimbi (2005) said; "Without nurturing the people it is easy for them to backslide." Reverend Mukungu (2003) said; "In the village there are many temptations and if they [the converts] are not cared for by the church it will be difficult for them to remain Christian."

#### **4.3.5. Poverty alleviation**

A number of interviewees expressed the need for the Church to get involved in the community on a more regular basis. Reverend Matundu (2005) of the Uniting Reformed Church in particular was concerned that the Christian community was loosing its grip on the community and needed to find ways to be more involved in the community as in the past.

Reverends Mukungu (2005) and Tjakuapi (2005) suggested that the Church do more development type projects so the community can see the Church is concerned not only about the spirituality but also about the physical needs of the people.

Although identified as a challenge to the Christian church in Opuwo it was also highlighted that the Church itself was also poor and in financial dire straits. For example, the Uniting Reformed Church and the Mission Work of Jesus Christ Pastors all have to work outside of the Church in order to support their families. Their respective churches do not have the finances to support them. This hampers their ability to concentrate on evangelism, caring for the flock and conducting community projects (Kulunga, 2005; Matundu, 2005 and Muharukua, D., 2005).

For example, the majority of church buildings were constructed through outside funding. That is, the local people did not make a major contribution to the construction of the building. Where locals have made major contributions they have used local materials to construct their places of worship. In these cases they used wood and clay. These are primarily the African Independent Churches. In October 2005 the Apostolic Church in Namibia opened their brick house of worship. The finances for the construction were from an outside source (Immanuel, 2004).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church places a high emphasis on tithing and freewill offerings yet the financial support of the members is very poor. There are other churches that also stress the need for tithing. In the local Seventh-day Adventist group the average giving each week amounts to a meagre N\$15.00. This averages to about 80<sup>C</sup> per capita. A teacher generally returns the tithe and those employed as missionaries for the Church. Those who are eking out a living on the street market or have gardens and animals give occasionally. This suggests that giving is not a priority in this community. However, with the high percentage of youth in the different congregations it is understandable that income is not very high.

To illustrate the lack of giving in this community an example can be cited. For six months in 2005 the town of Opuwo was without water. Water was given irregularly as the town council had not paid the bulk water supplier. The Opuwo Pastor's Forum in partnership with Adventist Development Relief Agency and the British High Commission put up a 10 000-liter water tank in each of the settlements. It was agreed that each community would provide the labor and foundation. Only two communities rallied to contribute financially to help themselves. The rest wanted the Opuwo Pastor's Forum to provide the money for every detail of the project except labor.

The Christian church is perceived as a leech as it does not contribute to the economy of the town. Many church leaders expressed the churches non-involvement in the community as a weakness that needs to be rectified. As a service institution it becomes imperative that the church of God partner with other entities, business, parastatals, non-

governmental organizations and other institutions to work for the community. The church is at the grassroots level and is best informed of what the needs of the community are. Although financially poor it has human resources to facilitate good community projects.

#### **4.4. YOUTH CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY CHURCH LEADERS**

##### **4.4.1. Modernity**

"What's new?" In the opinion of youth workers in the Opuwo area this is the watchword of many youth. One interviewee commented that youth like to experience new things. Keeping current and contemporary has become a challenge to many churches, as they do not have the facilities, skill or finance to keep updating their styles. By this they do not suggest that the youth demand the latest in technology, praise service and such like. In this opinion they are suggesting the youth do not enjoy repeating the same thing year in and year out. They like a challenge. They want to learn new things. The challenge here is therefore centered on the church providing new and opportune ways of applying Christian action so the youth have new experiences (Katarayu 2005).

The youth also desire modern forms of worship. This challenge is being experienced at the Dutch Reformed Church, Uniting Reformed Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Kenovandu Hepute, 2005 and Matundu, 2005). For three years the leadership at the Seventh-day Adventist Church has experimented with diverse forms of worship. It is always the more established members of the church who feel an injustice has been done. One long-standing member yet irregular in attendance asked the Pastor; "Where have you seen a cross in another Sabbath [Seventh-day Adventist] church in Namibia?" This was in response to a cross that was placed in the church for the communion sacrament. Those who attend church regularly have adapted to the "changes" that were introduced. Those who attend irregularly find the service too different, as they are not familiar with the style of the service. When the President of the church in Namibia, visited in 2005 he commented; "You cannot allow people to extend the time limit..." He wanted the service

to be time bound. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century worship is about God not following a prescribed form.

#### **4.4.2. Immorality**

By the time children reach their teen years traditionally they are expected to experiment with sex in some form. Young boys are taken by their female cousins and experiment sexually with them. When a girl reaches puberty she is taken by older male cousins and they have sexual games that they play. These games help the girls to become sexually mature. It was reported that a Christian leader received his greatest entertainment while in his late teens (as a non-Christian) was going to find a woman for the night. He especially enjoyed the adrenalin of having sexual relations with a married woman. Sneaking into her house during the night and then sneaking out before dawn (Hepute, Mukungu and Ujaha, 2005).

This being the general practice in society an immense pressure is placed upon Christian youth to do the same or it scares off potential youth (ibid.; Muharukua, D., 2005). In giving a hypothetical situation at a youth meeting one day, the researcher asked the question how they would respond. Each of the young men present concluded that they would not hesitate to enjoy a sexual relation if the opportunity arose. The girls on the other hand were more reluctant and only two of the six said they would not engage in such an activity. Two girls without a doubt said they would engage in a sexual relationship if the opportunity arose. The other two said if they feel a connection with the person they would engage in sexual relations. The last third said they would not be enticed into fornication. This discussion suggests that the pressure does not need to be strong, if the opportunity is there nothing prevents them from participating.

In identifying immorality as a challenge Christians have indeed a tremendous work. The challenge now is to move beyond merely identifying the challenge and asking, "How can we equip Christian youth to be celibate until marriage?" Indeed it is an individual choice.

It is however, the role of the church to prepare the teenagers to be responsible sexual beings.

#### **4.4.3. Modern entertainment**

One interviewee (Katarayu, 2005) stated; "The youth are being educated in the things of the world." Indeed with the growth of Opuwo becoming exponential, new and challenging social dilemmas face the community. Gambling has become rampant. One young lady in pursuit of millions spent every cent of her earnings at the gambling house and then borrowed money supposedly for food but it went into the machines.

Video outlets have become a good business in Opuwo. People are watching movies especially violent and promiscuous movies.<sup>39</sup> This form of entertainment distorts the mind and the self-image of the individuals watching.

Beer halls are in abundance in Opuwo. There are more beer halls than any other business and it is growing. School going youth frequent these establishments. Legally no person less than eighteen can purchase alcohol. This however, does not deter shop owners in Opuwo. The television series of the 1980s "Cheers" about a group of friends who frequented a bar in Boston had the theme song; "Where everybody knows your name." Indeed friends are made easily around a bottle. How can the Christian community help the youth in this situation?

#### **4.4.4. Economic independence**

Marriageable age among Ovahimba men is around 30 years. With modern western education youth are economically independent of their parents at an earlier age. The marriageable age is moving down. A contributing factor is the Christian belief in celibacy before marriage. With the ability to work for government institutions or private companies youth are no longer dependent upon their parents to assist them in getting

---

<sup>39</sup> In visiting the video store these are the only kinds of movies on offer.

married. Besides inheriting animals from their uncles they now have the ability to purchase animals with the money they earn. Many youth can therefore be seen as rich as they have both animals and other material possessions (Herunga, 2005; Muharukua, D., 2005).

In a research study conducted in Windhoek (the Namibian capital) and the four northern Regions of Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, and Oshikoto, it was established that many families who live in the city are dependent upon food production in these northern Regions. It was established that without the input from these areas many would starve in the city. Thus the migrants to the city are very dependent upon the family supply of food. Although no study was done in the Kunene Region in this regard one can transfer these findings to the Opuwo town and her people. Without the food supply from the family farm many would not do well in town. What the researcher does not highlight in the study is that food is different in the city and in the rural areas. Besides being financially convenient to eat the food from home it is also familiar and tastier. Although youth are economically independent their food security is still dependent upon their rural home (Frayne, 2005:51-67).

#### **4.4.5. Modern education**

For many youth farming is no longer attractive.<sup>40</sup> The farming lifestyle is too hard and too "dirty". Youth have tasted an easy life with everything paid for them and they would like to continue the lifestyle. A common observation by foreign workers entering the Ovahimba culture is; "these people are lazy!" One young Peace Corps volunteer was so indignant he commented: "I will be so happy to finally work with people who are goal oriented again." (That is, when he arrives back home in the USA.) When one uses one's ethnocentric eyes it is easy to believe such an observation. However, if one attempt's to understand the people one will notice they are very hardworking people. As Rev. Tjakuapi observes: "If we are so lazy how can we produce so many animals and such big

---

<sup>40</sup> Such a statement was made at the first Tuhungeleni Conference (a CCN initiative) in Windhoek in October 2005 during a break out meeting on economics. The President of the Farmer's Union of Namibia

gardens. If you place one of these people [foreigners] in the garden they can hardly work for one hour. So who is the lazy one?" The Ovahimba are managers. They do not work easily for someone else. In saying this it is therefore important to realize the challenge associated with education. Youth receive an education but do not want to work on the farm nor do they have a desire to work for other people yet they desire to have money. In taking a job they do the minimum in order to receive the wages. It is this attitude of doing the least that the church needs to address. The wise king said; "whatever task lies to your hand, do it with all your might (Ecclesiastes 9:10)."

Rev. Matundu (2005) of the Uniting Reformed Church mentioned another educational challenge, "Education broadens people's thinking, and youth need to learn how the Christian worldview fits into what they are being taught." This was echoed by Mr. Herunga (2005) a Christian teacher at the junior secondary school in Opuwo. What these gentlemen are suggesting is that the church assist the youth in understanding the Christian worldview so when challenges come to their belief system they are not baffled by new ways of thinking. They should learn to apply their Christian beliefs to the new information they are receiving while at tertiary institutions and so forth.

#### **4.4.6. Family pressures/responsibilities**

When youth become Christian they have tremendous pressure from their families (Matundu, 2005). Some are even persecuted or told to leave home (Kuroro, 2002).<sup>41</sup> The support they receive from the church is very important. This pressure is always worse when it comes to marriage. Respect plays such an important role in this society it is important for youth to have their parents involved in the marriage negotiations. One couple in the Seventh-day Adventist church waited three years for permission to get married in church because they refused to marry at the *okuruwo*. Many others got married in the Church but only got married ten years later in the traditional way. Parents do not accept the marriage unless the couple is married traditionally (Herunga, 2005).

---

made the statement.

<sup>41</sup> Peter himself was asked not to return home initially but was eventually allowed back.

There are other challenges that the family puts on the young people and it requires steps from the church to give the youth guidance and counsel. It is important to remember that each case will need to be taken on its own merit. However, unless the church addresses some of these issues, it will continue to remain major obstacles for many youth and cause many to backslide.

#### **4.4.7. Alcohol and Drugs**

Although part of the modern entertainment it is important to highlight alcohol as a separate challenge. Drugs challenge every society. Youth here are no different. Alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, snuff and so forth are all mind-altering substances that are addictive. The church has an important role to play in helping the community in this area (Kuroro, 2002). These drugs need to be seen for what they are and Christians should be taught the dangers thereof. Besides the physical dangers youth also need to be educated about the social evils resulting from using drugs (Kulunga, 2005).

#### **4.4.8. Westernisation**

Buyis and Nambala (2003:34) highlight that people became Christian because of what they could get from the missionary. Russell (1966:117) makes a similar observation in a study of the impact of Christianity in northern Uganda. He observes, "The local population was primarily interested in obtaining a share in western civilization and all its benefits." The youth of northern Kunene Region are therefore, not the first to want to experience a new culture and the benefits thereof. Many youth become Christian believing they will be western and not Himba. Western meaning they will become rich and have many of the modern material things. This misconception needs addressing (Ndjamba, 2004).

Combined with this misconception is the desire of youth to want to give up the old way of life. They want to have the Bible so they can surrender their familial responsibilities

(Tjambiru, 2003). This danger needs immediate correction or the community will have a distorted picture of Christianity.

In 1995 at least two young men approached the researcher requesting baptism. Upon further enquiry they divulged that they wanted to be baptized so they could let their secondary wives return to their parents. Becoming Christian would legitimise their divorce. The reason they stated was that their wives were fighting.

Another young man explained in 2001 that becoming a Christian would enable him to give his inheritance to his wife and children and not his sisters children. He felt strongly then that only his children are to inherit from him. Today he suggests that his sisters' children can inherit the small things but his children should inherit the cattle and his money in the bank.

#### **4.4.9. Imitators of others**

It was mentioned by a number of interviewees that youth often become Christian because of their peers. Although this is positive peer pressure it is important that the Christian leaders recognize this and identify and help the youth who fall into this category. Pastor Hipakua (2005) of the Nazarene Church reported that he tries to befriend those whom he notices have joined because of peer influence. It is also common that sometimes individuals want to imitate a Pastor. When the Pastor leaves the young person becomes discouraged. This needs to be guarded against and the youth challenged to be free thinkers who are not dependent on any one person (Muharukua, D., 2005).

#### **4.4.10. Leaving the safety of the home church**

The researcher had the privilege of interviewing one who left the area in 1996. Although it was a definite concern from the Pastors that youth leave the area and leave the family of God (this was especially highlighted by Ps. Daniel Muharukua). Ishmael Mbinge (2005) is an example that it is not necessarily true. However, it is important to look at the

bigger picture. In viewing the bigger picture one has to admit that there are more who leave the family of God than there are those who remain Christian. It is therefore an imperative to look into how this can be corrected (Muharukua, D., 2005).

#### **4.4.11. Bible knowledge**

The need to ensure that youth are equipped biblically was highlighted extensively. Here the interviewees are suggesting that the youth learn to be responsible in their choices. Basically what the interviewees are saying is that the youth need to learn to be new people in their society. This is very important as it means to be radically different. Besides biblical knowledge youth will need support and encouragement from the church family to remain faithful (Tjiimbi, 2005).

#### **4.4.12. Unemployment**

Youth often do not desire to return to farming or help on their parent's farm. Many out of school youth do not have the results to further their education. Rev. Matundu (2005) who is also the Director for youth development for the government in the Opuwo district says the Christian community needs to get more involved in employment opportunities for youth. Rev. Mukungu (2005) says; "One needs a full stomach to be happy." What he is suggesting is that the people need employment so they can survive. Without employment it is hard for them to provide for their families.

### **4.5. THE YOUTH AND CHRISTIANITY**

In the previous section the challenges that face church leaders were discussed. This section deals with the endeavours of the Christian community to introduce the youth to Christ and the challenges in this area.

#### **4.5.1. Church and school**

Education and the church in north Kunene Region (the former Kaokoland) are inseparable. While the government has declared itself to be secular, that is, it does not wish to be favoring any one particular religion, the practice is not such. The history of this country is firmly bound to the work of the Christian church.

At school whether in the most remote village or in the town of Opuwo, prayer, Christian singing and Bible study are routine practices. At all the schools the Christian youth get together to form Scripture Union Clubs. At the junior schools, teachers help to organize the programs. At the High Schools, the students run their own programs. The aim is to encourage each other as Christians and to help build each other (Mukungu, 2005).

Churches are expected to be involved in the schools. As a Christian worker in this community it is expected of the researcher that every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning, he visits Kameru Senior Primary School assembly and opens the school day with a prayer and devotional. Initially the task was divided among diverse denominations but with time (over the years) it has landed on the shoulders of one denomination. These few moments a week has afforded the researcher an opportunity to present the gospel in little five-minute nuggets. The learners love the experience and the teachers have learnt to understand a different side of Christianity (Mumbuu, 2004).

#### **4.5.2. Church is for the Youth**

The Ovahimba have a saying: "Teach my children about God..." This suggests that as adults it is hard to change. (Can a leopard change his spots?) As the children are not steeped in tradition it is easier for them to change. As children they are not active participants in the traditional religion and are therefore isolated spiritually. Based upon this understanding Christian evangelism has been aimed at the youth in society. The majority attendees on Saturday or Sunday are children and youth. The Nazarene Church is run by youth and 90% of their members are under 30 years of age (Hipakua, 2005).

The Pentecostal church (Mission Work of Jesus Christ and the Pentecostal Apostolic Church) primarily has youth and children attending the church services. Mission Work for Jesus Christ has more of a balance than most other church groups (Muharukua, D., 2005 and Katarayu, 2005). The older churches (Catholic and Lutheran) are more traditional in their services and attract older people (Tjakuapi, 2005). The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a number of children, fewer youth and more adults as members (Ndjamba, 2004).

In the former Kaokoland the youth are very active in the church program. The assistant pastors at the charismatic churches are all youth and active in evangelism. The Pastor at the Nazerene Church is a young man of just 32 years. All their lay pastors are twenty-something. Youth generally have a high regard for the church and actively participate in the work of the church. The church in the area also seeks to have special programs for their youth. An important part of being a youth in the church is having a youth choir. Youth choirs help to build the youth in the Christian walk. This is however, changing, as youth are demanding programs that address their needs. Youth camps are also high on the agenda for many church groups. These camps are primarily Bible camps that help youth to be more established in the faith (Hipakua, 2005 and Kenovandu Hepute, 2005).

#### **4.5.3. Church as an attraction for a while**

Why are so many youth attracted to the church? It is important to note that traditionally they are left in a spiritual vacuum. In the Ovahimba culture spiritual things are primarily related to being cursed, or when one needs material things. Spirituality is a communal affair with the father as the family or clan representative. The only time a specific individual is required is when the person is sick or cursed and the father is seeking help on his/her behalf. Traditionally therefore the father is the spiritual partner on whom everyone else depends. Christianity gives the youth an opportunity to personally connect spiritually.

The Ovahimba society is a highly materialistic society. One's status is related to one's role in society. Without material possessions one cannot function well or with authority. Thus the youth are not respected nor are they seen as important, except for their ability to work on the farm. Youth in any society are seeking ways to understand themselves, their heritage, their values and so forth. With spirituality reserved for times of distress it is important to note that youth are traditionally disengaged (for the most part) from spiritual activities. Church provides self-esteem and leadership positions (Mukungu, 2003).

Since education came to Kaokoland via the church the two are intimately intertwined. It is most probably based upon this connection that the Christian message and church is perceived to be something for children. As Rev. Ngambwe (2005) said: "We do not have a specific program aimed at the youth yet they are the one's who attend the programs..." A number of the church leaders interviewed shared the concern that the youth once they leave school seem to leave the church. It is at this stage in their development that they are challenged academically and socially. Employment often means they have to be at work and do not have the opportunity to be at church programs as when they were at school. It was highlighted that at this stage in their development marriage takes precedence. Pastor Daniel Muharukua (2005) mentioned that especially the young ladies suffer during this stage, as they cannot go in search of a spouse, as it is culturally inappropriate. However, while they sit in the church their options are limited as the men are either too young or already married.

Thus once youth reach young adulthood they do not have the same affinity to the church. Pressure is commensurate with age. At this age there is pressure on the youth to return to the traditional way of life. It is often said: "A Himba is a Himba."

#### **4.6. CONCLUSION**

The Christian community has been hard at work for five decades. Through the study conducted the researcher has discovered that the church is primarily a young church. Few youth have remained in the church through adulthood. A conclusion can be drawn

that the youth are not transformed by the gospel message or the message was presented in a manner that was irrelevant to the hearer.

The next chapter outlines a relevant method of presenting the gospel that is not western yet is biblical and culturally appropriate.

## Chapter Five

### CONTEXTUALIZATION

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

Thus far the thesis has discovered what mission is in an African context. It defines African mission as bringing hope to a world in despair. In understanding the goal of mission it became imperative to apply that to a specific people. In chapter three a discussion of the Ovahimba culture took place that laid the foundation to do an empirical study on the Christian involvement in the Ovahimba community. The thesis then identified the Ovahimba youth as a people who are unreached by the gospel of Jesus Christ. This chapter will now explore the need to contextualize the gospel for reaching the Ovahimba youth.

#### **5.2. CONTEXTUALIZATION AND INCULTURATION DEFINED**

Contextualization has become an important missiological concept in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is a controversial concept often misused and misunderstood. There are Christians who feel the term does not do justice to the gospel message. Allowing Christians familiarity with the world when God calls His people to be separate and different from the world. An opposite extreme subjects the application of principles of Biblical truth to circumstances. A balance is needed.

Hiebert (1985:186) calls this balance critical contextualization. He states that critical contextualization is “whereby old beliefs and customs are neither rejected nor accepted without examination” by the church community. In doing this Hiebert suggests contextualization needs to be critical (of the local culture) and rooted in biblical authority. Critical contextualization aims to make the gospel relevant to a situation. Using varied ways to share the gospel without losing the essence of the gospel.

Contextualization and inculturation are often perceived as interchangeable concepts that aim to help the local community (western or non-western) to insert new values into their old heritage and worldview (Müller, 1997:198; Moreau, 2000:475).

The concept inculturation was coined by Catholic Missiologists to refer to a process where a people assimilate the traditions of the church and create unique local applications of these traditions (Luzbetak, 1989:81). Contextualization originated among Protestant missiologists about three decades ago. According to Moreau (2000:476) the primary reason why the Protestant Christians avoid using the term inculturation is the Catholic Churches “emphasis on church tradition [being] parallel to the gospel in authority”.

Contextualization has many and diverse ways of being defined. Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:200) define it as, “the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, Word, and will of God in a way that is faithful to God’s revelation... and that it is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts.” Duraisingh (1998:65) states: “The gospel is contextual in that it is inevitably embodied in a particular culture...” Nolan (1988:25-26, original emphasis) suggests contextualization can be viewed in two ways firstly, “It can be understood as taking the *contents* of the gospel from the Bible (and tradition) and giving them a new *shape* in terms of our particular context.” Secondly it is “taking the shape of the gospel from the Bible and tradition in order to discover the *contents* of the gospel in our contextual situation.” He adheres to the latter idea. Moreau (2000:225) suggests the ideal way to define contextualization is by looking at its goal. He suggests the goal of contextualization is “to enable, as far as possible, an understanding of what it means that Jesus Christ, the Word, is authentically experienced in each and every human situation.”

Moreau (2000:475) quotes Arrupe as saying, “Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and

remaking it so as to bring about ‘a new creation.’” Taber (1991:174) suggests inculturation “is based on the analogy of the incarnation: just as the Eternal Son was incarnated, that is became a human being, not in general, but in the specific culture of lower-middle-class Galilean Jewry in the early first century, so the gospel today, and its human messengers, needs to become humanly incarnate in all the specific cultures of the people to whom mission is addressed.”

Hiebert (1985:217) reminds us that we need to continually be aware of the standard of biblical primacy. This thesis is written from a Protestant and Seventh-day Adventist tradition in which the primacy of biblical authority is always held in high regard. Thus the term contextualization, used throughout this thesis, will adhere to Moreau’s (2000:225) definition which states: “to enable, as far as possible, an understanding of what it means that Jesus Christ, the Word, is authentically experienced in each and every human situation.”

### **5.3. ADVANTAGES OF CONTEXTUALIZATION**

Contextualization has diverse forms and various applications. What could possibly be the advantage of such diversity?

#### **5.3.1. Mission as contextualization affirms God’s turning to the world**

Western theology has become the benchmark for doing and understanding theology. In making it the benchmark it has isolated people of other backgrounds. It implied that other traditions or worldviews are illegitimate and have to conform to the western thinking or as the Ovahimba like to say, “*ouhuura*” (we have been colonized). This is essentially what western theology has done. It has colonized the peoples of the world to their way of thinking.

In contextualizing the gospel to a specific context it makes the gospel relevant to the person or people. It is not an attempt to accommodate the gospel to the people. Rather it

is a true incarnation of God coming to His people. In contextualizing the gospel, God comes to the people and establishes Himself among them. He not only contextualizes His theology but He comes and dwells among the people in their situation. Whether that situation is a social need or an ethical need. God is present. With western theology being the benchmark it isolated the people from God. Contextualization suggests that God has come to dwell with His people (Bosch, 1991:426; Matthew 1:23).

### **5.3.2. Contextualization balances orthopraxis with orthodoxy**

In traditional western theology theory and praxis were mutually exclusive. Theory was held as more important than the praxis of the Christian lifestyle. Newbigin (1995:135) argues: “There cannot be a separation between conversion and obedience... The call to conversion is not given in a vacuum. It is in the context of a call to follow Jesus, and what is meant by following Jesus is spelled out in his teaching and example.” Contextualization gives theology a new emphasis. It directs the Christian believer to be more aware of his or her actions to self and others.

Bosch (1991:425) quotes Gutierrez as saying, “Orthopraxis and orthodoxy need one another, and each is adversely affected when sight is lost of the other.” Contextualization moves Christian theology to being more practical and less theoretical yet in tandem.

### **5.3.3. Contextualization deals with worldview issues**

Through the ages, Christianity has responded in three ways when encountering a new culture or a different culture to the missionary. There was a response of isolating the new converts from their old culture or a condemnation of the culture making the converts feel guilty for whom they were. A second response was an unquestioning acceptance of the new culture. These two extreme responses caused much anxiety to all involved as both led to syncretism. Kraft (1996:376) states: “The ‘undirected selection’ of elements from the new way that allows people to draw their own conclusions and attach their own

meanings to the new practices is the road ordinarily focused on by those who talk of syncretism. But overdirection or domination can also lead to syncretism.”

Hiebert (1985:186) suggests that contextualization allows the church or the individual “to deal biblically with all areas of life.” Thus contextualization allows the local Christian community to wrestle with culture and the Bible.

#### **5.3.4. Contextualization is an holistic approach to mission**

Contextualization challenges Christian mission to be involved in the person. Contextualization addresses the whole person and not just his “spiritual” condition. It deals with the person or people’s culture, historical situation, social conditions as well as spirituality (Hiebert, 1985:207). Bosch (1991:431, original emphasis) says it like this; *“The best models of contextual theology succeed in holding together in creative tension theoria, praxis and poiesis – or, if one wishes, faith, hope, and love.”* These deal with the whole person and not segments of the individual.

### **5.4. PITFALLS OF CONTEXTUALIZATION**

All disciplines have advantages and challenges. This section deals with the dangers of contextualization.

#### **5.4.1. Contextualization as an end in itself**

Firstly, it is easy for the process of contextualization to be viewed as completed. Stagnation follows and the gospel changes from a dynamic life-giving force to a meaningless ritual or form (Hiebert, 1985:213). As Paul (2 Timothy 3:5) states, there are “men who preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality.” When doing theology it is important to recognize that both times and situations change. Life is not static. Different challenges demand different methods of doing things. Taber

(1991:160) states; “Christians in general and missionaries in particular are people of their age and culture, even with respect to their theology.” The contextualization process is therefore unending as one seeks to apply one’s Christianity in diverse circumstances.

#### **5.4.2. Contextualization and traditional Christian forms in tension**

Older Christians often have ‘holy cows’, that is, forms or traditions that they hold dear and will struggle to relent. It is expected that when one shares about the work done in the (cross-cultural) mission field that one include reports about the way the local people are learning Christian songs. Fortunato (1998:18) quotes an anonymous person as saying: “a person should not be expected to undergo a cultural lobotomy to become a worshiper.” Worship does not need to take a western form. Form is merely a vessel through which one expresses one’s belief. Old (Christian) forms can be replaced with new forms without necessarily changing the foundational principles or teaching. Then there are (cultural) forms that can receive new meaning, for example circumcision. Circumcision in and of itself is not against Biblical teaching (Genesis 17:9-14). However, some cultures have a deep cultural heritage linked to circumcision and these need to be given new Biblical meanings or applications. The form itself does not need to change, just the meaning attached to it. Another example of form concerns the place of worship. In New Testament times worship was conducted in houses. To transform various places of worship to receive new meaning, can retain a sense of awe in a specific culture.

#### **5.4.3. Naïve contextualization**

Hiebert (1985:186) warns against two extremes in doing contextualization that he calls “naïve contextualization”. One is the extreme of uncritically accepting the local culture and the other is to deny the local culture. In the latter situation both the cross-cultural worker and the new convert are in danger of trying to supplant a new culture in the place of the old culture. Here often the host culture will perceive Christianity as the culture of the foreign missionary. Hiebert (1985:30) states categorically; “the gospel belongs to no

culture.” Yet in rejecting or denying the old culture there is a danger of making Christianity speak to only those who can convert to the missionary’s culture.

Accepting old cultural patterns unreservedly demonstrates acceptance of others and their culture. However, there is a danger that the people will neglect private and/or corporate sins. “The gospel calls not only individuals but societies and cultures to change,” says Hiebert (1985:185). It can also lead to syncretism. That is, when the new and old cultures live together they will eventually harmonize and result in “neopaganism”.

#### **5.4.4. Syncretism**

Syncretism is another danger that needs to be borne in mind. Previously, cross-cultural missionaries believed the host people had no religious belief. That is, the gospel was shared thinking the people were a *tabula rasa*. This was primarily done through the ethnocentrism of the missionary or mission sending organization. However, in the context of critical contextualization there is still a danger of syncretism (Hiebert et al, 1999:19).

If syncretism is perceived as merely a mixing of different religions then the gospel expressed in diverse cultural milieus is syncretistic (cf. Duraisingh, 1998:68). Having this definition of syncretism Van Rheenen (1991:85 ff) emphasizes that a double danger is possible. Van Rheenen uses Timothy Warner’s illustration of a continuum, points out that religion is composed of secularism on the one extreme and animism on the other. Secularism he suggests is “belief that there is no spiritual powers”. While animism he suggests is the “perception that all of life is controlled by spiritual powers and human beings seek to manipulate these powers.” However, he says “truth is found somewhere between these extremes (ibid.)”

In critical contextualization syncretism goes deeper than merely mixing religions. Syncretism is seen as “combining elements of Christianity with folk beliefs and practices in such a way that the gospel loses its integrity and message (Hiebert et al, 1999:378).”

This definition infers that a deep knowledge of both the Bible and the culture are required. The challenge of syncretism is not merely in the forms and practices of the new people of God but in their old worldviews. Unless the old worldview is challenged, the forms and practices will not be replaced or receive new meanings. It is at this level that critical contextualization is vital (cf. Hiebert, 1985:212).

While discussing marriage and remarriage at a bible study a participant became indignant, “we do not live in the Bible [days] we live in our own culture... Our culture is important and relevant.” This man was angry and upset as the Bible did not give him the answers he was looking for. It challenged him to rise above his old worldview and accept Biblical principles (a Biblical worldview). It is with this attitude in mind that God speaks in universal terms to all peoples so humanity can allow His word to diffuse into every culture. God desires to bring mankind to Himself. He can only do it through culturally relevant methods as we all live in a specific milieu (1 Corinthians. 9:20). However, He desires to transform people and make them new at the worldview level. That is, He desires to give a new *joie de vivre* to His people. Yet, until the *parousia*, He desires the new person to continue existing in his or her old environment (John17:15). It should be noted that the gospel does not change cultures per se: it is about changing individuals and helping people function as full human beings within the cultural context in which they find themselves. This concept is an important principle for doing mission. God does not want to remove people from their environment. He transforms us within our social context. Thus God is transforming the community one life at a time (Kraft, 1996:441).

The next section discusses how the principles of contextualization can be applied.

## **5.5. APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTEXTUALIZATION**

From the moment mankind decided to leave the protective presence of God and unite with God’s enemy the Deceiver, God’s mission has been to heal and restore a meaningful relationship with His creation (Revelation 21:3; Kaiser, 2000:16; Bavinck, 1960:277).

For God to effectively demonstrate that He has not deserted His creation He has to find ways to communicate appropriately to each person or people His loving care and concern for them. The purpose of God is to infuse mankind in a method of viewing life that restores the relationship He once had with them. But being sinful, like our ancestors (Adam and Eve), we hide when God calls. We are ashamed and are shy to reveal our true selves. Yet God does not desire to expose us, but to give us healing and in that way restore us to our true purpose – being His confidante.

Hiebert (1985:176) states, “A child does not become a human being merely by biological birth. He or she must be transformed into a social being, a member of society.” This process of transformation that Hiebert refers to is the process of socialization. Socialization is the internalizing by the child of the worldview of his or her parents (biological or adopted). The child learns skills that will assist him or her in taking up responsibility in the community and being perceived as one who belongs to the community. The goal of socialization is about belonging to a specific social community. Socialization does not happen in a vacuum. The same can be said of becoming a Christian. Becoming a child of God suggests belonging to a new community: the Christian community. Thus the new Christian is socialized into the community of believers. As the individual has already gone through the socialization process and acquired acceptance within a community, conflicts arise between the two worldviews. It is at this point that contextualizing the Christian message becomes a challenge. Learning to be a new person in one’s social context. This cannot happen overnight. It is a process. Contextualization is thus the process of Christian maturing (cf. Luzbetak, 1989:136, 166,182,188, 192 ff)<sup>42</sup>.

The environment is not static. People change. The dynamic nature of life calls for new ways of practicing Christianity. Part of maturing as a Christian, is adapting to the various and unique circumstances wherein one finds one’s self. Spiritual development is a process from infancy through adulthood. An individual’s context shapes his or her

---

<sup>42</sup> Luzbetak, (1989:64) states that mankind is not like bees or ants instinctively knowing how to operate under certain circumstances. Mankind must learn to exist in diverse circumstances.

spiritual development. As circumstances change, the individual's Christianity needs to adapt in response. New applications of how to be a Christian need to be found. As soon as spiritual development stagnates one begins a downward spiral away from God. Contextualization refers to this process of adapting to the circumstances life presents. Bosch (1991:422, original emphasis) states it as: "The Christian church is always in the process of *becoming*; the church of the present is both the product of the past and the seed of the future."

When people learn of God's new set of values or way of viewing the world it is essential that they not merely assimilate His thinking and way of doing things, but that they go through a process of internalizing the gospel. Thus contextualization addresses the "how to" internalize the word of God into a specific individual or people in a specific context.

## **5.6. CONTEXTUALIZATION AND THE MISSIONARY**

It is commonly held today among Christian churches that the Bible does not arise from any one people. The Bible is God's word to all humanity. However, it is God communicating through human media and language. It is God's word using diverse cultural settings to communicate His interest in mankind. The incarnation of Jesus is a similar process. Jesus is divinely sent to a specific human context. God cannot reveal Himself to sinful, depraved, mankind in His glory. The radiance of who He is will destroy the sinner. He says of mankind, "no one can see God and live (Exodus. 33:20)." The majesty of God is too great for mankind to behold. He, therefore, drapes Himself in humanity to shield mankind.

As God's witness (whether cross-cultural or not), it becomes imperative that the gospel is communicated using the local methods of communication. Bosch (1991:453) quotes Casaldáliga as stating, "The universal word only speaks [in] dialect[s]." The essence of a true representative is the ability to preserve the universality of the message yet to communicate it relevantly and meaningfully within the local context. Tippett (1987:152)

states, “A pastor or missionary may be well aware of human identity, but tragically oblivious to cultural identity... The latter determines the languages and manner in which it [the Gospel] should be communicated, and also the patterns in which one’s new life in Christ is nurtured and exercised.” It is for this reason Hiebert et al (1999:369-370) emphasizes the following key needs. The missionary needs to have a “deep understanding of the language and culture”. The “religious beliefs of the people” needs to be understood. And the people’s “real-life situations” need to be understood. According to them, these will help the missionary to know the people to whom they are witnessing.

In addition to knowing the people, it is important to “test the people’s beliefs and practices in the light of biblical truth and tests of reality (ibid.).” It is here that contextualization as a process is realized. There is an ongoing dialogue between the new worldview (Biblical beliefs) and the old worldview (societal context). Besides this dialogue there is also a dialogue with the wider Church community, that is, the universal Church. Hiebert (1985:216ff) speaks of this third dialogue as “transcultural theology”<sup>43</sup>. That is, theology done in the context of the local people yet perceiving the local theology as a part of the universal Church. Local theologies need to be faithful to the “greater church of which they are a part (ibid.).”

It is important to consider the people when applying the word of God to various situations. However, it is just as important to neither deny the old or to accept the old unconditionally. Hiebert (1985:186) proposes a critical contextualization. By critical contextualization, Hiebert implies examining the culture under the microscopic lens of God’s word<sup>44</sup>.

The first step in critical contextualization is a solid knowledge and understanding of the culture (Hiebert et al 1999:369; Hesselgrave and Rommen, 1989:128; Moreau, 2000:227). Knowing the culture or “audience” (Hesselgrave and Rommen, 1989:128)

---

<sup>43</sup> Luzbetak (1989:81) refers to this three-way dialogue as a “triple dialectic”.

<sup>44</sup> This presupposes that one has a deep understanding of who God is (the Word).

gives the witness an opportunity to know what to search for under the lens of the microscope. If one looks into a microscope with little knowledge it is difficult to interpret what it is that one is seeing. However, having some knowledge, one can identify various structures. Having a deep knowledge suggests one is able to better discern and analyze the information that one is viewing (cf. Hiebert et al 1999:374). A deep knowledge of the culture and worldview allows for a critical analysis through the lens of the Bible (microscope). Non-biblical aspects can be identified. It is this knowledge of God and mankind that is vital to making the gospel real to the individual. When Jesus walked on the earth, he took the time to learn and know people. It was this deep knowledge of God and mankind that gave him the ability to meet people's spiritual and/or physical needs (White, 1942:143).

Critical contextualization affirms the Seventh-day Adventist Church (and other Christian communities) teaching on the priesthood of all believers. It implies doing theology through the experience of the people. Theology at the grassroots level encourages participation from those on the ground. Thus the second step in critical contextualization is dialogue between the skilled theologian, missionary and/or minister of the gospel and local Christians (untrained theologians). This dialogue allows for the Holy Spirit to guide both the skilled theologian and the unskilled theologian. This interdependence confirms the three self-principles as advocated by Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn over a century ago. This dialogue is local yet global. Hiebert (1985:216) refers to this as "transcultural theology".

Local theology suggests it comes out of the local context (experience) as opposed to implanting a theology and trying to make the foreign theology fit into the people's situation. It is at this point that critical contextualization goes beyond indigenization (cf. Bosch 1991:449; Hiebert 1985:193). Indigenization, accommodation, adaptation and so forth all speak about western theology entering a foreign culture and being accommodated within that culture. However, critical contextualization starts from within the local context (the laity, the people) and brings them, through a process of dialogue and interaction with the word of God. This dialogue moves on to the trained theologian

and eventually to the world Church (cf. Hiebert, 1985:216 ff). Tippett (1987:373) highlights that this is essential for the Church to grow. He believes the growth should not employ “a foreign form” but it should be “suitable to the world in which it lives.”

The third step would then be what Hiebert et al (1999:22) refer to as “missiological transformations”. This term suggests Christian maturity is always incomplete. It speaks about growing up in Christ. Hiebert et al (1999:389) state, “People hear the gospel through their existing categories, assumptions, and beliefs.” However, once they choose conversion transformation kicks-in. Conversion “must lead to the transformation of their beliefs, worldviews, and lives (ibid.)” This cannot happen in a moment or at the snap of a finger. The miracle is that one allows oneself to be transformed over time. It becomes a process of Christian maturing within one’s milieu.

## **5.7. A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING CULTURE**

This section will present two models to understand the Ovahimba Christian youth and the Ovahimba culture.

### **5.7.1. Hiebert’s model of culture and worldview**

Hiebert (1985:30) attempts to assist the missionary (as a lay anthropologist) in understanding culture by presenting a model. He suggests that such a model is essential to the missionary task as “it [the gospel] must always be understood and expressed within human cultural forms.”

Figure 5.1 purports that culture has three dimensions, viz. the cognitive (ideas), affective (feelings) and the evaluative (values). Culture is “the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared

by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do (Hiebert, 1985:30).”

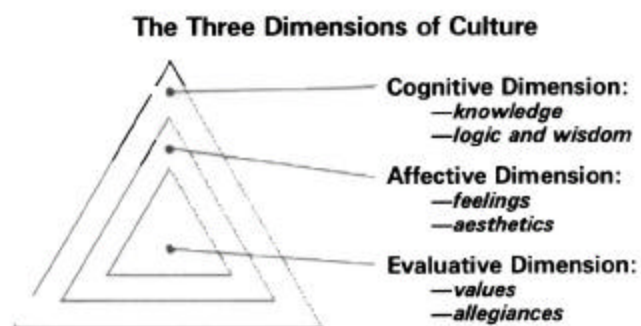


Figure 5.1: The three dimensions of culture (source: Hiebert, 1985:30)

However, to understand culture Hiebert (1985:35) feels it is vital that the missionary address each of these dimensions for holistic communication to take place. The reason being that the goal of mission is discipleship. It is, therefore, essential that the Christian proclamation stretch beyond mere information because the converts are “to become followers of Jesus Christ (ibid.)” That is, unless the missionary has an understanding of the three dimensions of the culture his or her presentation of the gospel will only address one dimension; usually it is the cognitive dimension. Like a three-legged stool it is not possible for this model to stand on only one leg. The presentation of the gospel needs to address the knowledge base but also the feelings (that is allow the converts to express their feelings) as well as the values of the culture. He therefore presents a model for understanding culture that includes both the “surface traits” and the “core traits” (ibid.).

To dig deeper into the culture, Hiebert (1985:42) suggests that the missionary learn the worldview of the target people. Figure 5.2 highlights two traits of culture, namely, the surface trait and the core trait. The surface traits are explicit as they are visible and numerous people can talk about them. The core traits are implicit and not as easily discernable. These require deeper levels of understanding. These are the “foundations, [that] hold up the culture, yet they remain largely out of sight (ibid.)” In this model it is

this foundation that needs to be understood in order for the missionary to effectively minister to a people. These core traits are the worldview of the people.

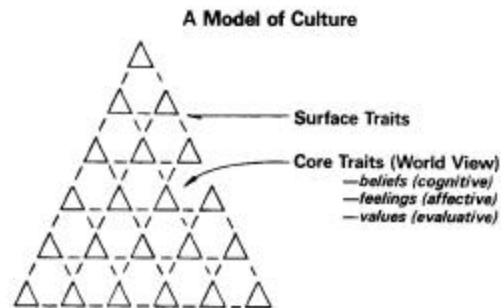


Figure 5.2: A model of culture (source: Hiebert, 1985:45)

Van Rhee (1991:33) suggests that, “Worldviews are like the air we breathe – very important but taken for granted. They are like eyeglasses – not important until they are lost.” This suggests that because worldviews are implicit or unexamined it is important that the missionary “search for forums where the implicit is made explicit and develop methodologies for uncovering worldview meanings.”

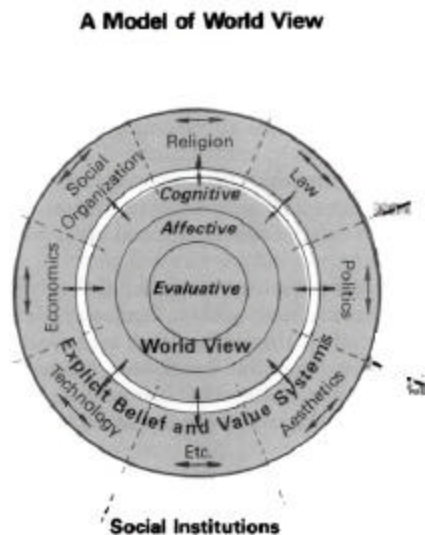


Figure 5.3: A model of worldview (source: Hiebert, 1985:46)

The significance of understanding the worldview cannot be underestimated, as it is the key to presenting a holistic gospel presentation. Figure 5.3 illustrates a worldview model that can help missionaries learn and value the worldview of another culture. However, it is not merely given to admire the other culture but to learn how to present the gospel so as to avoid the pitfall of syncretism (Hiebert, 1985:45-50).

The worldview or “basic assumptions about reality” interact with one’s beliefs at various levels. These interactions with reality become the visible culture. Yet they remain implicit as they are taken for granted. These basic assumptions need to be challenged for the gospel to reach the heart of the people.

### **5.7.2. A worldview-building model**

Goodson (2004) has developed a worldview model (figure 5.4) for researching culture and developing evangelistic material.<sup>45</sup> This model is an attempt to assist the Adventist Frontier Mission missionaries in their cultural research so they can more effectively do evangelism. The purpose is to understand the worldview of the people so deep-rooted change can take place. The premise being that unless the worldview issues are understood and addressed, the gospel cannot penetrate the people group.

Goodson (2004:19, original emphasis) defines culture as: “the **practiced norms of a society** as a whole based on the portions of life experience and the resulting progression of values that are shared by the individual worldviews of the vast majority of the members of that society, and the customs or practices of their ancestors that they have chosen to practice as a community or as individuals within the community.”

---

<sup>45</sup> Goodson has developed a class called “Worldview Dynamics”. This section is based on those class notes. They are unpublished material. The author states in his preface that his book is written in layman’s terms.

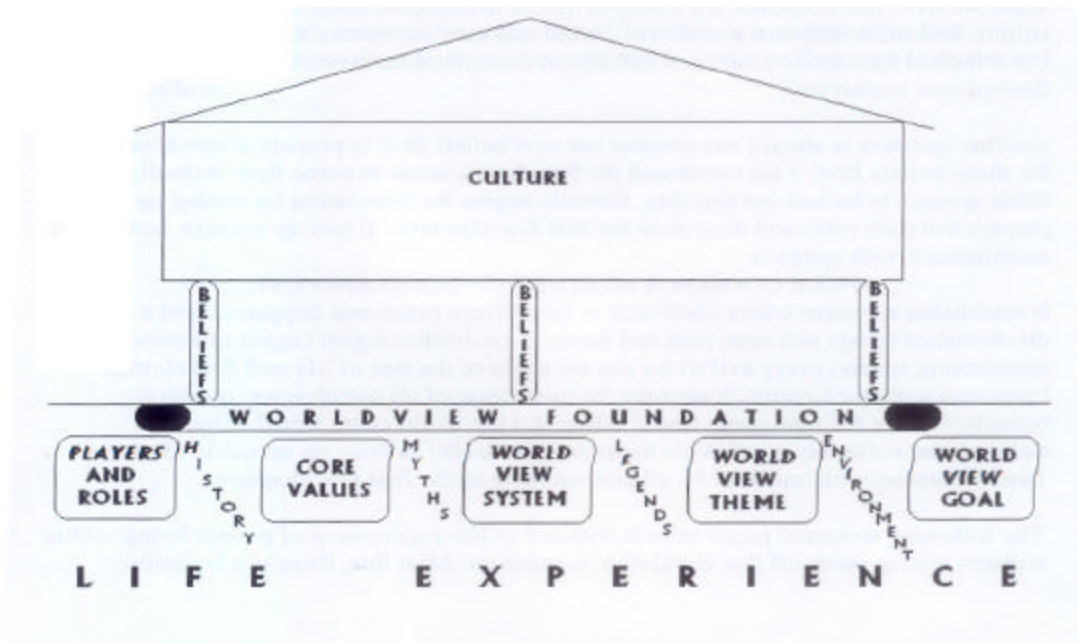


Figure 5.4: Worldview-building model of cultural research (source: Goodson, 2004:22)

Figure 5.4 illustrates, that a house or building can be used to represent an approach to understanding an individual's worldview, belief system and culture. The foundation consists of *life experience*. In applying the principles of one's core values and beliefs the author sub-divides an individual's synthesis of life experience into "building blocks" that make up the individual's worldview. People from the same culture have shared life experiences and thus similar worldviews. Goodson goes beyond Hiebert by including in his model six different building blocks that form the worldview. Hiebert merely highlights in general terms the three dimensions of a worldview (Goodson, 2004:22).

Figure 5.4 describes the building blocks of the three dimensions of one's life experience. He (2004:19) therefore defines worldview as "the **personal view of life** based on personal life experience or that obtained through the shared experiences of others." Thus the following building blocks of worldview are identified; roles and worldview players, core values, worldview system, worldview theme, worldview goal, and background information (through history, legends and myth).

The worldview of the people gives rise to certain beliefs that form the bridge between the worldview and the culture. These beliefs are established upon the shared experiences. Without the foundation of the shared experience it is very difficult for the people to have shared beliefs.

Beliefs then give rise to the culture of the people. “Culture is the visible aspect *or clothing* of [a] worldview (Goodson, 2004:24, original emphasis).” In this model culture is the building (the visible portion) it therefore represents the outward behavior of the people. The three tier worldview-building model therefore lays the foundation of an approach to understanding people and sharing the gospel.

### **5.7.3. A critique**

A number of scholars suggest that worldview forms the foundation of a culture. This analogy of an inanimate object attempts to describe a living organism. Culture is living and growing. It is more of an organism than it is a building. Having life it continues to grow and develop. A building requires a good foundation for a structure to be placed on it. This foundation is seen as the worldview. To change the foundation the whole structure needs to be destroyed and something new built on a new foundation. The gospel does not demand that the individual deny who he or she is. They can remain in their culture, but need to transform their culture according to biblical principles. Thus they are not destroyed and rebuilt, but transformed.

## **5.8. CONCLUSION**

For mission to be effective among the Ovahimba it would be expected that the missionary practitioner to establish models that could help understand the culture and the people in

order for the gospel message to penetrate the hearts of the people. This chapter therefore, presented a definition of contextualization that ensures the gospel is not polluted but can speak to people in diverse circumstances. It then presented the idea that culture is living and needs to be illustrated as such. The next chapter will present some research findings of this study.

Part Three:  
Research Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

## Chapter Six

### Research Findings

#### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

This thesis defines African mission as bringing hope to a world in despair. In understanding the goal of mission it became imperative to apply that to a specific people. Chapter three briefly discussed the Ovahimba culture and laid the foundation for an empirical study on the Christian involvement in that community to be done. The thesis then identified the Ovahimba youth as a people-group who are unreached by the gospel of Jesus Christ as based upon the empirical study done. Chapter five then explored the need to contextualize the gospel for reaching the Ovahimba youth. This chapter now presents some research findings.

Throughout this research paper there has been an attempt to find answers to three crucial questions facing the Christian Church in Kaokoland: What is contextualization? Why is there a need to contextualize the gospel message for them to hear it? How can the gospel be contextualized without losing a Biblical focus? These questions will be explored in relation to the background provided by the previous chapters.

#### **6.2. WHAT IS CONTEXTUALIZATION?**

Moreau (2000:225) looks at the goal of contextualization as a means to define it. He states that contextualization is: "to enable, as far as possible, an understanding of what it means that Jesus Christ, the Word, is authentically experienced in each and every human situation." Russell (1966:124) argues, "it is necessary that preaches and teachers [of the Bible] know the difference between the 'Christ' who is the Savior, and the 'Christianity' within which Christ is preached and lived out. The '-inity' part of it must necessarily take the local color, while the Christ retains his universal and divine character." When one sees contextualization as the individual Christian imitating the nature of Christ in the

local circumstances, his or her Christianity will be relevant to the community. It will not be a philosophical attempt at living a Christ-like lifestyle.

### **6.3. WHY IS THERE A NEED TO CONTEXTUALIZE THE GOSPEL MESSAGE FOR THE OVAHIMBA 'CHRISTIAN' YOUTH TO HEAR IT?**

#### **6.3.1. Key Contextualization Issues**

The gospel needs to be made relevant to the Ovahimba adult life. Based on the comments and discussions provide in chapters 3 and 4, six key issues can be identified. These are:

- ⇒ Christianity is perceived to be temporary for children and youth.
- ⇒ Christianity is not relevant to the Ovahimba's lifestyle, as it does not address their issues.
- ⇒ Christianity is used as a bridge between the traditional and western lifestyles.
- ⇒ Christianity is seen as a “hand-out” of material possessions and not a spiritual force.
- ⇒ Christianity is seen as a ritual to appease a foreign God so one can “cover all bases”.
- ⇒ Christianity is linked to western education and is expected of one attending school.

These issues can be summarized into three categories: worldview, communication and ecclesiological issues.

#### **6.3.2. Key Contextualization Challenges**

The contextualization challenges facing the Christian community in north Kunene Region will be divided into three key challenges: worldview challenges, communication challenges and ecclesiological challenges.

### *6.3.2.1. Worldview Challenges*

#1 – With many youth becoming Christian because they are spiritual orphans it is imperative that worldview issues receive further study with the emphasis placed on a balanced look at their expectations and the role of Christianity (see 4.5.3). Failure to conduct such a study would be detrimental to the development of the church and the individual. Here the role of the Opuwo Pastor’s Forum can be crucial.

#2 – For the Christian message to take root among such people is not easy. As reported by a number of clergy, the church attendance is constantly changing. Youth are not permanent (see 4.4.9). For example, the Dutch Reform Church focused on the youth in its evangelism. Yet so many decades later they are still working among the youth and the youth of ten years ago are now young adults, few of who remain as members of the Christian community. The idea of working among youth continues to be vital to the Christian mission. Youth as well as church leaders suggest working with the youth is the only place to receive results. Yet in the words of Pastor Daniel Muharukua (2005) “after three or four years, the youth are no longer in attendance...” This suggests that they did not find what they were searching for (see 4.5.3).

#3 – Contextualization is not about relinquishing one’s principles or biblical base. One youth leader warned: "We must give the youth what they want. But if we give them what they want all the time we will help them fall (Katarayu, 2005)." Some youth wanted to reject the old traditions and accept Christianity as an alternative. These both lead to syncretism. It is important that the Christian church help the youth to face the many diverse challenges they will face as Ovahimba Christians. The Christian message needs to be presented in such a way as to help the youth to be new people in their context. That is where the rubber meets the road. Without addressing the various life phases and other issues, the church will continue to work among the youth from one generation to the next. Contextualizing the gospel to the youth would therefore require not only modern worship styles but also help the youth to deal with traditional issues.

#4 – The Christian Church in Kaokoland is generally led by youth. Having youth leadership challenges the contextualization of the gospel in this area. Firstly, adults do not regard youth as spiritual leaders. Secondly, youth are too modern in their way of doing things. As a result, they challenge the Christian leadership to diversify both the rituals and the forms of the church. The Nazarene Church is embarking upon a new strategy to bridge the age or generation divide. They recognize this as a serious challenge to their evangelism. In identifying this challenge this church has debated over the issue of how to share the Christ of Christianity with the Ovahimba (Hipakua, 2005).

The Okorosave (Nazarene Church) is experimenting with the idea of friendship evangelism. The young pastor is building relationships within his community so he can gain the respect of the community and the community leaders. To gain the respect of the community the church is embarking upon participating in the cultural events of the community and demonstrating as much as possible a Christian's participation within the Himba cultural milieu. This is one way for the church to contextualize the gospel for their people (ibid.). The benefit of this approach is, the church is both working in the community and also stretching beyond the immediate community. Being an active participant in the life of the community it is establishing itself as an activator of development in the community (see 4.5.2).

#5 – The lifestyle of the Ovahimba is not conducive to a weekly meeting. Neither would the traditional church service appeal to the Ovahimba way of worship. This worldview perception highlights what Mofitt (2005:490-494) perceives as the inability of the church to equip her members to understand "God's intention" for His people. He states: "If the gospel of Christ were changing people, then we would expect visible change in their societies. We would expect to see God's will being done in all spheres of society." Although Mofitt is referring to the involvement of the church in society, the same inability of the church to relate to the needs of her members can also be seen within the worship forms of the church. God's will is to meet with His people. The forms should be contextualized so as to present deeper spiritual meaning for all worshippers. Mofitt

cautions against merely having an intellectual experience as opposed to a conversion experience. It is possible that having merely an intellectual knowledge would threaten one's need to adhere to forms as opposed to their meanings.

#6 – An important core value in the Ovahimba culture is the idea of being blessed or cursed by the ancestors (see 3.3.2.4). The Christian community needs to develop a theology of the blessings and the curses as outlined in the book of Deuteronomy (11:26-28). This deep-seated fear of being cursed of God through the ancestor can only be remedied in Jesus being the curse for all humanity (Galatians. 3:13-14).

#7 – A theology needs to be designed that speaks to the Ovahimba nomadic lifestyle. Such a theology would discourage the idea that one needs to become sedentary in order to be Christian (see 4.3.4). History suggests that the ancestor Kaoko came in search of a better land (Tjavara, 2005). The Christian pilgrimage theme is not new. Like Abraham the Ovahimba are seeking a city not built by human hands. This idea of seeking a city built by one other than human beings speaks to the heart of the Ovahimba as they have experienced so much suffering. They seek a place where they can be liberated from the trenches of labor and illness.

#### 6.3.2.2. *Communication Challenges*

#1 – The Ovahimba are a primary oral community. As an oral society the gospel needs to be spoken in communication styles that are familiar to the people. Using western preaching styles will only close the ears of the people. In 2003 and 2004 this researcher recorded scripture using traditional art forms, poetry, music, and prose. One traditionalist commented: “You really want to catch our people with the gospel.” A group of Christian youth leaders requested: “This is what we need to reach our people...” The Red Cross office in Opuwo said; “We are using your methods *ondjongo*, *ombimbi* and so forth to get the message of AIDS across.”

Using *ondjongo*, *ombimbi*, *omiimbo*, and other traditional communication styles is using the language of the people. Allowing God to speak in the local dialect is more than translating. It is about making the Bible relevant to the context. It is about destroying the myth that people must be colonized into western thinking and modes of behaviour.

#2 – Western imagery can be detrimental to the task of communicating the gospel. “Father” in the Ovahimba community has a different role than in western thinking. For the western person the concept raises images of care and kindness. For the Ovahimba the primary role is that of protector and provider.

The concept of sin and evil is also alien to the Himba worldview. When asked about when was the last time a Christian sinned this was an alien idea. Christians it is said, do not sin, only those who are not Christian. After baptism or the initiation into the church it is difficult to find members of the church seeing themselves as sinners. If they do sin it suggests they need to abandon the church, as God does not look favorably upon them. This is especially the perception seen among teen girls. They fall pregnant (innocently or not) and stay away from the church because they have become sinners.

From the above discussion it is clear that the gospel should be communicated in a contextualized manner. The above examples demonstrate the connection between media and a culture. Therefore, different churches need to experiment with different media to help the Christian and the not-yet-Christian to internalize the message of the gospel.

#3 – It is said that Jesus seldom preached to people. When he chose to preach, he used parables and proverbs and other wise methods. He seldom gave a discourse. More importantly though was his life. His life did not preach a different sermon to his sayings and parables. They spoke in tandem. It is this kind of communication that is required.

### 6.3.2.3. *Ecclesiological challenges*

#1 – Contextualizing the gospel to speak to the Ovahimba will automatically challenge many of the traditions of the church. “This suggests the church must rise to the challenge and change with the times (Matundu, 2005).” Worship as understood by Christians is an alien concept to the Ovahimba lifestyle. It works for the youth who are at school but not thereafter as they return to a nomadic lifestyle either at home or as workers (Muharukua, D., 2005). As one Somali nomad was quoted; “Show me how to put your church on my camel before you talk to me about Jesus (Phillips, 2001:49).” A new way of Christian fellowship is required.

Contextualizing the Christian message extends beyond the evangelism stage. It moves into the actual application of the gospel in the life of the Christian and the life of the church. The church will therefore need to discuss about having two forms of church. Firstly, a sedentary type weekly church service for those in town and secondly, a nomadic church for those in the rural areas. Phillips (2001:46) observes that Christians are often prejudiced towards nomads. This would include gathering together for encouragement (Hebrews 10:25; Ephesians 4:12).

The Israelite community conducted special festivals at strategic times of the year. There were festivals of light, tents and so forth. These kinds of festivals can be contextualized so the Ovahimba can have services that meet their needs. A harvest festival can be introduced in the month of April just before the cold season. Other seasonal festivals can assist the people to gather together. Hebrews 10:25 speaks about gathering together however, it does not speak about a weekly gathering. Unfortunately, scheduling such festivals will need to be done through discerning eyes as the weather plays an important role in the movements of the Ovahimba. One cannot set the calendar based on the Gregorian calendar.

#2 – A nomadic lifestyle suggests the members will need special care as they live scattered and isolated (see 4.3.4). It would be important that the Church utilize the father

as the spiritual leader (see 3.4.4). A village council would be a gathering of spiritual leaders in a given geographical area. The pastor would be the general overseer over two or three village councils. Where this ideal is not a possibility the church will need to improvise new ways of spiritual leadership for the scattered flock.

#3 – A common observation highlighted are the youthful preachers sent by churches. One young lady, Pana Kakondo (2005) asked, "What can a child teach an adult?" She went on to recommend that youth be allowed to share with other youth only. Respect for elders is very important in this culture. To ignore it suggests the church will remain irrelevant. Adult men are therefore required to share the gospel (see 3.4.4.). Yet he needs to be familiar with livestock so he can interact on a deeper level with the community and be in the know of the needs of the community.

To assist in this dilemma it would be good for the Opuwo Pastor's Forum to create a local dialogue with traditional leaders. This can be done independently among the traditionalists and it could be done collectively with traditional leaders. This dialogue also needs to extend to the African Independent Churches. Such a dialogue would allow for greater understanding of each other and a greater respect for each other.

#4 – Poverty is relative. The Christian community claims to be poor, yet their God claims the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). He lays claim to all the gold and silver reserves (Haggai 2:8). If He owns everything what does the church lack?

The poverty of the Christian faith in this area speaks about the poverty of understanding the essence of who God is. This poverty of knowing that God is a giver has crippled the mission of the church in this community. Perceiving themselves as victims or beneficiaries only has made the church unable to serve her community. Instead of contributing to the development of the community the church claims poverty and the inability to serve her people. In so doing the church has destroyed her witness in the community (see 4.3.5).

The church needs to form alliances with different stakeholders to work towards bringing economic freedom and a sense of humanity. Unless the church acts as the activator of partnerships it will be impossible with its limited resources to be the hands of God in the community (Verster, 2000:55).

#### **6.4. CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented the reasons for the need for contextualization in the Ovahimba community. It also presented the findings of the research. The findings were divided into three sub-sections; worldview, communication and ecclesiological challenges. Findings for each of these were highlighted. The next chapter will present some recommendations.

## Chapter Seven

### Recommendations

#### **7.1. INTRODUCTION**

After presenting a general introduction to the thesis the second chapter presents the essence of mission as perceived through the eyes of African Christians. For African Christians the bottom line of the Christian mission is to ensure that the incarnation of God is a reality for her people. God needs to be tangible to be experienced. The third chapter gave a brief outline of the Ovahimba culture, which laid the foundation for the empirical study of Christian involvement in the Ovahimba community. In the fourth chapter the role of the Church amongst the Ovahimba was outlined. Here it was discovered that contextualization as a model for sharing the gospel is important. Thus chapter five explored what contextualization is and how it could possibly be applied. Chapter six then gave some findings of the study; specifically that the Church has failed to penetrate the Ovahimba worldview, it has failed to present the Word using words that speak to the people and it has failed to create a church which the Ovahimba can call their own. Some recommendations will now be made.

#### **7.2. THE GRAPE VINE MODEL**

This study has evaluated two models for studying culture in chapter five. This section recommends the grape vine as a model to understand culture and to be used in sharing the gospel. Culture is not static. It is vibrant and living. It is dynamic and growing (or degenerating) constantly. The Hiebert and Goodson (see 5.7.1. and 5.7.2.) models use inanimate objects to describe something dynamic. Figure 7.1 illustrates culture as a grape vine. Grape vines require soil (or nutrients), a root system, a stem, branches, and leaves and care to produce fruit. A grape vine is living and dynamic thus constantly adapting to its environment, as is culture. No culture is practiced in the same way it was

ten years ago or even a century back. The dynamics of culture is such that new things impact upon it all the time. People, technologies and environments are constantly changing. The dynamics are such that each new thing has a ripple effect upon the culture.

Culture is very difficult to define but this thesis follows Hiebert's (1985:30) understanding of culture when he states it as: "the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do."



*Figure 7.1: The grape vine model (source: Petersen, GP, 2005)*

Firstly, soil is very important for the growth of a vine. The pH of the soil is important. The correct nutrients need to be present but it also requires good moisture. These and other factors need to be in balance or the vine cannot grow well. This is really the nourishment of the vine. This thesis proposes that the soil is representative of the interaction of individuals within the community (that is the shared or personal life experience and the historical background of the people or of each individual).

Secondly, it is through the root system that the plant receives its nourishment. Without the root system the vine cannot mature or grow. These form the worldview tributaries.

Any root system has a taproot. It is from the taproot that the root system spreads. According to Goodson (2004:43, original emphasis) the core values “should reflect those key essentials around which *ALL* of the experiences and life information in the entire worldview is wrapped.” The core values (taproot) are therefore rooted in the life experience of the community. It will branch into tributary roots that will give sustenance to the beliefs and the visible aspects of the culture. These tributary roots, the community players, worldview system, theme and goal, in turn feed the taproot.

The worldview players are all the people in the community with their distinctive roles. In any culture people have different functions or roles. Just as in a team of cricket or football. These players have specific titles and roles.

Most things in life have a system or procedure. It becomes important therefore to understand how the various worldview players interact within their environment. This system will guide the community to interact in a way that everyone can be at peace, fulfill their specific role and understand each other.

A worldview theme is the common denominator that underlines the community. The theme of a book or play is important to an understanding of the overall play. The same can be said of a culture. Unless the theme of the worldview is highlighted and identified it would be very difficult to share the gospel within that specific culture. It would be tantamount to hitting ones hand instead of the nail.

A worldview goal asks the question, what is the all-consuming purpose of a specific worldview? That is, what drives the people to do what they do? (Goodson, 2004:64). These then make up the root system of this model.

Thirdly, the root system supports the stem. The stem is the backbone of the vine. Without the stem the vine would not bare fruit neither would branches develop. The stem of the vine can be perceived as the worldview of the individual or community. Just as the stem unites the branches with the root system, so the worldview defines a people. It links their core values to daily living, that is, practicing one's beliefs.

Fourthly, the branches of the vine give it body and shape. Yet if the branch is not bearing fruit it is cut off. It no longer has a purpose. It would therefore be perceived that the branches are representative of the belief system. The belief system stems from the worldview.

Fifthly, the tendrils help the vine to be more secure and helps direct the vine in new ways. The leaves harness the energy from the sun and process the nutrients to nourish the plant. The leaves also protect and outwardly adorn the plant. These can be seen as the traditions, customs and other visible behaviors that emanate out of the core values and beliefs.

Sixth, a healthy and budding vine gives clusters of good fruit. Good fruit brings joy and happiness to those who eat it. The fruit would be the life practices in the various fields of life.

Jesus shares a story about the vine in John chapter fifteen. In this parable he suggests that his Father is the vinedresser. Jesus further suggests that he is the vine. Then he says that those who trust in him are the branches. He desires all people to be connected to Him the

Vine. That is, the Vinedresser wants to graft branches onto the vine. White (1940:675) states: “The life of the vine becomes the life of the branches.” Thus creating a new Christian worldview with changes in beliefs and behavior creating a Christian culture. The individual still lives in the same community, thus their interaction with others remains, yet the root system has been changed, namely the worldview theme, system, core values, and so forth. This parable holds the key to understanding culture and how the gospel can best be shared among diverse cultures.

In using the imagery of the building one has to totally destroy the previous building with its foundation and start afresh. This is very unlikely in the real world where people cannot start as *tabula rasa* (clean slates). One can never wipe out the history or past systems of beliefs and values. Yet in grafting people into the vine the worldview is transformed and the fruit is a new product emanating from the vine. Jesus prays that those who put their trust in him are not removed from their environment (John 17:15). As a graft one is born spiritually and lives in Jesus (John 3:6-7; Rom. 8:1; Gal. 2:20; 3:27; Guthrie, 1981:657).

For contextualization of the gospel to be effective in the Ovahimba environment it would require that a worldview transformation be established. This transformation is essential in creating a new context for the gospel to effectively work.

This thesis therefore does not perceive Christ as above culture or in culture but as a transformer of the worldview of the people. In so doing Christ affects the worldview, beliefs and the fruits. Thus He transforms the individual.

### **7.3. HOW CAN THE GOSPEL BE CONTEXTUALIZED WITHOUT LOSING A BIBLICAL FOCUS?**

African Christian theology attempts to blend traditional and Christian understandings of God (De Carvalho, 1981:33). It is important that this research paper highlight that this is not the intention here. In this section the grape vine model is used as a means to steer away from syncretism and move closer to an understanding of using the Bible as a microscope to contextualizing the love God among the Ovahimba.

#### **7.3.1. Applying the grapevine model – cultural research**

Cultural research is key to understanding the host culture and its worldview. Goodson (2004:73) makes a profound statement:

“Because worldviews are responsible for judging and accepting or rejecting all new information or ideas, and the work of the missionary is to promote new ideas – essentially those ideas that conflict with those based on sin already found within the host culture, the missionary will always be at odds with the people he is sent to evangelize unless he finds a way to make those preexisting worldviews work for him. That doesn't necessarily mean that he has to agree with them, it just means that he learns to work with them and use them. If we remember that the worldview is the mind's best answer to life's questions then it would only be reasonable to expect that anything not totally agreeing with it to appear as un-best. Understanding that concept in the environment is critical to being able to evangelize and still have it appear as 'good news'” on completing the missionary task.

The following factors can form the basis for cultural setting and understanding:

1. Have a learner attitude.
2. Be willing to enter the culture and not be afraid to try new things.
3. Be a participant-observer, not just an observer. Experience will provide an added dimension to the research.

4. Find a cultural-insider who can help analyze and interpret the data. They can provide invaluable insight and understanding.
5. Be aware of one's bias.
6. Identify key core values and fundamental beliefs.

To effectively achieve this one has to join in the life experience of the people. That is, learn the language; participate in cultural events and daily activities. It is important to remember that the foreign missionary will always be an outsider to the host culture. However, as far as possible the missionary practioner needs to participate in the experiences of the people.

### **7.3.2. Applying the grapevine model - worldview**

Once a deep-rooted understanding of the culture and worldview has been achieved, the missionary practioner with his Biblical microscope can start addressing the unanswered questions of the culture. This needs to be done in consultation with other missionary practioners and with local people (Christian and the not-yet-Christian).

The first part of the grapevine model is about the people and their social environment. Meeting the social context is vital to the missionary task. White (1942:143) suggests that Jesus met people's physical, mental and social needs then he invited them to be his disciples or imitate him. The foundation of the grapevine model is doing evangelism in a holistic manner. The felt needs of the people must be addressed so that trust relationships can be built. In meeting these needs a demonstration of Christ-like love will be demonstrated and challenge the community to rise to new levels of building the community. Thus it becomes a model to the young Christian community.

In meeting these felt needs a bridge is built whereby the missionary practioner can now speak about values, worldview themes, goals and systems. Not with the goal of changing people but to dialogue with the culture to help initiate a new way of viewing reality. Kraft (1996:442) warns that missionaries as outsiders need to remember they are merely

change innovators and not change implementers. That is, they are called to be witnesses. Transformation can only be achieved by the Holy Spirit working in the hearts and lives of people and them making the decision to change or be transformed and grafted to the Vine, Jesus.

Adult Ovahimba, in particular, want to learn conversational English. In a program run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1998 addressing this need has proven to be popular. It has helped the men especially to be more marketable when dealing with their animals and political events.

Animal husbandry is fundamental in the lives of the Ovahimba. Despite their extensive knowledge of and experience with animals, there is a growing need for a program to supplement this knowledge and to assist in training youth so that they can manage the animals in the future. Such a program would need to be worked in collaboration with the veterinary services.

Reverend Matundu (2005) has recommended that the church needs to run some kind of skills program so as to give the youth a fishing rod rather than fish. A vocational center is required that can help with computer and artisanship skills (e.g. bricklaying, sewing, mechanics, electronics and so forth).

### **7.3.3. Applying the grapevine model – communication**

Once one has gained the trust of the people and has been accepted one can transition into the evangelism stage or focus of the mission. Doing bridge building through community based projects forms the foundation of the evangelism process. While contextualization starts in that phase, it continues so that the gospel story can be communicated in full.

Contextualization has many facets. In Missiology there are worldview themes, goals, core values, beliefs and so forth to consider. Each of these needs to be contextualized. One cannot begin with behavior or beliefs. One needs to go to the roots. That is why

learning the culture is so important. It is not enough to just change behaviors or beliefs. This does not produce transformation. It is merely reflecting the foreign missionaries understanding and interpretation of the gospel story. Kraft (1996:440) suggests that change at the worldview level “will ramify through every [cultural] subsystem, effecting integral change throughout” the individuals being.

Communication plays an important role in this process of advocating change. If the message is only true for the sender no change will be seen. The message then should be directed at the receptors and be relevant to their lives. But, the message cannot be conveyed through foreign media. For the Ovahimba, *ondjongo*, *ombimbi*, *omiimbo* and so forth are required. They are an oral community and these forms speak the “language” (communication style) of the people as well as confer a message of hope.

Kraft (1996:443, 444) identifies some effective cross-cultural communication principles of the gospel:

1. Jesus identified with his hearers
2. Jesus was receptor-oriented
3. Jesus gave himself to two-way communication
4. Jesus demonstrated His Father
5. Jesus earned respect
6. Jesus dealt with specific people
7. He spoke to specific situations
8. Jesus refrained from information overload
9. Jesus' method involved inviting people to discover
5. Jesus put great trust in His receptors

Communication is therefore getting the receptor or listener involved in the conversation. It would therefore be paramount to communicate in the “language” (communication style) familiar to the listener.

The Ovahimba society is very dependent upon the radio for information and learning. Being oral people they learn through hearing. This thesis recommends that the radio be utilized using traditional Ovahimba media styles. It is essential that western style preaching be avoided. In so doing a larger audience and more influence will be exerted upon the community.

For nurturing purposes cassettes can be made that will present biblical encouragement to the community. With most Ovahimba families having access to radio and tape these should not be overlooked. In the traditional western view of Christianity it is important to spend time with God each day in reading the Bible. This can be the form of “reading” the Ovahimba can use.

#### **7.3.4. Applying the grapevine model – ecclesiology**

Ecclesiology is about the condition of the body of Christ. Being connected to the Vine implies that the branches will bare good fruit to the glory of God. The behavior of the church members will reflect being grafted to the vine. In Matthew chapter seven Jesus suggests that the fruit will reflect the condition of the tree. In the Ovahimba context this suggests that immorality and the fear of being cursed are amongst the issues that can be dealt with by incorporating a new worldview of life.

The life of the church is also influenced, as a new way of viewing church will be incorporated. No longer will the church be viewed from a western weekly gathering point of view. The church will look outside the parameters of a foreign culture and be viewed from within the perspective of the nomadic (or mobile) Ovahimba oral mindset. The adjustments that will be made will be based upon these values. It will be a Christian community with distinct Ovahimba features. Thus a unique ecclesiology will develop, being slightly different (yet similar) to other ecclesiology.

Church administration has a vital role to play in ecclesiology. However, western concepts of church administration are irrelevant to the context. This will mean a different

way of perceiving the local church as well as church structures. This will require further study and evaluation.

Local theologies of healing, ecclesiology, blessings and curses, sin, pilgrimage and so forth are all needed in the Ovahimba community. These cannot merely be traditional western theologies. They need to be uniquely Ovahimba but in collaboration with the global church. A sensitive issue is polygamy. This too needs to be talked through. To encourage such and other theologies it would be required of the Opuwo Pastor's Forum or any other entity to host Bible Conferences so these issues can be dialogued through. The aim is not merely to debate but to reach a consensus on these and other theological issues.

#### **7.4. CONCLUSION**

The church has presented the gospel in a foreign "language" that caused the Ovahimba to be alienated from the message. Although truth was spoken, it spoke in western terms to an audience that was not western. This chapter makes recommendations in the following areas not as the final methods but as alternative methods that can be adapted at each stage of the growing church in this area. It used a new model of understanding culture as a foundation on which to stretch itself to contextualize the gospel in the following areas: cultural research, contextualization, worldview, communication and ecclesiology.

## Chapter Eight

### CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated through informal interviews and participatory observation that the church in Kaokoland struggles to retain her Ovahimba membership. In identifying the oral and nomadic lifestyle of the Ovahimba this research paper suggests that the church in Kaokoland needs to move away from traditional approaches to evangelism and nurture and seek to study how best to present the gospel in this context.

Throughout this study the focus has been to explore ways that can effectively communicate the gospel to the Ovahimba context without polluting God's message of reuniting with His people. The Ovahimba are semi-nomadic people who have unique styles of communicating and sharing information. The Christian witness to the Ovahimba through five decades has primarily been through preaching. The Ovahimba were also encouraged to become sedentary. This foreign methodology has caused the Ovahimba to say; "We are being colonized..." The researcher was therefore challenged to think of ways to share the gospel in non-traditional ways, in order to be pertinent to the people, yet faithful to God. The researcher discovered contextualization to be an authentic way for the gospel to be shared that would give it a Himba flavor yet retains its Biblicist foundations.

The grape vine model was presented to provide structure for understanding culture and for contextualizing the gospel. This model provides the tools for the missionary practioner to understand culture at a deeper level. It also creates a framework for contextualizing the gospel so as to avoid the pitfalls of contextualization. Thus the missionary practioner can be a relevant witness within the said people group.

God is the alpha and the omega of mission. He therefore sends reconciled sinners into the world to invite the not-yet (Ovahimba) Christian into His presence so they can be reunited with Him. Their lifestyle needs to reveal to the not-yet (Ovahimba) Christian a

dynamic experience with God as the One who can provide for all their needs. The Ovahimba must experience the Immanuel God, that is, God with us, in their everyday life. Through this experience the Ovahimba youth will find a spiritual home that will equip them as ambassadors of Jesus in their context.

### Appendix 1A: An *Ongano* – The Jackal and the Wolf

Once there was a jackal and a wolf. The jackal was always wise, and the wolf was always stupid. The jackal would go and sleep in the middle of the road. When a truck would come along, the people would see the jackal and stop. The jackal would pretend to be dead, and the people would beat the jackal to make sure he was dead. He would hold very still, and the people would believe that he was dead and put him in the back of their truck. Then the jackal would throw all the things out of the back of their truck. When he had thrown everything out, he would jump off the truck and take everything home. One day the wolf came to visit the jackal. “Where did you get all these things?” The wolf asked when he saw all the food and blankets piled high to the ceiling. So the jackal told him all that he had done, and how the wolf could do it too. The wolf did what the jackal had said, and soon a truck came along. When the people saw the wolf, they wanted his fur because this was when people traded furs. So they beat the wolf to see if he was dead. But instead of holding still, the wolf moved! The people saw this, and knew he was still alive. So they beat the wolf until he ran away.

### **Appendix 1B: An Ongano – The Jackal rides a lion**

Once upon a time there was a jackal, a lion and the lion's wife. One day the jackal said to the lion's wife, "I am the chief of your husband." The wife laughed at this silly remark and said, "No, my husband is the chief of all the animals. How can you be the chief of a lion?" And they argued about it. Then the jackal told the lion's wife, "You must believe me. Tomorrow we are going on a hunt. Then you will see what I am going to do to your husband and you will know that I am his chief." The lion's wife said, "I know you will never be the chief of my husband." The jackal departed and went home.

The next morning he went to the lion's house and shouted an invitation, "Lion, Lion! Let's go hunting." The lion became excited. He told his wife, "I am going hunting with the jackal today. I will bring home something good to eat." But the wife did not tell the lion what the jackal told her the previous day.

The lion and the jackal had fun together. While they were walking, the jackal said, "Oh Mr. Lion, my leg is hurting. I must have broken it jumping off the rock. Could you please help me and put me on your back?" The lion wanted to be helpful and friendly. He agreed that the jackal could ride on his back.

The jackal did not need a second invitation. He hopped right on. While riding on the lion's back the jackal said, "Oh, there are so many flies... They are irritating me... Could you please give me a branch of a tree so I can stop them from crawling on my ears?" The lion gave the jackal a branch. The jackal swished the branch at the flies. Then he said, "Oh, this branch is too small. Could you please give me another one? The flies are becoming much, much more." The lion broke off a bigger branch and gave it to the jackal.

When they were about to reach the lion's den, the jackal started to beat the lion. The lion began to run, faster and faster. And the jackal called to the lion's wife, "Oh, oh! I told you that I am the chief of your husband." When they reached the lion's den, the jackal

jumped off the lion's back and ran away. The lion was too tired to chase him. He was so embarrassed he went to sleep. The lion was very angry and he decided that he would not go hunting with the jackal again.

The next morning the lion went hunting alone. The jackal watched to see where the lion was going. He ran ahead of the lion and waited for him.

The jackal carried a bow and arrow. The jackal excitedly called to the lion, "Oh, come see this." His curiosity aroused, the lion started moving towards the jackal. The jackal took his arrow as if he was shooting at something. Then he pretended to let slip and shot at the ground next to his foot. He cried, "Oh! Help me! I shot myself! I shot myself! Can you please help me and take me home. I need to get to the hospital." Because the lion was kind, he put the jackal on his back again.

Once again, the jackal asked if the lion could give him a branch to shoo away the flies. The lion was not going to fall for that one again. He said, "No! I cannot give you a stick!" The jackal, not wanting to push his luck, said, "Oh, okay." When they were about to reach the lion's den, they passed under a tree. The jackal tore a branch and started to beat the lion. So the lion sprinted and the jackal said, "I am the chief!" And he beat the lion so much that the lion got sores. While the jackal was beating the lion, the lion was calling, "Oh my wife! Help! Help! Come and help me!" And she replied, "I will not help you. That is only a small little jackal you are fighting. I refuse to help you fight such a small animal."

**Appendix 2A: Ovahimba male and female dress**



Photo #1 –  
Special bridegroom's headgear  
(Gideon P. Petersen)



Photo #2 –  
Special bride's headgear  
(Gideon P. Petersen)



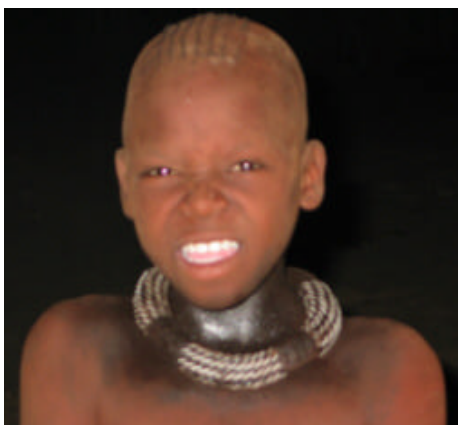
Photo #3 - A man's dress  
(Gideon P. Petersen)



Photo #4 – A woman's dress  
(Gideon P. Petersen)

## Appendix 2B: Ovahimba jewelry

Photo #5 – A girl's necklace



(Gideon P. Petersen)

Photo #6 – A lady's necklace with shell



(Gideon P. Petersen)

Photo #7 – A man's necklace and bracelet



(Gideon P. Petersen)

**Appendix 2C: Ovahimba male and female hairstyles**



Photo #8 – a teen boy (Viriato Ferreira)



Photo #9 – a teen girl  
(Gideon P. Petersen)



Photo #10– a pre-adolescent girl  
(Piet Steyn)



Photo #11 – a married man  
(Gideon Petersen)

## Bibliography

### **Books and Articles**

1. \_\_\_\_\_. 1970. The New English Bible. 2<sup>nd</sup> ED. Oxford. University Press.
2. \_\_\_\_\_. 2001. Oxford Paperback Dictionary Thesaurus & Wordpower Guide. UK: Oxford University Press.
3. Bavinck, J.H. 1960. David H. Freeman (trans.). An Introduction to the Science of Missions. NEW JERSEY: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.
4. Biko, S. 2004. I write what I like. JOHANNESBURG: Picador Africa.
5. Bollig, M. 1997. “When the war came the cattle slept....” KÖLN: Rüdiger Koppe Verslag.
6. Bosch, D.J. 1991. Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in Theology of Mission. NY: Orbis Books.
7. Buys, G.L. & Nambala, S.V.V. 2000. History of the Church in Namibia: An Introduction. WINDHOEK: Gamsberg MacMillan.
8. Cairus, A.E. 2000. The Doctrine of Man. In: Dederen, R. (Ed). Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology. MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 205-232.
9. Crafford, D. 1996. African traditional religions. In: Meiring, P. (Ed.). A World of Religions: A South African Perspective. PRETORIA: Kagiso Publishers, 1-26.
10. Davey, A.P. 2005. In the midst of the throng: Politics of mission in globalizing cities. Missionolia, 33 (1): 73-88.
11. Davis, Wade. 1999. The issue is whether ancient cultures will be free to change on their own terms. National Geographic, 196 (2): 64-89.
12. De Carvalho, E.J.M. 1981. Who is Jesus Christ for Africa Today? Africa Theological Journal, 10 (1): 27-36.
13. De Grughy, J.W. 1985. Theologies in conflict: the South African debate. In: Villa-Vicenci, C and De Grughy, J.W. (Ed.) Resistance and Hope: South African essays in honour of Beyers Naudé. CAPE TOWN: David Philip, 85-97.
14. Duraisingh, C (Ed.). 1998. Called to one Hope: the gospel in diverse cultures. GENEVA: WCC Publications.

15. Fortunato, F. 1998. Trends In Global Worship: Charting the progress toward the realization of Revelation 5:13. Mission Frontiers. Special Issue, 18-21.
16. Frayne, B. 2005. Rural productivity and urban survival in Namibia: Eating away from home. Journal of Contemporary African Studies. 23 (1): 51-76.
17. Goodson, D. 2004. Worldview Dynamics: A Tired Missionary's perspective. Unpublished paper.
18. Goudzwaard, B. and De Lange, H. 1991. Beyond poverty and affluence: toward an economy of care. GENEVA: WCC Publications.
19. Guthrie, D. 1981. New Testament Theology. ENGLAND: Inter-Varsity Press.
20. Hesselgrave, David, J. and Rommen, Edward. 1989. Contextualization: Meaning methods and models. USA: Baker Book House Company.
21. Hiebert, P.G. 1985. Anthropological insights for missionaries. MI: Baker Book House.
22. Hiebert, P.G., Shaw, D.R. & Tiéno, T. 1999. Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices. MI: Baker Book House.
23. Jacobsohn, M. 1995. Negotiating meaning and change in space and material culture: an ethno-archaeological study among semi-nomadic Himba and Herero herders in north-western Namibia. PhD dissertation. University of Cape Town.
24. Kaiser, W.C. 2000. Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a light to the nations. MI: Baker Book House.
25. Kanyoro, M.R. 1998. Called to One Hope: the gospel in diverse cultures. In: Duraisingh, C. (Ed.) Called to One Hope: the gospel in diverse cultures. GENEVA: WCC Publications, 96-110.
26. Kavari, J.U. 2000. Orature in Kaoko: Poetry and Prose of Ovaherero and Ovahimba. In: Miescher, G. & Henrichsen, D. (Ed.) New Notes on Kaoko: The northern Kunene Region (Namibia) in texts and photographs. CAPE TOWN: Credo Communications, 111-128.
27. Kirill, M. 1998. Gospel and Culture. In: Duraisingh, C (Ed.). Called to One Hope: the gospel in diverse cultures. GENEVA: WCC Publications, 77-95.
28. Kraft, C. H. 1996. Anthropology for Christian Witness. NEW YORK: Orbis books.

29. Kumalo, S.R. 2005. Prophetic Christianity and Church-State relations after ten years of democracy: Assessing the Theology and Democracy programme at UKZN. Missionolia 33 (1): 99-110.
30. Luttig, H. G. \_\_\_\_\_. The religious system and social organization of the Herero: a study in Bantu culture. UTRECHT: Kemink en Zoon N.V.
31. Luzbetak, Louis J. 1989. The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology. NY: Orbis Books.
32. Mans, M. 2004. Discover Musical Cultures in the Kunene: A guide to the living music and dance of Namibia. WINDHOEK: Namibia Scientific Society.
33. Mbeki, T. 2002. Africa define yourself. CAPE TOWN: Mafube Publishing (Pty) Ltd.
34. Mbiti, J.S. 1969. African religions and philosophy. NY: Anchor Books.
35. Mofitt, R. 2005. Transformation: Dream or Reality? Evangelical Missions Quarterly. 141 (4): 490-494.
36. Moreau, A. Scott (Ed.). 2000. Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions. USA: Baker Book House Company.
37. Mouton, J. & Marais, HC. 1990. Basic Concepts in the Methodology of the Social Sciences. PRETORIA: HSRC.
38. Müller, Karl (Ed.). 1997. Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives. NY: Orbis Books.
39. Muzorewa, G. 1990. A Definition of a future African Theology. African Theological Journal. 19 (2): 168-179.
40. Neufeld, D.F. (Ed.) 1966. Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia. Vol. 10. USA: Review & Herald Publishing Association.
41. Newbigin, L. 1991. The Christian message versus the “modern” culture. In: Anderson, G.H., Phillips, J.M. and Coote, R.T (Ed.). Mission in the 1990s. MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 23-25.
42. Newbigin, L. 1995. The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission. MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

43. Nolan, A. 1985. The option for the poor in South Africa. In: Villa-Vicenci, C and De Grughy, J.W. Resistance and Hope: South African essays in honour of Beyers Naudé. CAPE TOWN: David Philip, 189-198.
44. Nolan, A. 1988. God in South Africa: the challenge of the gospel. CAPE TOWN: David Phillip.
45. Ong, W. J. 1982. Orality and Literacy: The technologizing of the Word. CORNWELL: T. J. Press (Padstow) Ltd.
46. Peltola, M. Lehtonen, Lahja (Trans.). 2002. Nakambale: The life of Dr Martin Rautanen. SOUTH AFRICA: Natal Witness Commercial Printers (Pty) Ltd.
47. Phillips, D.J. 2001. Peoples on the Move: Introducing the Nomads of the world. UK: Piquant.
48. Pool, G. 1991. Samuel Maharero. NAMIBIA: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers (Pty) Ltd.
49. Russell, J.K. 1966. Men without God? A study of the impact of Christianity in north Uganda. UK: Highway Press.
50. Sanneh, L. 2003. Whose Religion is Christianity? The gospel beyond the West. MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
51. Shea, W.H. 2000. Creation. In: Dederen, R. (Ed.) Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology. MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 418-456.
52. Taber, C.R. 1991. The World is too much with us: "Culture" in modern Protestant Missions. USA: Mercer University Press.
53. Talavera, P. 2002. Challenging the Namibian perception of sexuality: A case study of the Ovahimba and Ovaherero cultro-sexual models in Kunene North in an HIV/AIDS context. NAMIBIA: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers (Pty) Ltd.
54. Tippet, Alan R. 1987. Introduction to Missiology. CA: William Carey Library.
55. Tutu, D. 2004. God has a dream: a vision of hope for our time. South Africa: Random House South Africa (Pty) Limited.
56. Van der Walt, B.J. 2004. Understanding and rebuilding Africa: from desperation today to expectation for tomorrow. POTCHEFSTROOM: The Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa.

57. Van Engen, Charles. 1996. Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology. MI: Baker Book House.
58. Van Rheenen, Gailyn. 1991. Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts. CA: William Carey Library.
59. Venter, L. Esterhuizen, Lester. (Trans.) 1983. Geskiedenismakers. NAMIBIA: Rössing Uraan Bpk.
60. Verster, P. 2000. Good News for the city in Africa: With reference to the "Apartheid City" Botshabelo. PRETORIA: Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research.
61. Walton, J.H. 1978. Chronological and background charts of the Old Testament. MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
62. White, E.G. 1940. Desire of Ages. CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.
63. White, E. G. 1942. The Ministry of Healing. CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

### **Personal Interviews**

1. De Villiers, P. (Pastor), Opuwo Christian Community Church, 9-8-2005
2. Hepute, Kenovando (youth leader), Dutch Reformed Church, 4-5-2005
3. Herunga, U. (school teacher), June, July and September 2005
4. Hipakua, R. (Pastor), Nazarene Church, 10-8-2005
5. Immanual, F. (Pastor), Apostolic Church in Namibia, May 2004
6. Kakonda, P. (Miss), youth, Uniting Reformed Church, 28-8-2005
7. Kanambunga, P. (Pastor), Oruuano Church, 6-9-2005
8. Kataruya, F. (youth), Apostolic Church in Namibia, 29-8-2005
9. Katundu, I. (Mrs.), community leader, October 1997 and April 2002
10. Kazahe, K. (Miss), youth, Dutch Reformed Church, June 2002
11. Kulunga, T. (church leader), Follower of Jesus Christ Church, 30-8-2005
12. Kuroro, P. (youth), Nazarene Church, April 2002
13. Marten, D. (Miss), Pre-school teacher, March 2004
14. Matundu, E. (Rev.), Uniting Reformed Church, May 2004 and 19-7-2005
15. Mbinge, I., (youth), Mission Work of Jesus Christ, 26-8-2005

16. Muharukua, B. (Miss), youth, Seventh-day Adventist Church, September 2004
17. Muharukua, D. (Pastor), Mission Work of Jesus Christ, 21-7-2005
18. Muharukua, E. (youth), Mission Work of Jesus Christ, October 2003
19. Muhenye, (chief) August 1995 and August 2005
20. Mukungu, J. (Rev.), Nazarene Church, May 2003 and February 2005
21. Mumbuu (Principal Kameru Seniro Primary School), October 2004
22. Ndjamba, S. (church leader), Seventh-day Adventist Church, May 2001 and July 2004
23. Ngambwe, J. (Rev.), Dutch Reformed Church, 20-7-2005
24. Thom, J.K. (chief), 30-8-2005
25. Tjakuapi, S. (Rev.), Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, 22-6-2005 and 20-7-2005
26. Tjambiru, V. (youth), Mission Work for Jesus Christ, May 2001
27. Tjavara, P. (paramount chief), 8-9-2005
28. Tjihukununa (retired school teacher), October 2005
29. Tjiimbi, T. Assistant Pastor, Mission Work of Jesus Christ, 26-8-2005
30. Toenjes, A. (Head, Dhimba Bible Translation Project), June 2001
31. Zatjinda, U.J. (children's ministry director), Mission Work for Jesus Christ, 4-9-2005

### **Group Interviews**

1. Hepute, K. (Pastor, Oruuano Church), Mukungu, J. (Rev., Nazarene Church) and Ujaha, L. (youth, Mission Work of Jesus Christ), 16-8-2005
2. Seventh-day Adventist Church Youth Group, 23-7-2005