

**INTERSEMIOTIC BIBLE TRANSLATION FOR AN ORALLY  
DOMINANT CULTURE:  
THE CASE OF TRANSLATING LAMENTATIONS INTO NSENGA**

**BY**

**GIFT NYIRENDA**  
(Student number: 2009128394)

THESIS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
QUALIFICATION

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
WITH SPECIALISATION IN  
THEOLOGY  
BIBLE TRANSLATION**

IN THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

BLOEMFONTEIN

SOUTH AFRICA

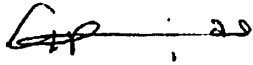
29 November 2024

**Joint Supervisors:**

**Professor Jacobus A. Naudé and Prof. Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé**

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the dissertation that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree qualification in Theology with specialisation in Bible Translation at the University of the Free State is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.



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## **ABSTRACT**

The study provides an intersemiotic, oral translation of the biblical book of Lamentations into Nsenga, a language of Zambia, highlighting the intricate connections between oral, visual, and written modes of communication. The translation process is guided by the incorporation of cognitive linguistics and contextual frames of reference, underscoring the ongoing intersemiotic activity in translating Lamentations. The thesis highlights the intrinsic presence of intersemiotics within the biblical source language text.

A comprehensive analysis of contemporary laments in Nsenga as performed by the Nsenga ethnic group reveals the prevalence of oral tradition that governs their whole life system. The significance of laments in this language and their intonation and tonal features in conveying meaning is emphasised, underlining the need for a skillful translation approach, particularly when dealing with poetic works such as Lamentations. Immersion into such a context remains an important prerequisite.

Moreover, the study advocates for exploring intersemiotic interplay within a single biblical text and examines the role of biblical performance criticism in this complex endeavour. This sheds light on the transposition and reserialization of meanings across various textual mediums. The oral-aural nature of biblical compositions and its implications for translation, exegesis, and textual criticism are highlighted by expanding the concept of text to encompass alternative communication forms. Ultimately, the study concludes that Bible translators must recognise that their task involves translating not only the written words but also the entire life system and performance cues embedded within the written text.

To tackle this intricate task, the thesis proposes a shift in perspective, suggesting that Bible translation should be approached as a multifaceted process that defies a linear translation approach. The thesis acknowledges the already rich knowledge concerning Bible translation and the fact that a multifaceted approach is not a new proposal. Instead, a deliberate sensitivity to the complexity of the task of translation is proposed throughout the entire process of translation. Therefore, a complexity theory approach is recommended, acknowledging the nuanced nature of translation that extends beyond linguistic considerations. This approach aims to unveil the various forms of intersemiotic interplay occurring at different translation stages. The thesis calls for heightened awareness of the intricate interplay between oral, visual, and written media during translation, affirming that translators should be fully attuned to the holistic representation of human life within both the incipient text (source language text) and the subsequent text (target text) as a product of the translation process. Such an understanding can be achieved through a complexity theory framework that acknowledges and navigates intersemiotic interplay within the translation process. This approach could apply to translation from one medium to the other or translation within the same medium because intersemiotic interplay is intrinsically present, be it in intralingual translation or interlingual translation.

**Keywords:** Nsenga (Cinsenga), oral Bible translation, laments, Book of Lamentations, intersemiotic translation, Biblical Performance Criticism, complexity theory, orality, alterity

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the Bible Society of Zambia, the Bible Translation community in Zambia, the Nsenga Bible Translation Community, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Synod of Zambia, my wife Bertha Banda Nyirenda, my daughter Grace, and my two sons, Gift (Jr) and Emmanuel.

## **AKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty for granting me the opportunity to compose this thesis. Special appreciation goes to my family, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, the Bible Society of Zambia, and the Langham family for their unwavering support throughout my academic journey. My beloved wife Bertha and our understanding children played a crucial role, recognising the need for me to focus on my studies.

I express profound thanks to my supervisors, whose guidance was invaluable with each submission. The relentless concern and support from Langham family cannot go unnoticed, your prayers throughout my journey are the reason for my reaching this far. May the divine, who knows how to reward all contributors to this work, shower blessings upon you.

My heartfelt gratitude further goes to the University of the Free State (UFS) for their unwavering financial support through the UFS bursary, as well as departmental bursary in 2024. This assistance not only alleviated financial pressures but also enabled me to focus wholeheartedly on my academic pursuits. This additional support played a pivotal role in the successful completion of my studies, and I remain profoundly grateful for the opportunities they have afforded me.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background**

The culture of ancient Israel was predominantly oral in nature (Miller 2011; Walton and Sandy 2013). The earliest transmission of biblical materials was oral (Wegner 1999:103) and the oral and the written transmission of Scripture occurred side-by-side throughout the ensuing centuries until the advent of printing (Makutoane, Miller-Naudé and Naudé 2015; Naudé and Miller-Naudé 2016; Niditch 1996; see also Littau 2011). The orality of the biblical text differs from one book to the other because it depends on the text type in question. In fact, a reading of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible reveals the great diversity of voices that speak through its texts (Birch Brueggemann, Fretheim, and Petersen, 1999:29). These range from peasant piety and royal archive, priestly ritual and prophetic utterances, apocalyptic vision and wisdom sayings, portions of lament, etc. All these voices and many more witness to the polyphonic nature of the Old Testament as a whole. Therefore, each voice needs its own approach when translating it into an African target language, although this is also true for any target language across the globe.

The orality of ancient Israelite culture as reflected in the Old Testament is not so different from most African cultures, even in the modern world (Finnegan 2007). As a result, when translating the Old Testament text into most African languages, the translator is working with two orally dominant cultures—the orality of the source language/culture and the orality of the target language/culture. For the Bible translator, this calls for a more robust quest to understand the precise relationship between the orality of the Old Testament and that of the target language (de Vries 2012). In exploring the orality of the Old Testament culture, it is unavoidable to work with the written text, which has remained as the major witness that provides clues to its orality. The switch between one form of media to the other, oral to written and written to oral, in the entire

process might prove inevitable. It calls for rethinking the place of intersemiotics in Bible translation, be it from written to written translation or from written to oral translation, especially where the target language is within a predominantly oral cultural context.

### **1.1.1. Intersemiotics and translation**

The relationship between intersemiotics and translation can be premised on the theory of semiotranslation. According to Naudé (2010:389) in an article entitled “Iconicity and development in translation studies,” he states that translation should be grounded in sign theory and semiotics of interpretation in particular. Jakobson (1959:139) provides three translation typologies: intralingual translation, interlingual translation, and intersemiotic translation. Intralingual translation is rewording or retranslating the given text within the same language or varieties of the same language. Interlingual translation is regarded as “translation proper” because it deals with the interpretation of the “verbal signs by means of some other language” (Jakobson 1959:233). Intersemiotic translation, in Jakobson’s definition is “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems” (Jakobson 1959:233). Thus, Jakobson’s definitions of intralingual and interlingual translation are presented as independent from intersemiotic translation, suggesting that intersemiotics is absent in the first two typologies. This is the researcher’s misgiving concerning the place of intersemiotics in translation, according to Jakobson’s definitions. The question is whether intersemiotics is absent in intralingual and interlingual translation. Oustinoff (2011) comments that the presence of intersemiotics in everyday life is so common that it is hard to identify when it happens. Marais (2019:17) demonstrates that Jakobson’s definitions are problematic in that all three relate to the translation of verbal signs. He even defines intersemiotic translation as beginning with verbal signs and does not account for intersemiotic translation between two non-verbal signs systems. Marais (2019:14-16) proposes rather that all translation is

semiotic and must account for translation between two non-verbal sign systems; in other words, translation studies must also include instances of translation that do not include language at all. Therefore, translation as a whole is an intersemiotic process.

Semiotics is generally understood as the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation (Halliday and Hasan 1989:3). Semiotics is arguably ever-present during translation in the mind of the translator, whether consciously or unconsciously. Perhaps it should be stressed that the translator's unconsciousness to semiotics and/or intersemiotics does not mean that it is absent in their interlingual or intralingual translation. It has to be noted here that a sign is not an entity; rather, we have to think of systems of meaning, systems that may be considered as operating through external forms of output that we call signs, but that are in themselves not sets of individual things, but rather networks of relationships (Halliday and Hasan 1989:3). "Translation across languages is a specific case of translation across sign systems" (Petrilli 2010:367). Petrilli further argues that "if we approach translation from Peirce's general theory of signs, in particular, his triad of icon, index and symbol, the relation between the source and the target text must be dominated by iconicity if a translation is to be successful in terms of creativity and interpretation" (Petrilli 2010:370). In commenting on alterity, Petrilli adds that a translation "must be at once similar and dissimilar, the *same other*" (Petrilli 2010:371).

One way to achieve a translation involving orality that is "the same other" is through employing Biblical Performance Criticism (Maxey 2012). This approach calls for creativity from the translator or exegete of the Bible in that it involves an artistic kind of thinking when doing translation work, by "adopting the best imageries from the target language that would communicate the same message and experience in the recipient culture" (Rhoads 2009:88; see also Rhoads 2012). Deciphered from Rhoads' phrase "adopting the best imageries" from the target

language is the aspect of intersemiotic consideration. It is an intersemiotic consideration in the sense that for an orally dominant culture, the thought process of adopting the best imageries is primarily done with an oral mindset, even when working on an interlingual translation of written to written. This goes for both the written and oral Bible translation. The oral features of the target language are incorporated into the translation. In other words, the translator is busy with semiotics in the source language texts and semiotics in the target language, whereas the target language is primarily oral in nature as a medium before it is written; hence, the importance of intersemiotics in both written and oral products in an orally dominant culture especially where the source language text is in written form.

### **1.1.2. Oral and written in translation**

The oral and written in translation are inseparable, especially where the target culture is orally dominant. Between any written source language text and the written text of the target language, there is an oral activity that takes place. The written source language text is first converted into the oral of the target language and then recorded in the written form of the target language. It is a movement from the written source into oral of the target language and then into the written form of that same target language. The frames of reference for a written translation in an orally dominant culture are basically oral in nature, although the final product will be in written form. There is an oral activity that shapes the written interlingual translation. This relationship between the oral and the written in translation is a window for the researcher to determine the role of intersemiotics in translation against the traditional understanding of intersemiotics. The traditional understanding is that intersemiotics is not involved in interlingual written translation. However, the oral is generally present in the written translation process; this is especially the case if the target culture is predominantly oral. At a very basic level, it is common knowledge that punctuation marks are a

witness to the presence of orality in the written translation. The question that should help in understanding this concept is: “Why should written texts have punctuation marks?” Therefore, talking about interlingual translation as a different type from an intersemiotic translation creates problems for the translators of poetic texts such as Lamentations.

### **1.1.3. Alterity and the other in translation**

This relationship between the orality of the Old Testament as a source text and orality as a feature of the target culture involves both *alterity*, the assertion of distance of culture, as well as *similarity* (or, familiarity), the assertion of proximity of culture (Sturge 2007). Bible translation is less challenging when the translator comes across “similarity” (familiarity) and “proximity” as a feature of the orality of the Old Testament culture in relation to the target culture. However, it is much more challenging when the translator encounters alterity as a feature of the orality of the Old Testament in relation to the orality of the target culture.

Alterity, as described by Emanuel Levinas (2006), is “an otherness that cannot be circumvented” (Zimmermann 2013:4); it cannot be evaded and it has a profound impact on language. This “otherness” has meaning and has to be represented by what would communicate the same meaning in a target language. The “representative of the meaning” in the target language might be different from that of the source language. The two representatives of the same meaning, both in the source and target language, are not usually the same. In analysing the philosophical writings of Peirce, the founder of semiotics, Buchler (2011:99) says that a sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity which creates in the mind of that person a sign that is an equivalent or even a more developed sign. In this sense, the translator is concerned with two signs: one in the source language and another in the target language. These aspects of alterity and semiotics lead one to start thinking about the role of semiotics, especially in Bible

Translation when dealing with alterity in terms of the presentation of information in both the Old Testament and the target culture.

#### **1.1.4. Lamentations and alterity**

The book of Lamentations provides a particularly interesting text for exploring intersemiotic translation into an orally dominant African language. Lamentations clearly has an oral basis in the performance of laments in ancient Israel and many of its poetic features relate to this orally based sociological background. At the same time, the aesthetics of Lamentations as poetry also have a written element in the use of alphabetic acrostics for the structuring of four of the five laments (chapters 1-4). Alphabetic acrostics have an oral realisation in that the phonetic patterning of successive lines has an oral component, but it has been argued that alphabetic acrostics are also based on the written order of the ancient Hebrew alphabet as known from abecedaries in ancient Israel (Dobbs-Allsopp 2009). Lamentations thus was performed and appreciated within an orally dominant culture, but part of its aesthetics and meaning are conveyed through its written form. As a result, Lamentations presents an extremely interesting text for intersemiotic translation because of its “otherness” in its written form as compared to the target language which may not match the written form of the Lamentations in the source language.

#### **1.2. Research Problem**

This research seeks to examine how to translate the book of Lamentations into an orally dominant culture. Specifically, the research is concerned with *Intersemiotic Bible Translation for an Orally Dominant Culture: The Case of Translating Lamentations into Nsenga*. The core assumptions are, first, that all translation is intersemiotic and, second, that intersemiotics helps address alterity in Bible translation.

According to the *Ethnologue* (Simons and Fennig 2017), Nsenga is a language spoken by 627,100 people; most speakers are in Zambia and to a lesser extent in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Its precise language classification is: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, N, Senga-Sena (N.41). The Nsenga language is widely spoken and positively viewed by its speakers. As a written language, it is in the process of development and there is not much literature in it at present. The Nsenga community has a New Testament, a literal translation, which was done in 1923 during the missionary era. A new translation of the New Testament, a dynamic equivalence translation, was completed and launched in 2016 by the Bible Society of Zambia. Currently, the translation team, of which the researcher is a member, is working on the Old Testament. There is little research on the Nsenga language apart from the reference grammar and phonology description by Miti (2001, 2002).

In translating Lamentations, the translator cannot handle the text as though it is narrative. It might be true that some features may apply due to the fact that it was the same mode (oral) of communication but quite a number of other features may not apply due to the uniqueness of Lamentations. The oral performance of portions of Lamentations is different in significant ways from that of laments in biblical narratives. Lamentations is an acrostic poem which provides a very good example to explain the difference between orality of the Old Testament and modern target languages. It has a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet used at the start of each verse, or line, or stanza (Lamentations 1) beginning with א (alef), the first letter, and ending with ת (tav), the last letter. There is significance attached to the use of the Hebrew letters in an acrostic formation, but this significance is not present in the target language, Nsenga. In addition, some individual Hebrew letters have historical meanings attached to them whereas the letters in the target language may not have any meaning. This makes it very difficult to maintain the structure of an acrostic poem in

the target culture. Translating an acrostic poem for performance remains a challenge because its beauty and rationale are well appreciated in the source language text, but these stylistic features are difficult to transfer to the target language.

The acrostic poems of Lamentations give a sense of the presence of vocal features, gestures, evoking both emotions and emphasis. Therefore, the presentation is not just for style and easy memorisation but also about the meaning. The vocal features are more likely to have come out as an important part of the poem. How the poem sounded in the original text is of great importance for effective establishment of the differences between orality of the Old Testament and orality of the target language. The same sound in the target language may not mean anything or may mean something different from what it meant in the Hebrew language. This only unveils the oral potential in the source language text and its otherness or alterity.

Special consideration of the nature of the portions of lament in the Old Testament need to be taken seriously by a translator. If that is not considered, the translation lacks the needed imagery and artistic nature which is critical and unique to Lamentations. One of the major problems in translating Lamentations is to understand its orality in verbatim terms. Due to the fact that in many instances the Old Testament culture is different from that of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Harvey (2002:102) asserts that there is a need to understand orality of the Old Testament in thematic terms rather than in verbatim terms. Although oral poets may affirm that they sing the same words, no poem is ever performed in precisely the same way twice (Fowler 2009:7). This means we have to digest the Old Testament texts/stories in terms of its themes and treat the verbatim as merely pointing to the theme. The theme which happens to be the meaning remains unaltered. This is more applicable specially to portions of lament because lament is presented differently from one context to another. This freedom often does not seem to have been taken advantage of by translators of Lamentations.

The local artistic forms of lamenting are not fully captured because the translator is glued to the verbatim understanding of translation instead of operating with some level of freedom by concentrating on the theme. The theme in question here is the meaning that remains unaltered. For example, gestures may have different meanings from one cultural context to the other and can be lost, retained or even transformed (Levinas 2006:16). What is important is the retention of meaning (theme).

### **1.3. Research questions**

The questions to be addressed by the research include the following:

- i. How should Lamentations be translated into an orally dominant culture, specifically Nsenga?
  - a. How can intersemiotics provide a solution for translating Lamentations?
  - b. Is intersemiotics present in all translation typologies?

### **1.4. Demarcation and justification of research**

This research is particularly concerned with intersemiotic Bible translation for an orally dominant culture, which in this case is the Nsenga language. Appropriation of the research will involve how the book of Lamentations can be translated into an orally dominant culture. As far as the researcher is aware, no research has been done on intersemiotic Bible translation with a special focus on Lamentations. Nor has there been research on translating the orality of Lamentations into Nsenga. There has also been no published work on Bible translation in relation to the Nsenga language.

It is undeniable, however, that there are some works on the connection between semiotics and translation. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839—1914) is regarded as the inventor of semiotics, or the general theory of signs (Evans 2002:89). Pierce introduced interpretive semiotics while Ferdinand

de Saussure (1857–1913) initiated “structural semiotics” (Stecconi 2010:314). Stecconi calls translation a special type of semiosis or sign action. Its core notions can be applied over several scales of complexity in translation, and this includes both verbal and non-verbal complexities (Stecconi 2010:154). The connections between semiotics and translation, in general, were further explored by Jakobson (1959/2012), Eco (2001, 2003) and Marais (2014, 2019a, 2019b). The connections between semiotics and Bible translation, in particular, are explored by Hodgson (2007) in his article “Semiotics and Bible Translation.” He sets out some of the foundational elements of Peircean semiotics in its application to Bible translation especially considering Pierce’s notion of translatability of all signs. Another recent article relating to semiotics and Bible translation is by Naudé, Miller-Naudé and Obono (2023) in their article “Semiotics of Alterity and the Cultural Dimensions of Bible Translation.” The theoretical framework of intersemiotics will be discussed further in the second chapter.

### **1.5. Theoretical framework and research methodology**

The research for the thesis will centre around three issues. First, the sociology of lament in the Old Testament is key to understanding the message of Lamentations but translating the book demands that the sociology of lament in the target culture be fully explored as well. In Nsenga, in particular, and most Zambian languages, in general, it is difficult to fully ascertain that the sociology of the Zambian languages were seriously considered when translating texts of lament because the translations of Lamentations do not sound like a lament in these cultures. The question to be investigated is how biblical texts of lament can be translated into an orally dominant Nsenga language for performance and which approach would best capture or make it possible to capture the aesthetic representation of Lamentation given the alterity of the text. The main objectives are to ensure that the target language expresses the meaning of the text in its own relevant aesthetic

ways in order to enhance the experience of the target text audience so that it is the same as that of the source language text audience, while retaining the richness of the meaning of the text. It is also important to ensure that the untranslatability of some aspects of Lamentations are addressed in the translation. To address these issues, the research will first explore the traditional forms of lament and their performance in Nsenga culture. Traditional laments will be collected, transcribed and analysed with respect to their themes, formal linguistic and poetic features and the sociocultural context of performance.

Second, the research will examine the formal features, especially the oral features, of laments in the Old Testament and in Lamentations. Attention to the acrostic features of Lamentations will also be examined to ascertain their oral and written features. The oral and written features of the poetry of Lamentations and their similarity or alterity to Nsenga will be analysed and explained.

Third, the research uses Biblical Performance Criticism to bring to visibility some oral features found in the book of Lamentations and that will help create a draft translation of the poems that will be sampled from the five poems in Lamentations in Nsenga for performance. Qualitative research analysis will be implored in the entire research project.

## **1.6. Value of the study**

The study has four areas in which it will have value. First, the research will assist Bible translators in understanding better how to translate the book of Lamentations, especially in orally dominant cultures. Second, the research will further research into translation for orally dominant cultures with respect to questions of alterity posed by poetic forms and structures. Third, the research will further the understanding of intersemiotic translation and its applications to Bible translation, the key being that we do not translate words only but we translate everything including culture and

frames of reference. Fourth, the research will have immediate and significant impact on the ongoing translation of the book of Lamentations into Nsenga.

### **1.7. Ethics of research methodology**

This research uses Biblical Performance Criticism for analysing and conveying the orality of the book of Lamentations. This involved performing the oral translation of the biblical text of Lamentations in Nsenga that is presented in chapter six. Prior to data collection, ethical considerations were addressed and this included obtaining informed consent from all participants. Field visits were conducted, ensuring sufficient interaction with community members to capture authentic lament expressions. All participants in the performance were provided with a consent form to sign, guaranteeing that their participation was voluntary.

The research also explores the traditional laments in Nsenga presented in chapter four as preparatory for the oral translation of Lamentation. All the participants who were involved in the performance of traditional laments did so willingly and voluntarily and signed a consent form. The identity of all those that provided information concerning traditional laments in Nsenga have been protected by presenting the data anonymously. The information collected has been used responsibly. The data collection and analysis followed the qualitative research methodology. The participants were allowed to talk in-depth using their own words and videos or songs if they so wished in responding to the questions of the semi-structured interviews. Ethical clearance from the General Human Ethics Research Committee of the UFS was obtained for the use of human participants in the research (UFS UFS-HSD2022/0921/22; see Appendix A).

To ensure a comprehensive representation of Nsenga lament traditions, this study engaged a diverse group of participants. A total of thirty individuals contributed, comprising ten men and

twenty women. Participants ranged in age from approximately thirty-five to sixty-five years. The majority were monolingual Nsenga speakers, with a few multilingual participants who also spoke English as a language of wider communication. However, all were well-versed in Nsenga culture and language. The group included elders, cultural historians, and community leaders, each offering unique insights into the tradition.

The research was conducted in various villages within Chief Kalindawalo's domain in the Nsenga-speaking region, ensuring a geographically diverse sample. The selected locations were culturally significant and home to key informants knowledgeable in lament traditions. The villages included Chimate, Ngilile, Sikankhomba, and Mundikula within Kalindawalo Chiefdom. Chimate and Ngilile are located near Petauke town, while Sikankhomba and Mundikula are farther away. These villages were chosen for their historical ties to Nsenga oral traditions, the availability of knowledgeable participants, and their accessibility for in-depth ethnographic study. Additionally, the selection aimed to balance perspectives from both modernised and more remote areas within the Nsenga-speaking region.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this introductory chapter has laid the groundwork for the comprehensive investigation into intersemiotic Bible translation within an orally dominant culture, focusing on the specific case of translating the book of Lamentations into the Nsenga language. The chapter has underscored the essentiality of understanding the complex interplay between the orality of the Old Testament culture and the orality of the Nsenga language. The distinctiveness of Lamentations as a poetic text has been highlighted, with its acrostic structure and oral features posing unique challenges for translation.

The research problem, encapsulated in the question of how to meaningfully translate Lamentations into an orally dominant culture, has been brought to the forefront. The central assumption that all translation is inherently intersemiotic, along with the exploration of the role of intersemiotics in addressing the alterity inherent in Bible translation, serves as the theoretical foundation for this study.

The delineation of the research questions has outlined the specific areas of inquiry, encompassing the potential of intersemiotics as a solution for translating Lamentations, as well as an examination of its presence across various translation typologies. These questions will guide the subsequent chapters, delving into the nuances of translating the acrostic structure of Lamentations, the sociocultural context of lament in Nsenga culture, and the interplay between oral and written features.

The chosen research methodology, rooted in qualitative analysis and Biblical Performance Criticism, ensures a holistic exploration of the orality of Lamentations and its translation. Ethical considerations have been duly addressed through ethical clearance, emphasising the respect for participants' consent and the responsible handling of collected data.

In the broader context, this study holds both theoretical and practical significance. It bridges gaps in understanding the intricate dynamics between intersemiotics, alterity, and translation in the context of Bible translation. Moreover, it offers tangible insights that will directly impact ongoing efforts to translate the book of Lamentations into Nsenga, thereby enhancing the engagement and comprehension of this text within the Nsenga-speaking community.

In the chapters that follow, chapter two focusses on the theoretical framework and research methodology, shedding light on the complex dimensions of intersemiotic translation and its

application to translating the book of Lamentations for an orally dominant culture. This approach aims to uncover the intricate interplay between orality, written text, and cultural nuances, thereby advancing both the field of translation studies and the practice of Bible translation in diverse cultural contexts. Chapter three examines the sociolinguistic features of the book of Lamentations, while chapter four focuses on the sociolinguistic characteristics of Nsenga laments. Chapter five delves into Biblical Performance Criticism as it relates to intersemiotic translation. Chapter six presents a Nsenga translation of Lamentations, reflecting on insights gained from intersemiotic translation and Biblical performance criticism. Finally, chapter seven concludes the study and outlines directions for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the development and application of intersemiotic translation by sampled proponents of the theory and the different twists associated with its applicability. The attempt is made here to show that an intersemiotic activity occurs in the process of cognition, hence the presence of intersemiotics in the written-to-written translations of the Bible, but especially when the translation is into an orally dominant target culture. This cognition is not limited to words, as it were, but to every aspect that adds to what Relevance Theory calls the “cognitive environment” of the translator. In other words, Relevance Theory suggests that cognition only takes place when a speaker is able to make inferences when reading or hearing something. Therefore, Relevance Theory is a theory of how people communicate with each other. It says that the speaker expects the hearer to pull information from a shared context. This means that a listener, reader, audience or translator will consider an utterance or a text as relevant if they are able to comprehend it and this comprehension is dependent on the context, otherwise the author or the source text remains irrelevant. When the hearer cannot connect or make inferences after listening to the speaker, it can make communication difficult. In this case, the translator will need to read extensively to broaden their horizon for easy comprehension and eventually enlarge the inferential territory or cognitive environment.

Sperber and Wilson (1986) promote Relevance Theory as a model of inferential communication. However, when the context of our audiences in Bible translation is not the same as that of the Biblical writers, a Relevance Theory approach may lead to cultural mismatches. This leads to the idea that shared context is not a perfect test of communication. This then gives room to an

exploration of the intersemiotic approach to translation which can deal with the problem of alterity by understanding the different semiotic systems that are at play in the entire process of Bible translation. This semiotic approach involves moving from time to time from one semiotic system to the other in the process of meaning-making.

For example, when translating the book of Lamentations into Nsenga, translators will first ask themselves how Nsenga people lament, and on what occasions. The answer to this question goes beyond semantics; it touches the whole aspect of culture and everything that forms the person's cognitive environment. Everything forming the cognitive environment of the translator will, at this stage, help answer the question at the back of the translator's mind and then be penned down for a written translation. As we investigate the views of the sampled proponents of intersemiotic translation, this chapter will try to establish whether intersemiotic translation should be defined by the process or the product, namely, the final form of the translation in the target language.

In a quest to discuss the theoretical framework of intersemiotics, there is a need to start from semiotics itself. It is unimaginable to discuss intersemiotic translation outside of semiotics generally or without hinting at the basic understanding of semiotics. Semiotics is from the Greek word *semeion*, meaning "a sign, a token or anything that is an indication of something" (Liddell and Scott 1996:1593). Therefore, semiotics is a study of signs; it explains the three parts (sign vehicle, interpretant, and object) of a sign and how they work together to give meanings to persons, places, things, and concepts (Hodgson 2007). At the centre of all this is language, which Reiss and Vermeer (2014:18) define as a "semiotic system" composed of signs, and they rightly state that translational action is mainly concerned with language. Therefore, the theoretical framework of intersemiotics will revolve around the whole concept of "language." In this case, language should be understood as something that can only exist within a cognitive environment and not in a

vacuum. This cognitive environment differs from one community to the other or even one local social setting to another. For example, there are oral, literary and non-verbal communities; these communities each process things differently. Translation of scripture into each of these communities should be mindful of the specific cognitive environment of such a target community – how the community processes meaning. This will pretty much be an interplay between semiotic systems that are not the same. Once this is done, it will help determine the theoretical framework that is applicable to translating scripture into an orally dominant culture.

## **2.2 Development of intersemiotic translation**

Intersemiotic translation can be traced from the fact that it deals with different forms of signs across languages involved in translation. It is viewed as the basis of cultural communication through which ideas are circulated, translated and explained using language, images and other semiotic resources (O'Halloran, Tan and Wignell 2016). The languages in question include both verbal and non-verbal languages. Therefore, the development of intersemiotics is closely tied to semiotics (a study of signs). In adding a voice to intersemiotics, Reiss and Vermeer (2014:18-19) calls language as a “semiotic system.” They further argue that the concept of language is not restricted to human verbal language, but it includes the verbal and the nonverbal aspects such that what is expressed by verbal means in one culture may be expressed by a gesture in another culture. This understanding of language goes out as a witness to an earlier existence of intersemiotics in translation even before the term could be ascribed to it. In other words, intersemiotic translation is resemiotisation because it is concerned with how semiotic choices are translated over time as social practices (O'Halloran, Tan and Wignell 2016).

## **2.2.1 Sampled proponents of intersemiotics**

The idea of intersemiotics has been around for quite some time and has been developing alongside the development of semiotics. However, intersemiotic translation in the field of Bible translation is the key area of interest in this study and delving into its formulation is key to understanding the subject matter. Reviewing the ideas of sampled proponents of intersemiotics and re-emphasising the link between intersemiotics and semiotics would be a great deal of help at this stage. Several people discussed intersemiotics in the field of linguistics, but have done so without making any reference to culture but to semantics only. As the sampled proponents are discussed, special focus will be on intersemiotics for linguistics in terms of words as signs and intersemiotics in terms of translating culture, not just words. Due to the undeniable connection between semiotics and translation, it is inevitable to start the discussion from Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), who is regarded as the inventor of semiotics, or the general theory of signs (Evans 2002:89) as stated in the first chapter. However, the researcher wishes to discuss the passing on of the mantle of semiotics by first sampling Augustine of Hippo’s thinking, and then turn to Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jakobson, and many more. Although there are many other scholars working in semiotics, but the ideas of the sampled figures are enough to introduce the topic.

### **2.2.1.1 Augustine of Hippo (354 AD – 430 AD)**

Augustine of Hippo cannot be regarded as a proponent of intersemiotics or semiotics per se, but his thoughts are worth discussing. His thinking about signs in relation to hermeneutics raises important issues for modern intersemiotic thinking in translation studies (Jensen 2007:39-41). An expansion of Augustine’s thinking about signs can be considered a contribution to semiotic thinking and intersemiotic translation. It is worth exploring when looking at the development of intersemiotics.

Jensen notes that the best known of Augustine's contributions to hermeneutical thinking is his theory of signs which he developed in the period between 387 and 396. Firstly, Jensen interprets Augustine's statement "*we speak in order to teach*" to mean *we speak in order to convey information*. In other words, we do not speak in order to convey a speech but to convey the message in the speech. In Augustine's sense, speech would be regarded as a sign. It can be argued that Augustine could not have been thinking about Bible translation; however, his thinking about signs speaks to semiotics and subsequently intersemiotic translation. Since signs are both verbal and nonverbal, it is therefore also true that all communication is done through signs. Augustine's contribution on the topic comes out clearly when he defines a sign as: "A thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses" (Jensen 2007:40). This definition speaks to the whole issue of intersemiotics, even in Bible translation. It means that if someone speaks to another person either by using verbal or nonverbal signs, a certain mental picture of the signified is created in the mind of the person listening. The implication of this is that the listener will have created another way of expressing what he/she has heard but retaining the meaning. To elaborate the issue further, Augustine provides examples to solidify the assertion by saying: "When we see a footprint, we think that the animal whose footprint it is has passed by; when we see smoke we realise that there is fire beneath it; when we hear the voice of an animate being we note its feeling; and when trumpet sounds, soldiers know that they must advance or retreat or do whatever else the state of the battle demands" (Jensen 2007:40). Augustine tries to categorise signs into two: natural and conventional signs. He calls natural signs those which occur in nature and that they do not rely on any agreed definition. Conventional signs are signs that signify a meaning which is not intrinsic or inherent to them (unlike fire to smoke) but which is agreed by convention. Jensen (2007) adds his thought by saying that there are two groups of

terms, those outside the mind, thing and word, and those within the mind, knowledge of the thing and knowledge of the word. In simpler terms, language does not refer to things but to our mental images of things. Therefore, if language refers to our mental images, then language is fundamentally an intersemiotic activity. From Augustine's reflections about signs, it is clear that his relationship with signs is more interpretive in nature, and this becomes his contribution to interpretive semiotics, which is very important for intersemiotic translation. Whether consciously or not, the later proponents of intersemiotics developed the approach from Augustine's thinking about signs and language.

### **2.2.1.2 Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913)**

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) is generally regarded as the founder of modern structural linguistics (Koerner 1971), in that he initiated “structural semiotics” (Stecconi 2010:314). Structural linguistics is only concerned with the grammatical structure of the language and only succeeds in describing how the language behaves. What was the main aim of Ferdinand de Saussure's structural semiotics? According to Jensen (2007:162), the aim was to emphasise that “the true and unique object of linguistics is language studied in and for itself.” For Jensen, it meant that De Saussure was suggesting that the most appropriate approach is to study language as a self-contained system regardless of its reference. This meant that meaning is not generated by reference to external objects but by differences within the linguistic system. In short, the entire mechanism of language is based on oppositions, such that the meaning for “father” is defined by its opposition to “mother” and “yellow” is defined by its opposition to “red” (Jensen 2007:163). However, interpretive semiotics emanating from Augustine, and later through Transformative Generative Grammar, turned out to be more useful in the field of hermeneutics as opposed to structural semiotics. To a larger extent, interpretive semiotics is interested in the inner word, while

structuralism is interested in language as a system without necessarily considering external reference and that it consequently denies the possibility of any extra-lingual meaning (Jensen 2007:163). Therefore, this research will not concern itself so much with De Saussure's structural semiotics but rather with interpretive semiotics, because interpretive semiotics speaks to intersemiotic Bible translation in a much clearer sense. It endorses the complex nature of Bible translation because it deals with translation not only of words but also of culture through the involvement of the entire cognitive environments of the source context and the target context.

### **2.2.1.3 Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 – 1914)**

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), an American philosopher, is regarded as the inventor of semiotics or the general theory of signs (Evans 2002:89). Peirce introduced interpretive semiotics, an approach that subscribed to Augustine's thinking. He was known for his influence on pragmatic thought, and it is this thought that brought about an interest in interpretive semiotics (Eco 2005). He noted that the relevance of a sign is determined by another object, which the sign represents, and that the relationship between the two determines how a person will react to the sign. Peirce's consideration of signs took into account that only certain aspects of a sign were the triggers for the person's reaction.

### **2.2.1.4 Charles William Morris (1901 – 1979)**

Morris developed a relationship of semantics (word meanings), pragmatics (word usage), and syntactics to symbols (Morris 1938). He was an American philosopher and semiotician known for his significant contributions to the field of semiotics (the study of signs and symbols). Some argued that he misinterpreted Peirce by converting the interpretant into a logically existing thing (Dewey 1946:85-95).

### 2.2.1.5 Roman Jakobson (1896 – 1982)

Jakobson's theory of translation focuses on the various functions of language in communication, emphasising the role of language in transferring messages across different linguistic codes. His theory introduces different types of translation based on the relationship between the source and target languages. It is difficult to discuss intersemiotic translation without making mention of the contribution of Roman Jakobson (1959) because he was the first to coin the phrase *intersemiotic translation*. He connected and explored semiotics and translation, in general, a domain that was further explored by Eco (2001, 2003). Jakobson is known for dividing the translation phenomenon into three categories, namely: (1) Intralingual translation, (2) Interlingual translation, and (3) Intersemiotic translation.

Intralingual translation was defined as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language” (Jakobson 1959:233). This type of translation suggests that the language of the source text and the language of the target community are the same and that their semiotic systems are the same. If the source text is oral, the target text is also expected to be oral in the same language as the source. This is a definition that is based on the relationship between the source text and the product in the form of the target text. In other words, intralingual translation refers to the rephrasing or paraphrasing of a text within the same language. It highlights the different ways a message can be communicated using different expressions while remaining in the same language.

Interlingual translation or translation proper is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. This type of translation involves two different languages each with their own semiotic system. It implies that if the source text is written, the target text which is the product of the translation process will be in written form. Again, this definition only regards the relationship between the end product of the translation process versus the source text. In other words,

interlingual translation, is more commonly associated with traditional translation involving translating a text from one language to another. In this case, Jakobson focuses on the challenges of transferring meaning between two distinct linguistic codes but within the same semiotic system. Intersemiotic translation was defined by Jakobson as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (Jakobson 1959:261). It is the categorisation of translation typologies by Roman Jakobson that brought about the term intersemiotic translation for the first time. Due to the fact that intersemiotic translation involves the change of the sign system between the source and the target language, there is some kind of transformation of the sign system. To emphasise the idea of transformation, Jakobson offered a terminological alternative, the synonym “transmutation.” He chose the term transmutation to capture the fact that intersemiotic translation involves changing into a different form, nature or substance. It is clear at this stage that according to Jakobson (1959) the easiest way to determine the translation typology is by comparing the form (semiotic system) of the target text against the form (semiotic system) of the source text. Therefore, intersemiotic translation as presented by Jakobson can be interpreted as implying the absence of intersemiotics in interlingual and intralingual translation. Perhaps according to Jakobson the form of the end product of the translation process (and not the process itself) testifies the loudest and is the basis for the definition of the translation types that he coined. Jakobson highlights how different semiotic systems or forms of expression can convey the same meaning.

It is important to note that Jakobson’s three typologies of translation have not gone unchecked critically. Marais (2019a, 2019b) essentially says all translation is a semiotic process. Another critical thinking against Jakobson’s triadic division of translation can be deciphered in the statement by Tymoczko (2007:56) which states: “Intralingual translation responds to the problematic of the nature of language, while intersemiotic translation addresses the problematic of

the concept of text.” This statement calls for a redefinition of language in terms of its nature when thinking about intralingual translation, because in the same language there are different semiotic systems at play which may include visual (gestures), oral and written. When the other part says the intersemiotic translation is addressing the concept of text, it also shows that there is a problem in understanding exactly what the nature of the text is.

If compared with Nida, it can be said that Jakobson was not trying to formulate a translation theory. However, both Nida’s translation theory of dynamic equivalence and Jakobson’s translation types contribute valuable insights to the field of translation; they approach translation from different angles. Nida’s theory prioritises conveying meaning and adapting to the target culture (Nida 1969), while Jakobson categorises different modes of translation based on linguistic and semiotic relationships.

However, it is interesting when one considers the questions mainly asked by Bible translation consultants who work with orally dominant cultures during checking sessions. Questions as basic as “*How do say this ...?*” are routinely asked. In most cases, consultants ask translators to process something within their contextual frames of reference and come up with a rendering for a particular concept orally and have it written down for a written translation. This kind of process needs to be recognised when giving definition to the intersemiotic translation and/or interlingual translation. Is intersemiotic translation different from interlingual translation based on the end product or based on both the end product and the process? Perhaps it is fine for intrasemiotic translation, especially in literary translation, if a text is translated into another text using purely verbal means (Gottlieb 2005:3). Conversely, it might not be the same with interlingual translation. To suggest that intersemiotic translation is absent in written interlingual translation of the Bible even when the target language is predominantly oral is not doing justice to the cognitive environments of both

the target culture and the culture of the source text. The entire oral culture, which includes non-verbal communications, will inform the translators' interpretive skills when interpreting the source text. The translators' cognitive environment is vaster than the verbal faculties due to the variety of frames of reference that are generally at play in the process. Therefore, the critical aspect of intersemiotic translation deciphered from Jakobson's approach is that it is a complex undertaking, especially that intersemiotic translation carries a source text across sign systems and typically creates connections between different cultures and media (Jakobson 1959). From the discussion, it is clear that intersemiotic translation highlights the challenges and complexities of conveying meaning across different modes of expression and is an important concept in the study of semiotics and translation theory, more so for Bible translation into an orally dominant culture.

#### **2.2.1.6 Umberto Eco**

Umberto Eco is an Italian philosopher, semiotician and novelist whose intersemiotic translation is centred on culture; hence it is more interpretive in nature. He states that:

[...] culture continuously translates signs into other signs, and definitions into other definitions, words into icons, icons into ostensive signs, ostensive signs into new definitions, new definitions into propositional functions, propositional functions into exemplifying sentences, and so on; in this way it proposes to its members an uninterrupted chain of cultural units composing other cultural units, and thus translating and explaining them. (Eco 1979:71)

From Eco's understanding of intersemiotic translation, it can be deduced that it promotes cultural communication and brings the idea of resemiotisation. According to Iedema (2003:29), resemiotisation deals with "how semiotics are translated from one into the other as social processes unfold." This understanding also captures the complex nature of intersemiotic translation as it does

not have straightforward answers to the implications of resemiotisation in terms of retention or loss of meaning. Questions may still linger concerning the practicality of the process. How can one make intersemiotic translation work in specific translation situations, given its complex nature? What kind of processual aspects should one envisage?

### **2.2.1.7 Robert Hodgson**

The connections between semiotics and Bible translation, in particular, are explored by Hodgson (2007) in his article “Semiotics and Bible Translation.” He sets out some of the foundational elements of Peircean semiotics as it applies to Bible translation especially considering Pierce’s notion of the translatability of all signs. He proposes the use of insights from semiotics into the process of sign production and meaning-making in the Bible translation process. Hodgson (2007) acknowledges that modern semiotics has its origins in the work of three scholars, namely, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913), Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 – 1914), and Charles William Morris (1901 – 1979). Semiosis is a process whereby the three parts of a sign (sign vehicle, object, and interpretant) come together in certain respects to establish a meaning or significance for the “something” that is pointing to “something else” (Hodgson 2007:174). “When we translate the Bible into non-print media, we are dealing with what Jakobson called inter-semiotic translation” (Hodgson 2007:183). However, this statement needs to be interrogated, given the wide meaning of intersemiotics and its potential presence in interlingual translation, especially if the target audience is orally dominant.

### **2.2.1.8 Ubaldo Steconni**

Steconni calls translation a special type of semiosis or sign action. Its core notions can be applied over several scales of complexity in translation, and this includes both verbal and non-verbal

complexities (Stecconi 2002:154). Stecconi (2010:314) further acknowledges the triadic processes introduced by Peirce that characterises interpretive semiotics. According to Peirce, signs function thanks to two relationships; one links something called “sign” to something else which exists independently of interpretation and is called “object”; the other relationship links the sign to an “interpretant” - a disposition to an act or another sign – which completes the meaning making process. In this model, a sign is typically something that represents something else for an interpreting mind, but it is the process that counts. Stecconi (2010:314) offers a very striking definition of semiotics as: “The discipline that studies how people make sense of their experience of the world and how cultures develop and give currency to this understanding. On any level, semiotics is ultimately a theory of how we produce, interpret and negotiate meaning through signs. It is this definition that fits the process and justifies the presence of intersemiotics even in the interlingual translation. For example, translation of Lamentations into the Nsenga language, which is within an orally dominant culture, yet the translation product will be in print form does not mean that the process will not include intersemiotic approach. Actually, it will first be intersemiotic in nature to make sensible meaning to the target audience and then penned down in writing. Therefore, the product would look like the type of translation is interlingual in nature but the major process before writing was more of intersemiotic.

#### **2.2.1.9 Susan Petrilli**

Susan Petrilli (2010:41) provides a very good suggestion on how we should be thinking about intersemiotic translation against Jakobson’s three model translation types:

The interpretive route which is expected to conclude by rendering a text in a different historical-natural language from the original, transits across signs that are different from the original, and calls for reference to a broad range of implied meanings upon which stand

the text's sense and significance. The result is that interlingual translation only concerns the point of departure and arrival, while all the intermediary interpretive work is of a semiotic order. Difficulty in translation does not concern the fact of having to transfer that which is said in one historical-natural language into another. The real problem consists in understanding the type of communication that renders the text possible, that renders it significant as a response, given that the text is not self-sufficient and presupposes more communicative relations that it actually installs. Interpretants must be traced in a great verbal and nonverbal sign network without any possibility of foreseeing which routes should be followed and which portions of the network should be explored. The text can only be "transferred" from one historical-natural language into another on the basis of intersemiotic translation.

Petrilli delves into the complexities of interlingual translation, emphasising that the challenge lies not merely in transferring words from one language to another, but in navigating the intricate web of meaning and communication. The suggestion deciphered from the quote is that the interpretive process involves traversing signs that may differ from the original text, requires an exploration of implied meanings. The essence of the text lies not only in the departure and arrival points of translation but in the semiotic realm of interpretation that bridges them. The difficulty, according to Petrilli, lies in understanding the communication inherent in the text, acknowledging that it relies on a network of verbal and nonverbal signs that extend beyond the text itself. Additionally, the notion of "intersemiotic translation" suggests that the transfer of the meaning of a source language text between languages involves a broader translation between different systems of signs. Simply put, it can be deduced from Petrilli's suggestion that, in Bible translation, it is not possible to have an interlingual translation without an active application of intersemiotic process, which

takes place between the source language text and the target language text. This is very true for interlingual Bible translation because the language of the Bible represents a common cultural and natural communication of that day and God decided to use the language of the people. The orality of the source language community played a major role in shaping what we currently have as a written text of the Bible. In view of the foregoing, the translation process has no option but to delve into an interpretive process that considers as essential the orality of the source language community. This should be true for any type of translation that one is working on as categorised by Jakobson. The fact that Petrilli talks about the intermediary interpretive work being of semiotic order, she in a way challenges Jakobson's three translation types. Therefore, the intermediary intersemiotic work that takes place should be considered when defining the type of translation. Susan Petrilli (2010:41) adds that:

Meaning and translation are semiotic phenomena whether interpretation/translation processes occur in the verbal sign system, among the sectorial languages of a single historical-natural language – intralingual translation – or among different historical-natural languages – interlingual translation.

From the statement above, the focus is on the semiotic nature of meaning and translation, emphasising that these processes occur within the realm of signs and symbols. It suggests that whether interpretation and translation take place within the same language (intralingual translation) or between different languages (interlingual translation), they involve semiotic phenomena within the verbal sign system. In simpler terms, it highlights that the understanding and translation of meaning involve the interpretation of symbols and signs, whether they are within the same language or across different languages. There is no direct passage of translation from one historical-natural language into the target language without going through an interpretive

intersemiotic process that houses various kinds of semiotic activities. Petrilli's view is critical for considering an interlingual translation of the Bible into an orally dominant culture and the translation of the Bible into sign language for the Deaf culture. The main point deduced from Petrilli's argument is that there should never be a point when the semiotic activity that takes place in the interpretive process of Bible translation is downplayed, and this should check the way we define translation typologies.

#### **2.2.1.10 Kobus Marais**

Marias (2019b:43), in arguing for complex thinking in translation studies, says that translation should be considered a “complex phenomenon rather than considering it in terms of ‘turns’ over a period of time.” In Marais' perspective on complex thinking in translation studies, the statement above suggests a departure from a simplistic or linear view of translation. Instead of focusing solely on the sequential progression of turns in the discipline of translation studies, Marais emphasises the intricate and multifaceted nature of the translation process. Again, we see that the aspect of “process” becomes as important as the product. By referring to translation as a “complex phenomenon,” Marais considers numerous variables, factors, and interactions involved in the act of translation. This could include linguistic considerations, cultural nuances, contextual elements, and the dynamic interplay between source and target languages. Viewing translation through the lens of complexity theory suggests that it is not a straightforward, step-by-step process but rather a dynamic and interconnected system.

In essence, Marais encourages a more holistic and nuanced understanding of translation, acknowledging the intricate web of elements that contribute to its complexity. This perspective aligns with the idea that translation involves more than just the mechanical substitution of words;

it requires a deep appreciation for the intricate dynamics at play in transferring meaning across languages and cultures.

He further argues that: “Even interlingual translation is both process and phenomenon and semiotic in nature” (Marais 2019b:43). Marais highlights that interlingual translation, which involves translating between different languages, is not just a mechanical process but also a phenomenon with semiotic elements. The semiotic nature at the process level of translation is a complex undertaking. This complex nature of translation would best be explored with a special focus on the complexity of intersemiotic interplay in the translation process. Marais’ main contributions towards complexity thinking builds from Peircean interpretive linguistics that revolves around a triadic representation of a complex semiotic process that occurs in the relationship of the Sign, the interpretant and the Object. He argues that any meaning-making and meaning-taking process entails translation because, for him, translation is a technical term used to designate the process of making meaning. Therefore, he is of the view that Bible translation should be studied as a complex (non-linear) “Either as a process or product in conventional parlance” (Marais 2019b:46). In all these arguments, he suggests that there are various aspects that are interrelated in the translation process and none of those should be forgotten or ignored. He concludes that translation studies should conceptualise “translation” theoretically from a semiotic perspective (Marais 2019b:52). One can also add that even categorising of translation types should be done from a semiotic perspective. Marais’ view of complex thinking in translation studies shows that there is a widening concept of the translation process, and this will have implications for translation and its theoretical conceptualisation. This entails that there is a problem with any theoretical conceptualisation of translation that does not bring to visibility the complexity of the task. In other words, theoretical conceptualisation is best served by the details involved in the process.

In analysing Jakobson's semiotic thinking, Marais (2014:100) says that what Jakobson did was to think in binary terms to categorise semiotics. However, he further notes that Jakobson recognised that semiotics involves a movement, a change and relationships. In this case, it involves the complex nature of semiotics, even the definition of intersemiotic itself by Jakobson entails an unexplored complex and interwoven relationships. Due to the complexity of relationships that exist when approaching translation from a semiotic point of view, Marais proposes that translation should be conceptualised as "a number of other things." Basically, he is inviting scholars to pay attention to the many other realities that are involved in the translation process and the many other realities that involve the formation of the source language text. Only then can the realities of the target language be respected. These realities could be in terms of the complex nature of the process and the complex nature of the formation of the source language text without undermining the complex nature of the target language into which the translation is done. To that effect, Marais (2014:104) conceptualises translation in terms of the "inter-relationships between various complex adaptive systems." His idea for this conceptualisation is to trigger a departure from "category thinking" and delve into relationship and systemic thinking. Category thinking is more of Jakobsonian notion, as he provided three translation categories or typologies as earlier discussed. Marais (2014) concludes with a summary on the advantages of thinking about translation from a complexity perspective. Here are some (not all) of his key points:

- a. It assists in the discussion on conceptualising translation. Reductionist theories and linear logic are not able to account for a complex, culturally determined phenomenon such as translation.
- b. It provides a theory of agency, explaining the relationship between agency and society, or individuality and universality.

- c. It conceptualises translation within an ecological framework.
- d. It points complexity studies and emergent studies as well as computer stimulation as a future field of study in translation.
- e. It allows for a theoretical framework within which to conceptualise both micro and macro-level translation problems and the relationship between them
- f. A complexity approach questions the use of linear logic in explaining translation.

The first point (a) above challenges reductionist theories and linear logic, which may fall short in accounting for the intricacies of translation. This suggests that complexity theory has the potential to account for the intricacies of translation. The second point (b) on complexity theory leads to be better understanding of how translation processes are influenced by various factors and agents. The third point (c) holds that complexity theory considers the broader context and environmental factors that impact translation. The fourth point (d) suggests that complexity theory hold promise for advancing our understanding of translation processes. The fifth point (e) means that complexity theory can be applied to understand issues at different scales in the translation process. The six point (f) argues that complexity theory encourages a more dynamic and interconnected view of the translation process.

Noteworthy in Marais' conclusion is the emphasis he puts on what his conceptualisation does to translation. He notes that the philosophy of translation he is arguing for “allows for particular contextualisation of translation in particular contexts while paradoxically considering the implications for the rest of humanity” (Marais 2014:104) Translation is intrinsically connected to many other aspects that need consideration starting with the formation of the source language text, coming to the contextual composition of the audience and the author and finally the contextual influence from the world of the translator and the community for which the translation is being

done. A complex interplay of semiotic systems is real and cannot be reduced to a linear explanation of what translation is all about. It can be concluded that Marais takes the interpretive process of translation further by making it clearer that this process is actually a complex undertaking and should be approached with deliberate awareness and effort that considers all factors that contribute to the formation of the source language text. In other words, it might be helpful to treat the source language text as an organised maze so that an approach is triggered that considers all factors in making a moral decision when faced with ethical uncertainties.

### **2.2.2 Complexity of intersemiotic translation**

A clear distinction between intersemiotic translation and the other two types of translations that Jakobson proposes is challenging if one considers the complex nature of Intersemiotic translation. The complexity of intersemiotic translation is premised on the complex nature of semiotics in the translation process. In other words, semiotics make translation a complex undertaking that cannot simply be defined by how the source language text relates or compares with the target language in terms of media. To start with, complexity theory in intersemiotic translation should be understood in terms of its opposition to reductionism. Even so, Marais (2014:15) cautions that complexity theory is not intended to replace reductionism. Reductionism is here understood in terms of the act of simplifying or narrowing down the meaning. Simply put in context, it is reducing complex issues into a few general principles/laws (Sabates 2012:472). It is an “explanation of complex ideas in terms not appropriate to their complexity” (McKim 2014:265). In this case, translation is a complex idea that cannot be explained in terms that are not appropriate to its complex nature. In this line of thought, complexity theory comes into conflict with reductionism in translation.

In the words of Byrne (2005:97), complexity theory would be defined as: “The interdisciplinary understanding of reality as composed of complex open systems with emergent properties and

transformational potential.” This definition of complexity theory calls for an open-mindedness of translation as opposed to confining it in a box, yet the practicality of the process is open to diverse complex activities that subscribe to divergent disciplines. In short, complexity theory is dynamic and it endeavours to break down boundaries of knowledge. It can be said that complexity theory puts up a direct confrontational approach against what would be regarded as linear translation. Linear translation theory refers to the concept of translating text or language in a linear, word-by-word manner from one language to another. It is often associated with traditional approaches to language translation, where the primary focus is on rendering each word or phrase from the source language into the target language without significant consideration of context, idiomatic expressions, or cultural nuances (Bryrne 1998; Cilliers 1998). As earlier stated, Marais (2019b:43) takes complexity theory further and says: “It might be more fruitful to consider translation as a complex phenomenon rather than considering it in terms of successive ‘turns’ over a period of time.” Lars Ellestrom in the foreword to “*Translating across the sensory and linguistic Borders. Intersemiotic journeys between media*” says: “When communicating, one often needs or wants to convey things that have already been communicated by another kind of medium. Such transfers across media borders can be difficult and problematic. However, they can also be a source for creativity and enhanced meaning” (Campbell and Vidal 2019).

Creativity and enhanced meaning are only attainable once we approach the translation task with a semiotic mindset which affirms that “we always interpret and translate signs in terms of other signs” (Hodgson and Soukup 1997:15). In affirming this position, Maxey (2012:5) adds to the relevance of semiotic principle in Bible translation communication as follows:

It is one of the lasting achievements of modern semiotics to show that all human communication and cultural construction, perhaps even communication and cultural

construction between all forms of life, share in semiosis, that is, in the making of meaning using signs of one form or another. For the breed of intercultural communicators known as translators, the relevant and often the only sign systems involve lexical choices—words and narratives found in written or printed texts. However, this narrow view of translation impoverishes a form of human thinking and behaviour by reducing it to literary production and by ignoring the many other ways in which humans communicate across languages, cultures, and media—that is, the ways humans translate and interpret in non-print forms.

The passage above highlights the significance of semiotics in understanding human communication and cultural construction. It emphasises the role of translators in intercultural communication, particularly in dealing with lexical choices and written or printed texts. Maxey criticises a narrow view of translation that focuses solely on literary production, arguing that it overlooks the various ways in which humans communicate across languages, cultures, and media in non-print forms. This broader perspective acknowledges the diverse ways in which translation and interpretation occur in human thinking and behaviour.

Therefore, it can be argued that intersemiotic translation is responsible for translating not only words but also translating everything, including culture. For example, it can be argued to a greater degree that in Bible translation for an orally dominant target audience, intersemiotic translation is available in both interlingual translation and intralingual translation. Within the Bible translation context, the entire process is intersemiotic in nature even within the intralingual translation as it has been demonstrated in the *Ketiv* and *Qere* readings in the Hebrew Bible.

### 2.2.2.1 Intersemiotic interplay in interlingual translation

When Bible translation consultants are working with translators in an oral-dominant culture, they push translators to embody their culture and further push them towards performance. The aim of this approach is to arrive at a natural expression of the biblical text in the target language. In the case of translating the book of Lamentations, it will definitely demand that the translators embody the message of the source language text and the knowledge of how the target language community laments. One or more of the following questions are likely to be asked:

*Does your language have some form of lament? What types of lament do you have in your language? What event does each lament address? How do your people lament? Are there any specific words used in laments? How systematic are the laments in your language, etc.?*

These questions are actually probing the cognitive environment of this oral culture. Imagine this translation is a written interlingual translation of the Bible, yet the translators are automatically pushed into the oral faculties of the community to answer the consultants' questions. The oral faculties would be regarded as a different semiotic resource. It has to be noted that for Bible translation, the source language text is a written text of a closed canon, but translators in an oral-dominant culture will process things in their oral culture, using their oral faculties within their cognitive environment before they can have their translation drafted in written form. What happens in the oral faculties of the translators and the community is an intersemiotic process that takes place in their cognitive environment because the processing is done in a totally different medium or semiotic system. The translators will start putting the images in place and then get back to oral formulations of the meaning of the text before deciding on how to write. Consultants' primary

questions are not to establish how translators can write a particular concept but how translators can express that concept in their oral culture; then, the writing becomes a secondary question.

Probing the team to give the expressions orally leads to another important aspect that needs some attention. This aspect is internalisation of the message of the source language text and making it one's own message before translating it. As we think about the intersemiotic interplay in interlingual translation, it is important always consider what Makutoane, Miller-Naudé and Naudé (2014:3) say:

The oral and the written dimensions are intimately connected. The transmission of long-duration texts is from mind to mind in a process of indoctrination, education, and enculturation of an elite minority. Memorisation (learning by heart) is central to oral tradition – oral performance from memory is the proof that ancient traditions have been mastered, thus setting the performer apart from those who have not internalized the tradition. Written copies of texts were not designed for instant reading of a page, but were a permanent reference point for an ongoing process of largely oral recitation. To be literate in antiquity meant that someone had internalised ancient texts and therefore had the ability to recite them and add to the tradition.

With this connection of the oral and the written in mind, it is crucial to understand the importance of internalisation in Bible translation, as mentioned in Oral Bible Translation (OBT) circles. Kelly (2019) points out that effective translation relies on the translator's knowledge and understanding of the text. For example, if translators from an oral culture cannot experience the emotions evoked by the book of Lamentations, how will their translation evoke emotions in the target audience? Therefore, any gaps in comprehension can result in gaps in the translation. Translation teams can

only incorporate into their work what they cover and experience during the exegesis-internalisation process, coupled with their existing biblical literacy. This underscores the significance of deepening one's understanding of the source text to create accurate and meaningful internalisation and subsequent translations. The exegesis-internalisation process emphasised in OBT may need some attention even in written translation of the Bible especially if the written translation is done for an orally dominant culture especially when the text type has a lot of orality clues in it. This internalisation process is more of an intersemiotic activity.

Another intersemiotic activity takes place when attempting to interpret the written source language text of the Hebrew Bible. The interpreter is expected to seriously consider the orality of the Hebrew text by applying Biblical Performance Criticism as an exegetical tool. It is at this stage of semiosis (or meaning making) where a lot of intersemiotic interplay is active because the interpreter is engaged in the process of reconstructing social context of the source language context by using the clues found in the written text. Clues in the written text have the potential to point to the kind of cognitive environment of that time. This cognitive environment houses both verbal and non-verbal signs. This then confirms that intersemiotic is actively present in this process of meaning-making.

The sad part of this process in written interlingual translation is that the questions are not part of the final product. The recipient of the translated version only looks at the written version as the final product without really being mindful that translators were involved in a robust intersemiotic process in arriving at the written translation. In an oral culture like Nsenga, even if the final product will be a written translation, the translation of the Bible is far from being possible without any form of intersemiotic process or engagement. Translators always transit between oral/visual faculties and literary faculties, each time a written translation is taking place. It is clearly far too

simplistic just to adopt the three types of translations as presented by Jakobson without really considering the interplay or the overlapping nature of intersemiotics. This is even more true in a target language that is orally dominant yet the Bible translation type is interlingual. This then suggests that any interlingual translation in such a target context cannot be exclusively interlingual when the whole process involves robust intersemiotic activities. In this sense, it would be justifiable to say that the theoretical framework to intersemiotic translation still needs to be explored further without confining it to Jakobson's three typologies of translation. This further investigation would best utilise a complexity theory model for intersemiotic translation because intersemiotics by its nature is complex and not simplistic.

Aguiar and Queiroz (2009:1) bemoan the fact that intersemiotic translation remains “virtually unexplored in terms of its conceptual modelling, especially from a semiotic perspective.” Karen Bennet's foreword to “*Translating across sensory and linguistic Borders, Intersemiotic journeys between media*” also echoes that the 1959 Roman Jakobson intersemiotic translation is based on the structuralist framework (Campbell and Vidal 2019) and that Jakobson's view of intersemiotic translation always included language (Aguiar and Queiroz 2009:1). The fact that Jakobson's intersemiotic translation always included “language” embraced a structuralist view of semiotics, means that a satisfactory theoretical framework for intersemiotic translation needs to be developed further from where Jakobson left it. If the understanding of language embraces a structuralist view of semiotics, it means that it is interested in language as a system without necessarily considering external reference and that it consequently denies the possibility of any extra-lingual meaning (Jensen 2007:163). Therefore, this kind of understanding of language is too narrow and not very helpful in this study. Language should rather be understood in terms of Peircean interpretive semiotics, and it is this understanding that presents us with the complex nature of intersemiotics

and it does widen our horizon of intersemiotics. Interpretive semiotics opens our eyes to the hidden presence of intersemiotics within interlingual translation of the Bible from the Biblical Hebrew text of the Old Testament to another written text in an orally dominant culture.

### **2.2.2.2 Intersemiotic interplay in intralingual translation**

In this study, resemiotisation through Biblical Performance Criticism will be used on Lamentations. Intersemiotic translation is a complex undertaking, and sometimes it occurs unknowingly in the process. Right within the Biblical Hebrew text there is a clear testament to the interplay between oral and the written.

One of the fascinating aspects, among others, that demonstrates an interplay between the written and oral traditions within the written Biblical Hebrew text is the Ketiv-Qere readings. The terms Ketiv and Qere are related to the Masoretic text from which modern translations of the Old Testament are done. By definition, the word “Ketiv” in Aramaic means “written” and it refers to the consonantal text as it appears in the written form of the Hebrew Bible. The Masoretic scribes carefully preserved the original consonantal text over centuries, ensuring its accurate transmission. On the other hand, in Hebrew, the “Qere” means “read” or “to be read.” The Qere represents the traditional oral reading or pronunciation of the text that differs from what is written (Ketiv). Therefore, the Ketiv and the Qere refer to the variation between the written form and the reading form of certain words in the Hebrew text. According to Revell (1992), the Ketiv-Qere phenomenon is a demonstration of the oral tradition dominating the written tradition. Although much of Revell’s statement might be subject to debate, it is enough to help us understand the presence of the interplay between the oral and the written within the Masoretic text. Van der Merwe, Naudé, Kroeze (2017:40) note that: “The Masoretes sometimes believed that a word should be pronounced

in a way that differed from the traditional consonantal text. Because they did not wish to alter the consonantal text itself, they recorded variant readings (the Qere) in the margin.” This is a very important interplay between the written and the oral, which can be regarded as an intersemiotic interplay within the written Biblical Hebrew text. Therefore, on the basis of this example, within the intralingual translation of the Biblical Hebrew text, there is serious intersemiotic interplay.

Speaking in favour of post-structuralist semiotics, Jensen (2007:168) makes a statement which calls for serious reflection on how we define text, and it stands out to be insightful in recognising the presence of intersemiotic interplay within an intralingual translation:

For post structuralists, the world is a text. There is no clear separation between texts and human life and environment. ... all mental concepts, every sight we see and all we encounter, are signifiers which signify other signifiers. Thus life refers to text, text to life in a way that the distinction between them is impossible. In the end, everything is text.

The statement says we can not separate human life from the text because everything is text. In the case of the Biblical text, it is true that it came from a specific setting of human life. Translating such a text should involve probing the entire human life of that time and also probing the human life of today for correct appropriation of the message in the target language. Probing the human life of the biblical context will not be limited to its literary context, but it will interrogate the entire human life and its cognitive environment. This interpretive process will not leave out the verbal and the non-verbal signs that were present in the source language context. It makes this process more complex in nature and its complexity is due to the intersemiotic nature of interplay.

With the foregoing in mind, it would be safe at this point to state that the general theory that can embrace resemiotisation and Biblical Performance Criticism is complexity theory of intersemiotic

translation. The complex nature of intersemiotic translation makes it clear that defining intersemiotic translation should not only depend on the form of the final product but on the intersemiotic activity that takes place in the process of doing Bible translation to arrive at the final product. Semiosis (making of meaning) should inform the definition of the translation type and once that is clear, it will remind the translation team that the task is complex in nature. The real intersemiotic activity takes place during the process of translation, whether the final product will be in the same semiotic system as the source language or a different semiotic system. This thinking is slightly different from Jakobson's thinking that defines translation types based on the final product by comparing the form of the semiotic system of the source language text to the form of the semiotic system of the final product. The complex nature of intersemiotic translation then calls for its definition to be based on the process and not just the product. If the focus is on the process, there will be more awareness on the part of translators to be more mindful of the movement between different semiotic systems in the process of doing Bible translation, even in what Jakobson calls interlingual translation and intralingual translation.

### **2.2.2.3 Immersion as a prerequisite for intersemiotic translation**

This discussion concerning intersemiotic translation of the Bible is slowly proving more and more complex. The complex nature of intersemiotic translation demands that we should not just translate words, but we are dealing with life and translating life as a whole. Learning from aspects of Bible translation in sign language, one of the important aspects that are championed when discussing intersemiotics for sign language translation projects is immersion in the Deaf culture.

In the context of intersemiotic translation, immersion refers to deep engagement or familiarity with both the source and the target semiotic systems involved in the translation process. While

immersion is not a strict prerequisite for intersemiotic translation, it can significantly enhance the quality and effectiveness of the translation. Immersion allows the translation team to gain a profound understanding of the intricacies, nuances, and cultural context embedded within the source and target semiotic systems. A comprehensive theory of rhetoric correctly asserts that the context holds equal significance to the text. This is because our perception is influenced by our position, and an individual's social background or rhetorical context plays a crucial role in shaping their worldview, constructing reality, and interpreting biblical texts (Schüssler Fiorenza 1988:5).

This statement emphasises the necessity of immersing oneself to gain a deeper understanding of the text being interpreted or translated, as well as the language into which the translation is being carried out.

As for the Sign language translation activity, the absence of immersion in the Deaf culture would obviously make the translator, consultant or any other person working with the Deaf people irrelevant to the assignment because they will be missing some important cognitive clues. Therefore, a level of immersion in this target culture will obviously give clear intersemiotic renditions. The question that should immediately be addressed is “Why immerse in the Deaf culture and not immerse in sign language?” This is an important statement because it acknowledges that translation is not just about translating language in a structural linguistics sense, but it is translating everything about the lives of the peoples involved both in the target group and the source language group. This is about the whole life of the people of the source language text and the people of the target language text. In short, we translate everything, and an intersemiotic translation reminds us that the target is everything, both in the source language text and the target language context that forms its language. For a Deaf culture, everything that forms the sign language is visual, and for an oral target culture, everything that forms its language is not written

but oral and visual in nature. Hence the importance of immersion because the oral-visual aspects of this language will be involved in the interpretive processes as one translates any written document into an orally-dominant target language. This is specifically true even for Jakobson's interlingual and intersemiotic translations. In this case, it is even more true for the translation of the Bible into an orally dominant culture. Since we translate everything, there is a need for everyone working with such an oral culture to immerse himself/herself in the oral culture, short of which would result in faulty translations that present a schism between the language of the target group as is spoken daily and the language used in the Bible.

Just as we need to learn to communicate visually in the sign language when dealing with the Deaf, we need to learn to communicate orally when dealing with the oral target cultures even if the form of the Bible will be written. A certain level of immersion in the oral culture is very paramount in this sense. There is a need to understand what it means to be in an orally-dominant culture.

#### **2.2.2.3.1 Immersion in source language cultural concepts**

Language is informed and shaped by culture. When culture begins to change, language also changes. The Biblical text that we have is not devoid of culture and context in its original state. The way of life of the people and their worldview informed the kind of language they were using in their daily communication. Their whole life system informs the language of the text that has been passed on to us. It would be unfair in the translation of these texts to ignore the fact that we are translating the whole life system in the source texts for renditions in the target language. The question then remains is: "Where will someone find the context of the source language text, the people of the text and their whole life system to immerse himself in it?" This seems to be an impossible undertaking because the human author whose whole life informs the language of the text is dead, his original community is dead, his audience is gone already and there is nothing to

immerse oneself in. Modern Jewish culture has been severely influenced by Western concepts of life due to the fact that many Jews were scattered in diaspora before Israel became a nation and this explains some of the conceptual differences between modern Hebrew and biblical Hebrew. This solidifies the thinking that the human author is dead. Contrary to that thinking, immersion in the source language context may include studying the whole life of the people of the text by analysing every available piece of information that points to their way of life. The kind of words they used should be interrogated to get glimpses of the thinking behind the usage of the chosen words or phrases or even sentences. These come from a real-life situation, which should be explored using every available resource. The message of the Hebrew Bible can be better appreciated if there is a window through which to see their conceptual thinking about life as a whole and their entire culture because that is what informed their language and the kind of words they used in their daily conversations. Some have taken the approach of teaching biblical Hebrew as if it is a living language where students are encouraged to speak the language in class.

#### **2.2.2.3.2 Immersion in the target language culture**

A call for immersion in the target language culture is somewhat difficult and perhaps seemingly unrealistic expectation for translation expatriates who are from a totally different context. In this context, the translation expatriates mostly would come from the literary context. However, lessons can be drawn from the current approach that is being propagated for the sign language Bible translation projects. There is a call for immersion in the Deaf culture if translation work is to be meaningful for the Deaf people. This immersion would help anyone working with such a team improve their cognitive skills using the prototypes that are readily available within the target language. Contextual frames of reference will be acquired through this immersion process because these frames of reference are properly acquired by experiencing and living within a particular

context. It is important at this stage to explain the importance of cognitive aspects or contextual frames of reference in the target language.

From the discussion, it is clear that some of the reasons why immersion can be so beneficial is that it broadens the cognitive environment and it can help produce a more meaningful translation. For example, immersion in the cultural context helps the translator or the translation team to grasp the cultural references, symbols, and values present in both the source and target semiotic systems. Without this cultural awareness, elements might be misinterpreted or lost in translation. The other aspect is that the translator will appreciate and comprehend the aesthetic elements, styles and techniques that are found in both the source and the target semiotic systems. Suffice to say that an immersed translator is better equipped to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the original work while adapting it to the target semiotic system. This is crucial especially when dealing with creative literature like that of Lamentations. The immersed translator will also understand the limitations and unique characteristics of each semiotic system. This understanding will help the translator to respect these constraints while making decisions during the translation process. Lastly, immersion brings about an emotional connection to both the source and the target culture.

Immersion will help the translator to have a better understanding of contextual frames of reference or inferences. Every context has its own frames of reference that enhance communication and making of meaning, regardless of whether it is a literary community, oral community or Deaf community. According to Wendland (2001:19), the best starting point to understanding the aspect of contextual frames of reference is an understanding of what this worldview entails. He defines worldview as: “A comprehensive frame of reference that governs a person/people’s perception and interpretation of life and death, which accordingly guides their overt verbal and physical behaviour.” Wendland shows that worldview is the definitive “context” because it consists of the

sum total of a society's system of presuppositions about truth, reality, and human experience as lived in a particular cultural setting. Katan (2004:234-243) deduces eight factors from the worldview which becomes a broader contextual framework that greatly influence how people in a given society perceive, evaluate and communicate with each other. These factors include: *time, space, the environment, power relations, individualism, competitiveness, structure, and thought processes.*

From the eight factors listed above, it is important to note that the seven factors influence the eighth factor, which is *thought processes*. It is in the mind where the activity of classifying things happens and this classification is based on the influence played by these factors that have been deduced from the worldview. Ungerer and Schmid (2006:7-45) in discussing the importance of prototypes in cognitive linguistics, place much emphasis on the mental processes of classification of things which they call "categorization". The product of this categorisation they label "cognitive categories." Ungerer and Schmid further say that prototypes have a crucial function in the various stages involved in the formation and learning of categories. For the categories to be attained, prototypes in the mind of a person play a very significant role. The entire context in which a person is found informs the kind of prototypes that one has in any given communication process. In the case of doing Bible translation in an oral culture, the entire oral culture informs the kind of prototypes in the thought processes of both the translation team and the target audience. These prototypes become part of the contextual frames of reference for the target audience that must not be trivialised. These prototypes will be oral and visual in the context of an oral culture. This has an implication on how one does Bible translation into a target context, regardless of the kind of translation. Whether it is written to written, written to oral or even written to visual, the prototypes that need to be considered are obviously non-literary in nature.

According to Wendland (2008:41), prototypes can also be referred to as “frames of reference” or “mental representations” which he defines as: “Distinct clusters or organised constellations of interrelated psychological patterns and expectations (including emotions, attitudes, values, etc.) that pertain to socially significant events, states, processes, experiences, or happenings along with the associated entities (persons, objects, substances, etc.) and qualities that are manifested in a given cultural context.” He further calls mental representations “basic tools in human cognitive construction (awareness, perception, reasoning, evaluation, decision-making), thereby playing an important role in the production and also in the processing of verbal text, for example, in establishing essential coherence relations in the discourse and in the extended development of topical themes and sub-themes in texts according to standard, expected patterns of arrangement.”

Contextual frames of reference for an oral culture cannot be exhaustive without talking about its links to the Relevance Theory of communication. Relevance Theory as developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986) is a cognitive theory of communication which focuses on how individuals process and interpret information to derive meaning from utterances in a given context. Any form of communication is only relevant if the participants in a communication are able to make meaning. Sperber claims that the success of communication depends on the listener’s ability to recognise and process relevant information. The absence of processing the relevant information leads to the absence of communication. Therefore, inferences play a major role in this process. This gives relevance to aspects such as contextual frames of reference and cognitive environment which make it possible for inferences to be made.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

The chapter has discussed the theoretical framework for intersemiotic translation by looking at the development of intersemiotics through the sampled proponents and their unique contributions.

Jakobson's three divisions of translation typologies served as of the springboard from which the specific focus of intersemiotic translation takes off. The discussion has shown the complex nature of intersemiotic translation. The continuous interplay between different semiotic systems in the process of making meaning have been exposed and are worth considering for a theoretical framework that is able to do justice to intersemiotic translation into an orally dominant culture. This led to the proposal that immersion into the source and target semiotic system be taken as a critical component of any theoretical approach if the translation of a book like Lamentations is to be meaningful in an orally dominant culture. The chapter has demonstrated that the theoretical framework to be used will not ignore cognitive linguistics and contextual frames of reference. These two approaches will make inferences possible in the process of semiosis (meaning making). Therefore, the complex nature of the task calls for a complexity theory of intersemiotic translation that will address both the source and target semiotic systems.

In the following chapter, we discuss the sociolinguistic features of the book of Lamentations, focusing on the social-structural factors, word choice, and poetic structure that influenced its language to better understand its setting, literary nature, and translation considerations.

## **CHAPTER THREE: SOCIOLINGUISTIC FEATURES OF THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The chapter focuses on the social-structural factors that may have affected the language of the book of Lamentations. When looking at the language that is found in this text, the research will pay particular attention to the choice of words and the poetic structure of the language. These will help determine the setting of the book. The aim is to identify sociolinguistic features in the book of Lamentations so as to have a full appreciation of the background of the book. The genre or the literary nature of the book cannot be fully appreciated or represented in another language by way of translation without taking a closer look at the social issues that influenced the language that is found in the book of Lamentations. Language has the potential to define the social behaviour or setting of a group of people in society. In other words, language exposes the social behaviour of people in a specific community. Vice versa, the social standing of a group of people in society influences the kind of language they use. In other words, language reflects the social issues affecting the users of the language. Therefore, language is a window through which we can see the social behaviour or setting of a group of people. The chapter will therefore endeavour to provide a working definition of Sociolinguistic in general and then narrow the focus on the book of Lamentations by first giving a brief background to the book, and then look at Lamentations as a poem as well as a lament or dirge, before giving a conclusion.

### **3.2 Working definition of sociolinguistics**

Sociolinguistics focuses on linguistics and sociology. It is a branch of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and society. It explores how language use and variation are influenced by factors such as social class, ethnicity, gender, age, and cultural context. Sociolinguistics examines how language functions in different social groups, how it reflects

social structures, and how it can shape and be shaped by social interactions. This field seeks to understand the social aspects of language, including language variation, language attitudes, and the role of language in identity and communication within various communities. Lewis (2001: 2) notes that “Sociolinguistics has threads that run everywhere. It is difficult to identify aspects of the Bible translation task that are specifically sociolinguistic in nature, and yet it is equally difficult to think of any aspect of translation that is not influenced by sociolinguistic concerns.” The general understanding around which this subject will be discussed is how people use language in their social situation and how this is linked to the subject of the research. According to Spolsky (2010), sociolinguistics examines the individual and social variation of language. It deals with the way various social factors and other variables influence or shape the language of its individual users (Moreau 2000:888). These include factors such as the speaker’s social status in society, sex, level of education, the given communicative exchange, level of formality of the context, and the relationship of the participants.

It is important to note that when interacting with others, speakers who “know a language” employ more than the phonological, grammatical, and semantic patterns of that language. They also know how to produce utterances that are appropriate for a wide variety of social settings. For example, they know how to modify their speech or writing when addressing adults versus children, and when addressing family members versus strangers. In many societies, speakers use language that befits their particular audience and situation. They generally know when to speak, how long to speak, and when it is more appropriate to remain silent. Savignon (1983:41-42) notes that this is often intuitive knowledge which is part of sociolinguistic competence. However, it is also true that this kind of knowledge is taught from generation to generation in different cultures. Education systems have also adopted these concepts by talking about informal and formal speeches or informal and formal letters. All this and many other social-

structural factors are considered in communication in an effort to attain the sociolinguistic competence in a particular social context.

Thompson and Widder (2016:61) say: “One of the most interesting ancient examples of the interaction between social context and language use comes from the Hebrew Bible.” Their observation is in reference to the incident in Judges 12:6, which sites the failure by the Ephraimites to correctly pronounce the term “*Shibboleth*” but instead pronounced it as “*Sibboleth*”. They tried to make a link between language and social setting in that since the pronunciation for the Ephraimites was not the same, it showed that they came from a different social setting. Given also that accent is studied under sociolinguistics, they conclude that “Sociolinguistics is the study of the interaction between language and society, or social context” (Thompson and Widder 2016:51). Therefore, the basic understanding on sociolinguistics will revolve around the relationship between social context and language. Speaking on sociolinguistic variations, Lucas (2001:61) rightly notes that variations are based on differences in space and time, and that the respective linguistic environments become the major influence. This thinking will be used when discussing the specific sociolinguistic features in the book of Lamentations.

Sociolinguistics is thus a branch of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and society. It explores how language use and variation are influenced by factors such as social class, ethnicity, gender, age, and cultural context. Sociolinguistics examines how language functions in different social groups, how it reflects social structures, and how it can shape and be shaped by social interactions. This field seeks to understand the social aspects of language, including language variation, language attitudes, and the role of language in identity and communication within various communities.

### 3.3 Important features of the book of Lamentations

A reading of the book of Lamentations reviews social aspects of humiliation, suffering, and despair of Jerusalem and her people following the destruction of the Temple and the city by the Babylonians in 587 BCE. In the Hebrew Bible, the book is titled after its first word “אֵיכָה” which is normally used as an exclamation of lament or desperation: “How!” (Brown, Driver, Briggs 1977:32). It is often the first word in laments (Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 48:17; Lamentations 1:1; 2:1; 4:1, 2). The term אֵיכָה (“Alas!”) and its counterpart אֵיךְ (“Alas!”) are normally uttered in contexts of mourning as exclamations of lament over a deceased person (2 Sam 1:19; Isaiah 14:4, 12). It should be mentioned that the word is more emotive than semantic in nature. It has to be noted that each language context has its own word that is used to express an exclamation of lament. Within the biblical literature, this word was also used in some contexts of announcements. A comment in the NET Bible First Edition Notes of Biblical Studies (2006), stresses that prophets borrowed this term from its normal *Sitz im Leben* in the funeral lament and rhetorically place it in the context of announcements or descriptions of God’s judgment (Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 48:17; Ezekiel 26:17; Lamentations 1:1; 2:1; 4:1, 2).

The poetic artistry exhibited in the book is another window through which we can see the sociolinguistic nature of Israel at the time. Understanding the sociolinguistic features of Lamentations is key to appreciating intersemiotics in Bible translation as well as understanding the message of the book before it can be translated. To achieve this task, there is a need to look at the book of Lamentations and its poetic nature. This will eventually bring to light important features that need serious consideration when translating this genre into an orally dominant culture. The chapter will deliberately try to look at how much of the book of Lamentations would be used as evidence of the written culture and how much would favour the oral culture. The results should be able to give us an interplay between the written and the oral in the context of Lamentations and indeed in our approach to translating the book. At this stage, the researcher

takes cognisance of Green (2017:199) when he talks about the interpretive strategies with regard to locating meaning of the biblical text by considering behind-the-text approaches, in-the-text approaches and in-front-of-the-text approaches. Of particular interest here are the behind-the-text approaches in relation to rhetorical criticism.

Green states that:

**Behind-the-text** approaches address the text as a window through which to access and examine the deposit of “meaning.” These approaches then, locate meaning in the history assumed by the text, the history that gave rise to the text, and/or the history to which a text gives witness.

**In-the-text** approaches recalibrate their focus on the qualities of the text itself, its architecture and texture.

**In-front-of-the-text** approaches orient themselves around the perspectives of various readers of the text, on communities of interpretation, and/or on the effects that texts have on their readers. In this case, readers do not simply identify but also help to produce meaning.

When discussing the in-front-of-the-text approaches, Green says that these approaches emphasise how our attempts to understand texts are shaped by what we as modern readers/hearers bring with us to the text: our formation, our interests, our questions, etc. Among other things, we go to ancient texts with all our cultural backgrounds to make sense out of the text which also addressed people who had their cultural backgrounds; the cultural backgrounds should meet in the text. The text, therefore, is the meeting point of the authors’ cultural background and the reader’s cultural background. It should hastily be mentioned here that of particular interest is the oral background of the reader of Lamentations that is expected to be

explored against the oral background of Lamentations through the written text in its current form.

This study is not a commentary but rather an investigation of the role or influence of the oral culture on the written text and/or vice-versa. Any attempt in this paper to talk about the three approaches as presented by Green would be made in light of this investigation to ascertain the inseparability or the interplay between the written and the oral within the interlingual and intralingual translation. In other words, this is an investigation of the presence of intersemiotics within the intralingual and Interlingual Translation as the main focus here. It should not, however, be convoluted with “Source Criticism” implored when studying the Pentateuch which involves “an analysis of biblical texts for evidence of the written or oral sources on which they are based” (Green 2017:190). It will not be unwise, though, to use some aspects of Form Criticism and Tradition Criticism where necessary on the book of Lamentations. The idea is to ascertain the literary patterns, or forms, and identify the relationship between the forms of those units and their functions in the socio-historical settings of the communities in which they were orally transmitted (Green 2017:193). We begin with the background to the book in question.

### **3.3.1 Background to the book of Lamentations**

The actual date of the authorship of this book is unknown. Both external and internal evidence do not give enough information about the exact date when the book was written. There is no information on how the book came to be composed, except that it seems likely that the five chapters once existed as independent poems (Berlin 2002:ix). However, the internal evidence in the book of Lamentations itself shows that the poems could have been composed soon after the 586 BCE destruction of Jerusalem. This assertion is supported by the earliest written traditions about Lamentations such as the Septuagint, Vulgate Mishnah and the Targums (Dobbs-Allsopp 2002:4). The poems are laments over Jerusalem that was left in ruins after the

Babylonians destroyed it and took the Israelites into captivity. Perhaps it is important to shed more light on the Septuagint (the Greek Translation of the Hebrew Bible), Vulgate (Latin Translation of the Bible), Mishnah and the Targum. The Mishnah is the body of Jewish oral law that was written down by the end of the 2nd century AD (Bromiley 1988:384). It is necessary here to provide brief definitions of the Mishnah and the Targum. The term *targum* is associated primarily with the various Aramaic translations of the Old Testament (Young 1988:727).

The fact that the date and authorship of Lamentations is anonymous, it is difficult to locate the exact place where the book was written. It is not in black and white as to who wrote the book of Lamentations although it is traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah. It is quite significant that this attribution is not found in the Hebrew Bible, where Lamentations is separated from Jeremiah and placed among the Writings. However, the Septuagint (LXX) puts it immediately after Jeremiah; an indication that the book is ascribed to Jeremiah. The Septuagint translation begins with a brief paragraph which is not found in most Septuagint versions:

“It came to pass that after Israel was taken captive and Jerusalem was made desolate, Jeremiah sat weeping and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem and said ...;” then the first chapter begins. The Vulgate (Latin) translation has adopted this statement and also the Arabic version (Gaebelein 2009:255).

This introductory paragraph does not actually appear in the Septuagint versions that we have in circulation. It could, however, be argued that this paragraph contributes to associating the book to Jeremiah’s authorship. Collins (2004:348) suggests that the approach used by the LXX to have Lamentations just after Jeremiah was probably based on a lost Hebrew original. Apart from the Septuagint, other writings such as the Targum, the Syriac (Peshitta), and Vulgate make the same ascription to Jeremiah, as does the Babylonian Talmud (*B. Bat.* 15a) and other

rabbinic works, which quote the book in the form: “Jeremiah says ...” (Hillers 1992:138). Despite all the ascriptions to Jeremiah in the Septuagint, Targums and in the Rabbinic literature, as well as the Vulgate, the consensus of modern scholarship is that Jeremiah was not the author (Collins 2004:348). However, the anonymity of the author of this book turns out to be a strong base for ascribing the authorship to Jeremiah because he was a witness to the fall of Jerusalem, especially that the Lament is over the fallen Jerusalem. It is generally assumed that Lamentations was composed shortly after the fall of Jerusalem, when the grief was still fresh. Apart from being a witness, Jeremiah also uttered mournful process. For example, Jeremiah 9:1 “O that my heart were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day and night for the slain of my people.” Jeremiah was also said to have written laments in 2 Chronicles 35:25, a lament over Josiah (Hillers 1992), and this in itself is helping the ascription to Jeremiah as the author of the Book of Lamentation. However, the debate is an ongoing one; it is clear that the author could probably have been a contemporary of the destruction of the temple.

Without or with the anonymity of the author, the context being addressed in the book is not questionable. The book expresses pain and agony, caused by divine punishment in response to human sin (House 2004:278). It is a fruit of Judah’s disastrous defeat and painful exile (Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush 1996). This alone is a window through which the social status of the people and their relationship with God can easily be seen. With due respect to ancient traditions that associated Lamentations with Jeremiah, the book remains anonymous.

### **3.3.2 Lamentations as poetry**

It is important to have a brief discussion concerning the literary type of Lamentation. The whole book is poetic, and it has five poems divided into five chapters. Lamentations is not the only

book that has poems in the Old Testament. Just as there are other text types such as narratives in the Old Testament, there are substantial amounts of poetic passages in the entire Bible.

Accounting for the Old Testament only, there are major writing strategies, namely: prose and poetry. Fokkelmann (2001:1) says a reasonably accurate estimate would be that more than 37 per cent of 1574 pages of the Hebrew Bible, about 585 pages, contain poetry. He, however, acknowledges that because these figures are fluid, especially in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Ecclesiastes, it is hard to determine the proportion of poetry to prose. Even so, the percentage of poetry in the Hebrew Bible is not less than one-third. This percentage is huge, and Lamentations as a whole is poetry. Wegner (1999:41) says: “One reason why there is so much poetry is that it moves the heart and emotions more than does prose.”

Poetry is a comparably more artificial language than prose, that is, artificial to everyday speech. It is more self-conscious language, which means that more thought is put into how something is said as well as what is said (VanGemenen 1997:114). It is important to re-emphasise VanGemenen’s perspective that since poetry demands that more thought is put into its composition, it is clear that the interpretive and translation approaches on such a text may not be exactly the same as those used on the narratives. This is of major importance in this research, especially in translating such a text for an oral culture.

In later Jewish traditions, Lamentations was read on the ninth of Ab in late July to remember the destruction of Solomon’s Temple on that date in 586 BC (VanGemenen 1997:118). This leaves us with a question: “If this use of Lamentations is a later Jewish tradition, how was Lamentations used in the earlier traditions?” This question is worth exploring. The book consists of five poems, the first four written as alphabetic acrostics proceeding through the alphabet from *aleph* to *tav*, while the fifth is not an alphabetic acrostic but evokes the alphabet with its twenty-two-line structure. The poems have fewer obvious unifying principles than

many other books, so redaction critics may be frustrated in their search for distinctive theological strands and form critics hampered in their struggle to discern how the poems fit into the lament forms found in the Psalms (House 2004:278).

Lamentations is a non-narrative text, and it has not fully received the attention that it needs in so far as translating it into an orally dominant culture is concerned. Two questions linger in the mind of the researcher here: “Does the poetic nature of the book of Lamentations affect the importance of considering intersemiotics in translating the book? Does this poetic nature shed more light on the orality of Lamentations?” House (2004:279) says that paying attention to Lamentations may produce a heightened appreciation for the power and relevance of the Old Testament poetry, especially poetry that addresses harsh subject matter. House (2004:279) further says:

Taken together, the poems that make up the book of Lamentations display a linguistic and conceptual power rarely seen even in biblical literature. Their power grows out of their subject, structure, dramatic presentation, irony (particularly the irony of reversal), shifting tone, historical setting, theological weight, and paradoxical imagery. This power is definitely evident when the book is read aloud, yet this power is even more obvious when the book is read and reread silently. As a written text, Lamentations uses the eye to move the intellect and emotions. As a written text the poems create a telling logical and psychological impression. As a written text the poems have significant individual and collective weight, for they offer a sustained, detailed, and realistic sense of the terror of individual and corporate punishment for sin. Since the book comes to us as a written text, it is appropriate to give the text as it stands close attention without negating whatever life the poems have had as oral presentations.

Claus Westermann has rightly argued that the poems of Lamentations must be interpreted and appreciated as Laments. They must not be reinterpreted to fit the current conventions or preferences. He asserts that until the church rediscovers how to lament not only will the book of Lamentations remain largely unreadable; the church's ability to pray as the Bible instructs it to pray will remain impaired.

Appropriating Claus Westermann's argument for the context of Bible translation, it means that until translators rediscover how to lament, the poems of Lamentations will always remain far from being appreciated. Translators are expected to bring to visibility the oral features of the Lamentations and establish the importance of these features in the translation process. One can begin from House's words as presented above, which says: "It is appropriate to give the text as it stands close attention without negating whatever life the poems have had as oral presentations." The social setting must be understood, and the oral world must be explored if the translation of this text into the oral target context is to be effective.

The nature of poetry is generally oral as rightly put by Fokkelmann (2001:vii) that: "Poetry is the most ingenious form of verbal." This means that it has a touch of creativity and imagination in the way it is orally expressed. With that in mind, when a translator is working on an interlingual written translation on the book of Lamentations, he/she should not assume that it can be done without first consulting the creativity of the oral of both the target and the source. An intersemiotic process takes place here before the translator can write down the expression in the target language. By intersemiotic process, the researcher means that there is a back-and-forth movement from written signs of the source language into the oral signs of the target language before eventually writing down what the target language would be comfortable with as their translation. At this stage, it is again very important to understand that the translator is

expected to interrogate the oral context of the source language text in the process of understanding the written text because the source text is inherently oral in its original state.

One of the essential characteristics of poetry is that it is coined in such a way that it is easy to memorise for performance. Again, performance is not meant for the literary community but for an oral community and its target is to affect the heart and the emotions of the addressees. This shows that the real essence of any poetry lies in it being expressed orally. This has an implication for translation. Its true nature is in the oral expression, although it might be kept in the written form. Due to its memorable nature, the whole national epics and key historical and religious memories for ancient cultures were preserved in poetry (Fee 2003:197). Lamentations is such a book.

### **3.3.2.1 Meter versus rhythm as a poetic feature**

For the poem to be memorable, it has to have a rhythm which is sometimes referred to as a meter. The traces of a meter in Lamentations would suggest that, primarily, the poems were to be performed or communicated orally. Longman (1988) defines meter as a patterned rhythm that structures a whole poem. It is a special rhythm in a verse, usually determined by the number of stressed syllables or accented words in a given line (Wendland and Zogbo 2020: 349). Stress or accent is an oral feature. According to Longman (1988), the debate concerning the presence of a meter in biblical Hebrew poetry is not yet over, whether biblical Hebrew poetry always has meter or not. This debate does not exclude Lamentations, where the issue is whether a particular kind of meter, the *qînâ*, occurs. The *qînâ* seems to have been a musical composition that was used for laments in ancient Israel, and which had a specific kind of meter—in paired poetic lines the first line was longer than the second line, perhaps with a 3:2 meter (see Garr

1983). However, the 3:2 meter is not consistently used in Lamentations, nor do all laments or dirges in the Old Testament exhibit this meter.

Due to the inconclusive nature of the debate on the meter, few details will be given on it because of the unsatisfactory examples of meter in the book of Lamentation. Berlin (2002:2) argues that there is no actual meter in any countable sense, in biblical poetry. To that effect, the wish to tabulate the examples for meter will not suffice because the rhythms that would be regarded as meter may not pass the criteria of counting the accents in poetry line. Instead, Berlin suggests that we should be talking about rhythm as opposed to meter. It is agreed that not all Hebrew poetry has meter, but there is still a pattern, and the pattern may have different relationships of words or phrases.

### **3.3.2.2 Parallelism as a pattern of Lamentations**

Lowth names Parallelism as a significant pattern in biblical poetry and he provides three categories: (1) Synonymous Parallelism, (2) Antithetical Parallelism, and (3) Synthetical Parallelism (Longman 1996:938). In explaining Lowth's categories of parallelism, Fee (2003:198) provides more clarity. Below is his explanation of the three kinds of parallelism:

- A. Synonymous Parallelism: The second or subsequent line repeats or reinforces the sense of the first line.
- B. Antithetical Parallelism: The second or subsequent line contrasts the thought of the first, often reinforcing the first line by the contrast.
- C. Synthetical Parallelism: The second or subsequent line adds to the first line in any manner that provides further information.

Parallelism is an important feature in biblical poetry and much attention to it reveals diverse relationships that exist within it. This has led to the argument that Lowth's three categories of parallelism are not adequate to handle the diverse relationships. According to Zogbo and

Wendland (2020:26), there is a call to go beyond Lowth's classification of parallelism because scholars today generally acknowledge that the parallel lines can express many more relationships than the three types attributed to Lowth.

It should be in the mind of the translator that Lamentations should be read as poems, with a performer in their minds. The structural breakdown or presentation should be understood as a device for enhancing the memory of the Performer. Fee (2003) brings out two critical points concerning Hebrew poetry that also apply to Lamentations:

1. Hebrew poetry, by its very nature, was addressed to the mind through the heart. Much of the language is intentionally emotive. It means that the translator must be careful not to over-exegete the five poems of Lamentations.
2. The vocabulary of poetry is purposefully metaphorical. Thus, one must take care to look for the intent of the metaphor.

### **3.3.2.3 Acrostic nature of Lamentations**

This section analyses the acrostic nature of Lamentations as a pattern of biblical poetry and its application in the original form of the laments in an Old Testament oral culture. This survey will help establish how the oral-aural situation would help translators with an approach that would enrich their translation of Lamentations into an orally dominant culture. One of the questions at the back of the researcher's mind is whether the acrostic style present in the book of Lamentations was actually present in its oral form. Again, this has nothing to do with the form criticism approach to understanding the book, but rather with how the oral and written are related to one another.

An acrostic is defined as a device employed in poetry whereby the initial letters or signs of each line, read downward, constitute a name, a sentence, or an alphabetic pattern (Soll

1992:58). A closer look at the structure of Lamentations, it is clear that twenty-two stanzas of chapters one, two, and four follow the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in their order. However, chapter two and four place the letter *Pe* before the letter *Ayin*. The variation in the order of the alphabet in chapters two and four probably relates to an early alternate order of the alphabet attested in ancient inscriptions (Dobbs-Allsopp 2009); alternatively, it can be used to suggest that there could have been a redaction. Chapter three of Lamentations follows the same arrangement of *Pe* before the *Ayin*, but it has sixty-six verses; each letter is assigned to three verses in the regular order of the alphabet, except for the transposition of *Pe* and *Ayin*. Chapter five has twenty-two verses but without alphabetic acrostic. It can be argued, however, that this poem or chapter was structured with the number of alphabetic characters in mind although the lines are slightly different in structure. Boda (2012:481) describes acrostics as a literary device that appears at several points in the Old Testament as well as in other Semitic literature, such as Akkadian, Ugaritic and Paleo-Canaanite.

Several purposes have been offered to explain the use of acrostics, including fulfilling magical rites, aiding memorisation of poems, emphasising completeness, or producing aesthetically pleasing literature (Westermann 1994: 98–100) Although there may be multiple purposes behind the use of acrostics, most likely they communicate that the poem expresses totality, and in the case of Lamentations both the total devastating effect of the destruction and the total expression of the pain of those who experienced it (Boda 2012:481).

Are there any possibilities that the book of Lamentations has undergone redaction to include the acrostic style? Based on its arrangement, Hastings (1909:527) held that Lamentations has a more artificial embellishment, suggesting that Lamentations may have undergone redaction of some kind. Redaction criticism focuses on how the reformulation, or redaction, of early traditions, is significant for a later community. It studies how the oral and written sources have been edited (or redacted) in the preparation of the new text (Green 2017:195). Redaction is at

play here because of the long process of transmitting the texts of the Bible and now of translating them into so many target languages.

#### **3.3.2.4 Babylonian acrostics versus Hebrew acrostics in Lamentations**

A comparison of the Biblical Hebrew acrostics with the Babylonian acrostics would perhaps be important to establish how wide the acrostics were used in Mesopotamia. Soll (1988:21) advises that: “Comparison between Babylonian and biblical acrostics will not resolve all questions about acrostic poetry, but it can be a basis for some useful generalisations and caveats about the authorship, setting, genre, purpose and aesthetic appeal of these compositions.” In the opinion of the researcher, this is a piece of essential advice, worth heeding in this endeavour. However, the useful generalisations are still very important for this study.

Babylonian acrostics and Hebrew acrostics as in Lamentations both refer to specific forms of literature that involve the use of acrostic patterns. An acrostic is a type of poem or text in which the first, last, or other specific letters in each line or stanza spell out a word, phrase, or message when read in sequence (Soll 1992). It uses a language’s alphabet to order a text with the first word of a regularly patterned line scheme with successive letters of the alphabet.

In ancient Babylonian literature, acrostic patterns were commonly used in various texts, particularly in religious and mythological compositions. One famous example is the “Enuma Elish,” the Babylonian creation myth, which contains an acrostic at the beginning of each of its seven tablets. Lambert (1992) cautions that that it is often misleadingly called “The (Babylonian) Epic of Creation.” The purpose of the Enuma Elish was to explain and justify the rise of the god Marduk to headship of the pantheon, and creation is incidental to that. Each acrostic praises a specific deity or the author of the tablet. This practice of including acrostics was a way to honour and invoke divine beings, making these compositions more sacred and significant. Therefore, the acrostic system is not unique the Hebrew Bible alone.

The Hebrew Bible contains a number of alphabetic acrostics. Soll (1992:59), argues that the earliest biblical acrostics are found in Psalms 9–10 and Nahum 1, which are dated to the period of the Judean monarchy before the exile while many other biblical acrostics are likely from the exilic or postexilic periods. The suggestion that many other biblical acrostics are from the exilic (during the Babylonian exile) or postexilic (after the Babylonian exile) periods implies that the use of acrostics might have continued or become more prominent during and after the exile. This could be due to cultural, religious, or educational shifts that influenced the writing and composition of biblical texts during these times. Overall, the use of acrostics in the Bible reflects the intricate and creative nature of ancient Hebrew literature, and these literary devices provide insight into the historical and cultural contexts of the texts.

The Lamentations acrostics form part of a collection of poetic elegies within the Hebrew Bible. The book is renowned for employing acrostic patterns in its initial four chapters. These acrostics in the book of Lamentations fulfil multiple functions. Primarily, the acrostic arrangement functions as a memory aid, facilitating memorisation and contributing to the overall flow and structure of the text. In a tradition reliant on oral transmission, this pattern aids recitation from memory, enabling reciters to retain verse order and lamentation content. Additionally, the acrostics serve as a tool for organising the structure of the work, imparting a sense of organisation to the poems of lamentation and guiding readers methodically through the material. Lastly, the utilisation of acrostics accentuates the profound emotions of lament and mourning found in the text. It reinforces the sombre mood and underscores the depth of sorrow expressed by the author. It does underscore the depth of sorrow if we consider the metaphorical meaning of alphabetical acrostics as referring to totality and completeness (Gottwald 1954: 23–32)

In summary, both Babylonian acrostics and Lamentations acrostics involve the use of acrostic patterns in their respective literary contexts. The Babylonian acrostics were often used in

religious and mythological compositions, while the Lamentations acrostics were utilised in the poetic elegies of the book of Lamentations to provide structure, aid memory, and emphasise the themes of mourning and lamentation.

### **3.3.2.5 Orality in the acrostic nature of Lamentations**

Can the acrostic nature of Lamentations serve as a witness to the oral nature of the book? What is the relationship between alphabetic acrostics and the oral tradition of the Old Testament? Should acrostics be exclusively understood as a literary feature? These questions need careful attention if a translation of Lamentations would be meaningful to the modern orally dominant culture.

To start with, it is important to acknowledge the strong bond between orality and the development of the writing system. The writing system was developed to represent what was orally communicated. Wegner (1999:73-86) discusses the development of the writing system, which serves as an important reminder that an intersemiotic interplay between the oral, the written and the pictorial or sign system of communication cannot be ignored. He says: “The earliest forms of writing are pictures and drawings that communicated a story or idea.” These stories were communicated orally but needed to be somehow kept in writing as a reminder form for future retelling of the same. From drawings, Wegner notes that there was further development into pictograms which basically were pictures of objects which represented letters or sounds. He gives an example of a bull’s head which represented an aleph in Hebrew. Wegner takes it further that from pictograms came the logograms which he defines as a picture that represents a concept, and that each picture may represent several different meanings. With time, there was standardisation and simplification of these pictures to come up with the alphabetic characters. The simplified signs, now the alphabetic characters, became representative of sounds (orality) and this shows how impossible it is to delink the written from

the oral communication even within the written text. Wegner (1999:77) makes a very profound statement when he says: “A letter equals a sound so that words are formed by placing together certain sounds.” Therefore, letters themselves are oral features, and that orality is an element of the writing system, and it needs to be taken seriously.

It is worth remembering that the written form of the Bible as we know it, a good percentage of it was originally handed down by word of mouth (Barré 2017:134). Only later were the oral texts written down, eventually assuming the form of a book. In the nineteenth century there was a great deal of interest in the origins of the Bible. Biblical researchers began to notice and then to investigate the similarity between the shape of many biblical passages and folklore traditions in modern societies. This led to the realisation that many of the biblical stories once existed in oral form, although not all biblical books had an oral background. Barré (2017:134) notes that even after the oral traditions came to be written down, they continued to be recited (for example, in rituals or storytelling). Because it was not fixed like the written version, the oral version continued to develop. Over time, various additions or changes would occur in the oral form of the tradition. Eventually, this process could affect the written word. To demonstrate this further, Barré (2017:134) presents two examples to show the oral background of the Old Testament:

1. Many of the stories about the patriarchs (or ancestors) were classified as “sagas.” A saga was a short, easily memorised, simple folk story that had little in the way of plot or character development and was handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The category includes the various stories about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Genesis.
2. The oral aspect of biblical tradition can also be seen in the Psalter. The Psalms were originally sung prayers in poetic form that were later written down. They continued to be sung — from memory — in the temple services. Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22

are two versions of the same Psalm, though there are many divergences in the wording of these two versions. Many experts in the Psalms today believe that the divergences stem partly from the fact that this prayer continued to have an oral existence even after being cast in written form.

There are quite a few acrostic poems in the Hebrew Bible. A broader understanding of these acrostics provide a good base from which to discuss the acrostic nature of Lamentations. This would eventually help ascertain the place of orality in the written text of Lamentations. It is important to note that acrostics are not unique to the Hebrew Bible. Acrostics are known from many historical periods and literary traditions, the oldest coming from ancient Mesopotamia (Dobbs-Allsopp 2000:14). There is evidence of acrostics in the Ancient Near East. The earliest examples of *name/sentence acrostics* are Babylonian and the two can be dated to the reigns of Ashurbanipal and Nebuchadnezzar II respectively since they mention those kings by name (Soll 1992:58). Lambert (1960: 67) adds that the best-known Babylonian acrostic, the so-called *Babylonian Theodicy*, has been provisionally dated ca. 1000 – 750 B.C.E. *Babylonian Theodicy* is a Mesopotamian wisdom poem consisting of a dialogue between a sufferer and his friend exploring the topic of theodicy or divine justice, and it consists of 27 stanzas of 11 lines each (Magnum 2016). This only goes to show that the idea of acrostics was an Ancient Near Eastern concept. However, the Hebrew Bible has *alphabetic acrostics* in which successive lines or stanzas open with successive Hebrew letters (LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush 1996). In the Hebrew Bible, some examples of the acrostic poems include: Psalm 9–10 (two verses for each of the twenty-two Hebrew consonants); Psalm 25 (one verse for each Hebrew consonant); Psalm 34 (one verse for each Hebrew consonant); Psalm 37; 111–112 (half verse for each Hebrew consonant); 119 (eight verses for each Hebrew consonant); 145 (one verse for each Hebrew consonant, albeit the missing nun); Proverbs 31:10-31; and Lamentations 1–4. Scanning

through some of the alphabetic acrostics shows that some acrostics are partial while others are complete.

Brand, Draper, and England (2003:20), talk about two functions of acrostic style, namely: (1) to help people memorise the poem and (2) to express completeness of subject matter from the first letter of the alphabet to the last letter. The completeness of the subject matter is sometimes expressed in English by using the expression “from A to Z.” While it may at times have been used merely as a stylistic nicety for both reader and listener, it more often served as a mnemonic device for pedagogic purposes in wisdom circles or to express the totality of the ideas addressed in the composition (Myers 1987:17).

Of the five poems which form the book of Lamentations, four are acrostics; chapter 1–2 begin each three-line stanza with the successive letter of the alphabet; in chapter 3 each line (of the three-line stanzas) begins with the appropriate letter; and chapter 4 contains two-line stanzas (Myers 1987:17).

Each line in Psalm 119’s twenty-two eight-line stanzas begins with the letter assigned (in successive order through the alphabet) to its stanza (Myers 1987:17). Thus in Psalm 119 the first eight verses begin with *aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; the next eight with *bet*, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the pattern is continued through verses 169–176, which each begin with *taw*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Brand, Draper, and England 2003:20).

Lamentations follows an acrostic poetic pattern for four chapters and then breaks that pattern in chapter five. A reading of the Hebrew text of Lamentations immediately presents a very interesting structure which also raises some interest in the mind of any person that upholds the fact that the text was initially oral. How can we relate what we are seeing with our own eyes, the style that looks more literate in its structural organisation, to what was communicated

orally? It is essential at this stage to have a broader understanding of acrostics in the Hebrew Bible if one is to understand the connection between the oral communication of the Hebrew text and its current written logical form.

### **3.3.2.6 Oral-aural communication of Lamentations in its acrostic form**

It is true that the Hebrew culture was predominantly oral in nature and that the biblical text was initially communicated orally. However, the written text that we have as the source language text calls for more investigation to determine the kind of relationship that was there between the written and oral. Lamentations present a challenge to the assertion that the biblical text was predominantly communicated orally. For example, some scholars such as Gaebelien suggest that “Lamentations is too artificial, too much studied, too elaborately worked out” (Gaebelien 2009). Although form is central to poetry in general, and that the acrostic represents an important formal device in Hebrew poetry, Dobbs-Allsopp (2000:14) stresses that scholars have posited that acrostics are used in the OT as either pedagogic devices or mnemonic aids. This takes us to a general understanding that there is no poem that is meant to be on paper, every poem reflects an oral reading – it is meant to be performed either orally or signed in sign language. It is meant to be orally expressed as opposed to being static on paper, no matter how beautiful it looks on paper.

### **3.3.2.7 Lamentations as a lament or dirge in the Hebrew Bible**

Lamentations would be categorised together with the Psalms of laments. Laments constitute the largest group of Psalms in the Psalter. There are more than sixty, including individual and corporate laments.

Examples of individual laments may include, but are not limited, to Psalm 3, Psalm 22, Psalm 31, Psalm 39, Psalm 42, Psalm 57, Psalm 71, Psalm 88, Psalm 120, Psalm 139, and Psalm 142.

A closer reading of these Psalms will show either an expression or a presupposition of deep trust in Yahweh, helping a person to express struggles, suffering, or disappointment to the Lord.

Examples of corporate laments include Psalm 12, Psalm 44, Psalm 80, Psalm 94, Psalm and Psalm 137. These Psalms also show and presume deep trust in the Yahweh for a group of people rather than for an individual. It is however interesting that Lamentations is not categorised under either of these two types of laments.

Westermann (1994) argues that the poems of Lamentations must be interpreted and appreciated as Laments. It is important here to understand the nature of lamentations in the Old Testament and relate the oral to the written in the earlier form of its communication. There has been a considerable study on whether Lamentations is a lament or a dirge. Perhaps it would be more helpful to define a lament and a dirge.

A “dirge” can be defined as a “song or poem that expresses mourning over death or national destruction” (Lee 2000). It is a mournful song or poem expressing grief typically composed for a funeral or as a memorial to the deceased. The book of Lamentations can be seen as a dirge because it mourns the tragic events and loss of life that occurred during the Babylonian siege and conquest of Jerusalem. As indicated above, dirges were often written in *qînâ* meter, with each couplet having five stressed syllables, the second part shorter than the first. Lee (2000) presents basic elements of a dirge which include but not limited to (a) the cry, “Alas!” (*hôy*, Jer. 22:18) or “How ...!” (*’êkâ*, Lamentations 1:1); (b) an announcement of death or catastrophe (Lamentations 1:1–4); (c) a description of suffering (Lamentations 1:5–6); (d) contrast between the former and present situation (Ezekiel 27:33–34); (e) a call to weep or wail (Isaiah 14:31); (f) and a description of the effect upon bystanders (Lamentations 1:12).

A “lament” is a passionate expression of grief or sorrow. Lamentations indeed contains heartfelt expressions of grief and sorrow over the devastation and suffering experienced by the

people of Judah and Jerusalem. Lee (2000) distinguishes a dirge from a lament by emphasising that a lament addresses God with the aim of alleviating suffering he emphatically states that the book of Lamentations contains both genres. From Lee's point of view, one can summarise that the book of Lamentations is both a dirge and a lament, as it mourns the destruction of Jerusalem and expresses profound sorrow and grief over the tragic events that took place.

However, Willis (2002:395) notes that there is little point in distinguishing between "laments" and "dirges," let alone establishing whether Lamentations is a lament or dirge. He says that this discussion is mainly focussed on analysing the literary form of Lamentations. His argument is based on the distinction made by modern form critics that the term "lament" is exclusively used to refer to the suffering of one who is still alive while a dirge expresses grief over one who has died. With this definition of the two terms, according to Willis (2002), it is difficult to state categorically and exclusively that the book of Lamentations is a lament or a dirge because both terms have been applied to various parts of the book of Lamentations. The bottom line is that the social context is that of suffering, with much emotion attached to it.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The chapter has endeavoured to provide a general understanding of sociolinguistics. Specifics in terms of translation with special focus on the book of Lamentations have been highlighted and important sociolinguistic features that are relevant to this study have been discussed. The background of the book covering authorship, literary features that are relevant to sociolinguistics, as well as some social challenges of the people, could not be avoided. One of the key aspects of special interest was the discussion of Lamentations as poetry. Discussing Lamentations as a collection of poems hinted on aspects to do with meter versus rhythm, parallelism and the acrostic nature of the book. The study concerning the acrostic nature of the book could not proceed without comparing it to the Babylonian acrostics. The focus in the

study of the acrostic nature of Lamentations was aimed at asking questions that would trigger the need to explore the link between orality of Lamentations in its original social context versus what is kept in the Biblical Hebrew text. The purpose was to establish oral-aural communication of the five laments and the implications this has for intersemiotic Bible translation. The study has revealed that even within the process of studying the sociolinguistic aspects of lamentations, there is a continuous process of moving from one semiotic system to another. These semiotic systems include oral, visual and written.

The next chapter discusses the Nsenga people and their use of the Nsenga language, particularly during moments of crisis, calamity, or grief. It examines the Nsenga ethnic group, their literature, and their oral tradition of laments, with a focus on the poetic elements within these expressions of sorrow.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIOLINGUISTIC FEATURES OF NSENGA LAMENTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the Nsenga people and their use of the Nsenga language, particularly in times of crisis, calamity, or grief. It discusses the Nsenga people as an ethnic group, their literature, and their spoken form of laments. The researcher focuses on the presence of poetry in Nsenga, specifically laments. Samples of collected Nsenga laments are presented to help understand the theoretical framework needed for translating Lamentations into the language. The Nsenga Bible is being translated into the Nsenga language, with the goal of completing the Nsenga Bible by the end of 2027. The findings of this research will be applicable to this translation as well as to any Bible translation into any orally dominant culture, especially when handling the book of Lamentations.

### **4.2 Nsenga people and their language**

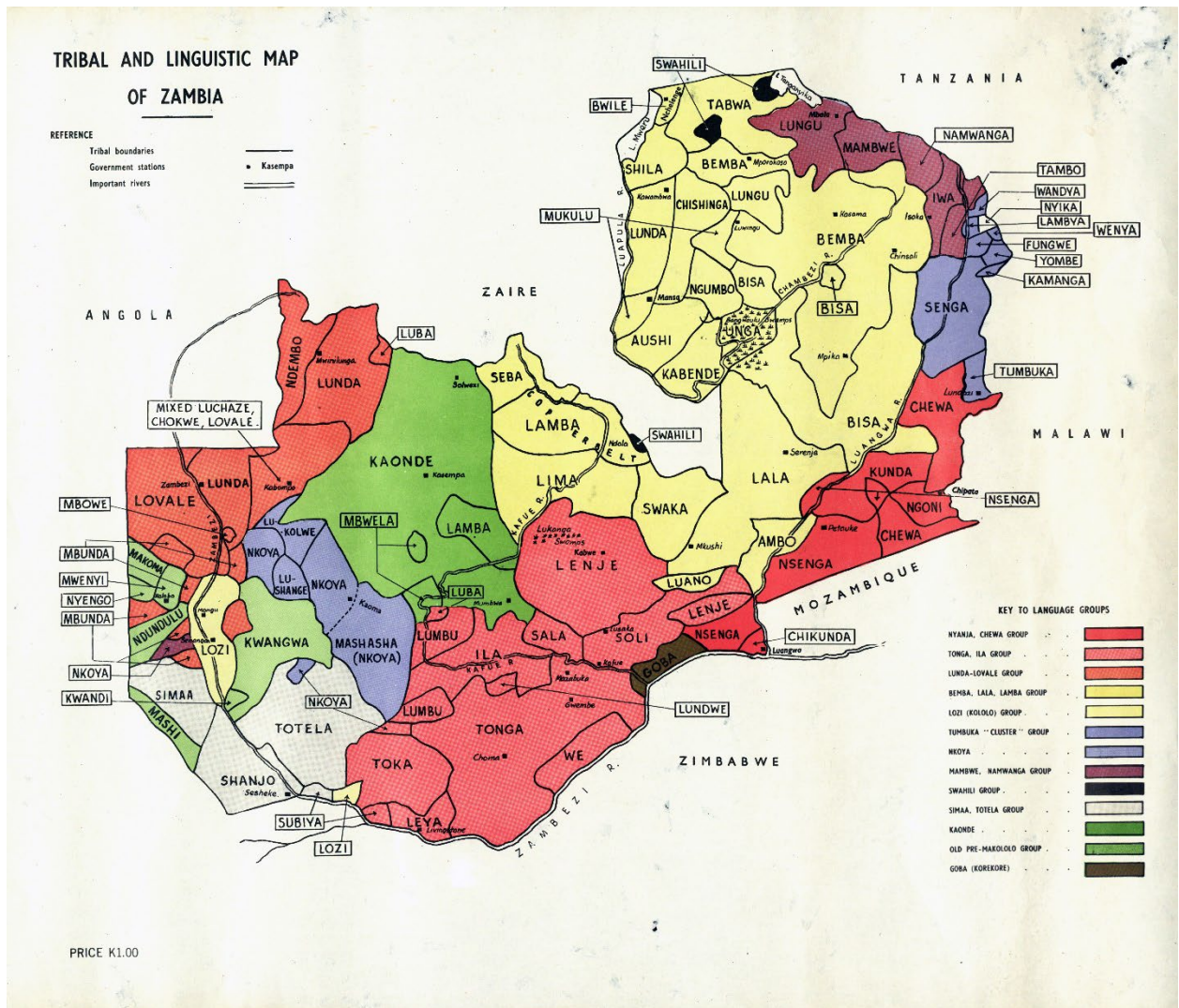
To fully appreciate the target group of the research, it is important to discuss the topic in two parts. The first focus will be on the Nsengas as a people group and the second will be focused on Nsenga as a language.

#### **4.2.1 Nsengas as a people group**

Nsengas are a Bantu-speaking people inhabiting the Luangwa River valley area of the Eastern Province of Zambia (Miti 2001; Poole 1949). They are currently found in the two districts of Petauke and Nyimba in Eastern Zambia.

However, these people will no longer be confined to the two districts that have been mentioned because the Government of Zambia has embarked on a deliberate agenda of creating more districts by dividing the districts that are vast in size. The two districts in which the Nsenga live

are not an exception. This means that in future, the Nsenga people will no longer be confined to only the Petauke and Nyimba districts of the Eastern Province of Zambia.



**Figure 1. Tribal and linguistic map of Zambia**  
 ([https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Tribal\\_Linguistic\\_map\\_Zambia.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Tribal_Linguistic_map_Zambia.jpg))

As the situation stands now, the Nsengas of Petauke are referred to as the Nsenga Luzi. Nsenga people are believed to share some social norms and customs with the Bemba, Bisa, and Lala peoples to the north of the country. The sharing of some of the social norms will be highlighted when discussing the laments in Nsenga and how these laments relate to those found in these tribes that share the same social norms as the Nsenga. As early as the 1900s, the Nsenga formed one of the largest homogeneous tribes in the East Province of Zambia, after the Chewa (Poole

1949:35). This is true to this day although they have generally been swallowed up by the Chewa due to the importance that has been attached to the Chewa language in the education system. In no way are the Nsenga people regarded as an inferior group regardless of the minimal amount of literature found in the language.

#### **4.2.2 Nsenga as a language**

The Nsenga language traces its roots to the ancient migration of Bantu-speaking groups across the African continent. Like other Bantu languages, Chinsenga belongs to the larger Niger-Congo language family. Over centuries, the Nsenga people have cultivated and enriched their language through interactions with neighbouring communities, creating a unique linguistic identity that sets them apart. As a language, Nsenga has won some serious linguistic battles against the fierce tribes of conquerors such as the Ngonis. Nsenga as a central Bantu language is not only spoken by the Nsenga people alone (Miti 2001:1). Part of the Ngoni people, a group of those who crossed the Zambezi River in 1835 from South Africa and settled in Chipata District of Eastern province, also speak the Nsenga language, yet they are Ngoni by tribe while the other Ngoni group that settled among the Tumbukas speak the Tumbuka language (Miti 2001:1). In view of the foregoing, some Nsenga cultural concepts probably crept into the Ngoni culture because language is also a vehicle of cultural concepts and has the ability to transmit cultural concepts wherever it goes. The fact that the Ngonis of Chipata adopted Nsenga as their language through marrying Nsenga women, means that there are similarities in the ways both tribes lament, although they are not identical.

Due to the fact that the Nsenga language goes beyond the Nsenga people, the statistics of the number of speakers of Nsenga language also goes beyond the subjects of the ten Nsenga chiefs, namely, Chief Kalindawalo M'ndikula (Senior Chief), Chief Mwape, Chief Nyamphande, Chief Nyanje, Chief Mumbi, Chief Sandwe, Chief Nyalugwe, Chief Ndake, Chief Lwembe

and Chief Mwanjawanthu. Chinsenga (the language Nsenga), as it is fondly called, plays a vital role in fostering social cohesion among the Nsenga people.

As a language, Nsenga is often confused with another language called Senga, a language and tribe from which the researcher comes. These are two different languages, and above all, Senga is regarded by some as a dialect of Tumbuka. However, this thesis is not concerned with establishing whether one language is a dialect of the other or not. It is however important to be more emphatic on the distinction between Nsenga and Senga as languages. One thing for sure that could not be ruled out are the cultural similarities that exist between the two language groups, due to the fact that they are both Bantu languages that belong to the same larger family and are in direct contact with one another.

One of the characteristics of the Nsenga language is that it is a tonal language, meaning that the meaning of a word can change based on the pitch or tone in which it is pronounced. Due to the fact, there are times when a tone changes a statement into a question and vice-versa. The tonal aspect of Nsenga is very critical to understanding the orality of the language and it highlights the need for special attention when doing any translation work into this language. The language features a rich array of vowel and consonant sounds, allowing for nuanced expressions of thoughts, emotions, and ideas. Nsenga language is highly versatile, adapting to modern concepts while preserving its ancient heritage.

As the Nsenga people interacted with neighbouring communities and traders, they absorbed and integrated elements from other languages, resulting in a dynamic and adaptive linguistic identity. This process of language contact contributed to the enrichment of Chinsenga and allowed it to embrace new concepts and ideas while preserving its cultural heritage. This is also true for many other Zambian languages that have come into contact with other neighbouring communities.

Throughout history, the Nsenga language has been an essential vehicle for storytelling, oral traditions, and cultural expression. Elders would pass down tales of their ancestors, myths, and legends, weaving a tapestry of knowledge that embodies the identity and values of the Nsenga community. This would always happen in the evening when elders are together with their children. This was a common practice every evening, especially in the absence of the modernisation which has brought televisions that are competing for attention from children. The language has played a crucial role in transmitting shared experiences, norms, and customs, nurturing a strong sense of cohesion and unity among the Nsenga people. This story telling use of the language can best be noticed in the different versions of the origin of the name Nsenga to be discussed in the following section. Much as there is not much consensus on the origin of the name Nsenga, the stories that have trickled down to this day still remain as testament to how Nsengas use language for cultural identity.

It is undeniable that in contemporary times, the Nsenga language faces challenges from globalising influences, modernisation, and the dominance of what would be regarded as larger language groups which are more widely spoken languages. An example of one such a language is Chewa because it is regional language imposed by the education system on the Nsenga people. These factors pose a risk to the vitality and continued use of Chinsenga. However, the Nsenga people, recognising the importance of their language in preserving their culture and identity, are actively working to revitalise and preserve Chinsenga for future generations. Through collaborative efforts, the language has won wide usage in radio and television drama. The Nsenga community is determined to ensure that the unique linguistic heritage of the Nsenga people endures and thrives in the face of the ever-changing world. Many television dramas that have a character that is fluent in Chisenga becomes a darling for many viewers in Zambia because the language is a marvel to listen to.

### 4.2.3 Origin of the name Nsenga

The term “Nsenga” has been subject to various interpretations regarding its origin, but none of these explanations has been entirely satisfactory. Poole (1949) discusses the three derivations that have been passed on orally from generation to generation.

Firstly, one proposed connection is with the root *senga*, found in neighbouring dialects as Mchenga, Musenga, and Henga, meaning “sand.” However, this application of the term to the Nsenga region seems inappropriate as the local word for “sand” is actually *Msechi*.

Secondly, another suggested derivation is from the word *Musenga* or *Misenga*, which refers to a type of grass. While a significant area of the southeastern part of the Nsenga region is known as Misenga due to the prevalence of this short grass, the central area, inhabited by the paramount chief Kalindawalu, is referred to as Mbala after a distinct tall, stout grass in that region.

Thirdly, there is also a persistent tradition that the name “Nsenga” was given to the inhabitants by outsiders due to their cultivation and production of a type of cotton that was believed to be indigenous to the region. Modern research, however, leans toward the belief that this so-called indigenous cotton is likely the Pernambuco variety, introduced in the 16th and 17th centuries by early Portuguese colonists. This challenges the idea of truly indigenous cotton in the area. Nevertheless, some historical accounts, such as those by Dos Santos and Livingstone, suggest the existence of wild cotton plants along the Zambezi and indigenous cotton species near Zomba in Nyasaland. In light of these differing viewpoints, Poole (1949:35) is of the view that the derivation of “Nsenga” from the cotton plant is still another possibility.

The Nsenga ethnic group lacks discernible cultural remnants from a pre-Bantu period, and there is no evidence of archaic artifacts preceding the culture of the current occupants of the region. Such traces have not been found to the east or south of the Luangwa River. This does not mean

that the Nsenga people do not have a culture; it only means that their culture cannot be traced to the pre-Bantu period. As such, as regards the origin of the Nsenga people, there are different theories that are advanced in trying to explain how the Nsenga tribe or the Nsenga ethnic group came into existence.

Poole (1949) conducted a categorisation of the theories related to the origins of the Nsenga ethnic group. These theories were initially grouped into three categories: *Mythical*, *Fable*, and *Historical*. It is worth noting that this triadic classification can be simplified into two categories, with Mythical and Fable being grouped together. Poole's work presents a narration of these categorised theories.

#### **i. The Mythical**

According to Poole, the first myth discussed pertains to the Nsenga legends. The myth revolves around a figure named Kalanda, who holds a primarily mythical significance. Kalanda's name is associated with gigantic footprints, those of his dog, his wife, and the impression of his bow on a rock situated in the Mvuvye River. Such legendary heroes are a common element in various tribal histories. Notably, Kalanda also shares a connection with contemporary tribes, as older sources of Nsenga history suggest that they originated from Kalanda Kunyansi or Kalanda in the western region. Similar markings on rocks with comparable legends are claimed to exist near the Msanzara and Nyimba rivers. This myth and its symbolic elements showcase the prevalent theme of legendary figures in tribal narratives.

The second myth discussed revolves around an immaterial tale about the presence of a footprint belonging to the great figure Undi on a rock located in the Lusangazi River. This story implies that the Nsenga people have an enduring connection to the land, and Undi's interaction is portrayed as an attempt to overcome them but ultimately limited to stepping foot in their

territory. This narrative significantly elevates the status of Undi to that of a semi-divine being within the realm of legends.

## **ii. The Fable**

Apart from the mythical origin of Nsenga, Poole (1949:36ff) discusses two fables about the origin of the Nsenga people.

The first fable attributes the origin of the Nsenga to Undi, who had three wives. The Nsenga people are said to have descended from his second wife, while the Chewa and Kunda people originated from his first and third wives, respectively.

The second fable involves Undi, Kalindawalu, and Mambwe, who are considered the heads of the Chewa, Nsenga, and Kunda tribes. They met on Ngolwe Hill and attempted to build a tall house together. However, they encountered language confusion, which led to the division of the people into tribes based on their interpretations of the requests made by the chiefs at the top of the house.

These fables shed light on the shared origin of the Chewa, Nsenga, and Kunda tribes. They also draw parallels to Old Testament stories, with the first fable being likened to the story of Noah's sons and the second fable resembling the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel. The passage emphasises the significance of language and highlights the common origin of the three tribes, regardless of the factual accuracy of the fables.

## **iii. The Historical**

Historically, the Nsenga people have their origins in the Bantu migration that took place over centuries in Africa. Specifically, the Nsenga are part of the larger Central Bantu ethnic group (Miti 2001:1). The Bantu expansion involved the migration of various Bantu-speaking groups across central, eastern, and southern Africa, driven by factors such as population growth, agricultural advancements, and environmental changes. The debate also extends to the cultural

origins of the Nsenga people. Since there are no pre-Bantu cultural artifacts that have been discovered east or south of the Luangwa River, the lack of such evidence implies the absence of Nsenga people in the pre-Bantu period around the area in question. Therefore, the Nsenga people's cultural origins cannot be traced to the pre-Bantu period.

With due respect to the differentiation between the Nsenga people as an ethnic group and the larger category of Nsenga-speaking people, it is important to note that these Nsenga-speaking people are primarily located in the Eastern Province of Zambia, as well as in certain areas of Malawi and along the borders of Mozambique. Their history is intertwined with the broader Bantu migration and the development of distinct cultural practices, languages, and social structures. Over time, the Nsenga people have established their own unique identity while sharing certain cultural and linguistic characteristics with other Bantu groups. Miti (2001:2) correctly cautions that we should not treat the Nsenga people and the Nsenga language as synonymous because there are cases where two or more ethnic groups speak the same language yet they are two different ethnic groups. He points out the Ngonis of Chipata and the Nsenga of Petauke as an example. These two ethnic groups speak the same language (Nsenga, which is Guthrie's N41) but they are two distinct ethnic groups. The Nsenga dialect spoken by the Ngonis of Chipata is a result of intermarriages that took place between the Nsenga women and the Ngoni men who survived the war. In this case, the mother tongue prevailed but the ethnic identity of the offspring was that of Ngoni although the domestic language remained Nsenga. Therefore, the group in focus for this research is the Nsenga people who speak Nsenga as their mother tongue or their heart language. Miti (2001) further notes that the Nognis retained their cultural and ethnic identity wherever they settled but adopted the language of the people among whom they settled. A case in point is of the Ngonis of Chipata who speak Nsenga and the Ngonis of Lundazi who speak Tumbuka.

### **4.3 Literature in Nsenga**

The Nsenga language is far from being regarded as a language of written literature in the sense that its appearance in literature is scanty. Only the *Nsenga New Testament* of 1923 and the *Chinsenga Handbook: A Manual of the Nsenga language, spoken in the protectorate of Northern Rhodesia* by Ranger and Sidney (1928) account for the earliest literature in Nsenga. Since then, there has been scanty printed literature in Nsenga, be it in newspapers, magazines, books or official posters. Additionally, there is no approved orthography for this language. However, in its oral form, radio and television drama groups have recently not ceased from using the language, and they have received overwhelming following because the language is exciting to the ears, and it is enjoyable. Due to the lack of literary attention to the language, Miti wrote a grammatical handbook entitled: *A Linguistic Analysis of ciNsenga* (Miti 2001). This book describes the sound system in Nsenga, the morphology and some aspects of the syntax of the language. In 2002, Miti published a sequel with the title: *Aspects of ciNsenga Tonology* (Miti 2002). *Aspects of ciNsenga Tonology* focuses on the behaviour of tone in Nsenga. In 2016, the Bible Society of Zambia published the New Testament in modern Nsenga. This was a new translation and not a revision of the 1923 Nsenga New Testament. The orthography used in the 2016 New Testament borrowed a lot from the works of Miti but with adjustments on tone markers that were regarded as too technical for an orally dominant culture. The translation process included testing the literature and its orthography among the modern Nsenga speakers for acceptability.

### **4.4 Nsenga as a spoken language**

The Nsenga language is spoken in Zambia, Mozambique and some border areas with Malawi, Mchinji District (Miti 2001). The Nsenga language is not one of the officially recognised indigenous languages of Zambia, and it is not taught at any level of the Zambian school system.

Instead, the language that is used in most Nsenga communities for education purposes in Nyanja. This confines the Nsenga language to being a spoken and not a written language. However, as a spoken language, Nsenga has penetrated the media through Radio and Television drama and it has proven to be a marvel to listen to in any drama where it has been used. Worth noting also is the fact that although Nsenga is not taught at any level in schools, it is used as a language of communication among pupils on the school premises within the Nsenga communities. This use accounts for the fact that Nsenga is a household language for all age groups in the Nsenga-speaking communities and its vitality is vigorous. As earlier mentioned, the language is also spoken by some Ngoni people who settled in Chipata.

#### **4.5 Poetry in Nsenga**

Just like many other oral cultures, Nsenga does not have documented poetic literature. There is a huge need for a serious study of poetry in Nsenga from a linguistic point of view. Perhaps that will in future shed more light on the different types of poetry found in Nsenga. This is not the focus of the current research, but this does not mean that a hint on poetry will be totally absent. To the contrary, it has to be mentioned that the Nsenga culture has a rich background of singing, dancing, and figurative sayings. This is an indicator that some important information or messages are expressed through such poetic expressions. Among the many dances practiced by the Nsenga include: Chitelele, Nsongwe, Ngumbi, Chipalu, Chintali, and many more. Each of these dances have their own contexts and reasons. The kind of songs follows the nature of the dance and its purpose. For example, the same dance of Chipalu can be danced as mere entertainment or it could be a dance at a funeral but the content of the song for the two different contexts will matter the most. The songs for Chipalu danced during a funeral would be more of a lament to address the context. This also applies to the other dances that have been mentioned.

Therefore, Nsenga is a very artistic culture in its orientation. The basic idea about songs is that they are formulated in a very poetic style to allow for repetitions which serve as emphasis on some key points, and with an intentional emotion-evoking style.

Nsengas also have ceremonies where certain poetic constructions are chanted for specific purposes including their worship of ancestral spirits. This aspect will not receive much attention especially since the focus here is on aspects that inform Nsenga laments.

Apart from songs and chants for specific purposes, Nsengas use a lot of figurative sayings to teach children, communicate important information, impart wisdom, or state the condition of a situation. These figurative sayings address different kinds of situations including calamities. It is for this reason that a lot of these figurative sayings will generally find their space in the Nsenga laments as phrases in a lament. Generally, figurative sayings are crude in nature, and if such sayings are found in Nsenga laments there is a serious need to pay particular attention to their meanings because they can be used in translating Lamentations into Nsenga for the translation to be sharper. Examples of such collected figurative sayings that have a tendency of easily creeping into Nsenga laments repetitively include the following:

a) *Chalo chamela Mano* (the world has growth teeth)

This kind of figurative saying is used when someone has died; it could be the mother, sister, brother, father etc. This is sometimes used in a kind of death where people are not fully convinced that it is a natural death but that there is suspicion of witchcraft involved. In a lament, it could even be said that “*Calo calya*” meaning “The world has eaten.”

b) *Mwanisiya pa Zuba* (You have left me in the Sun)

This saying in a lament communicates that the one who remains has been left without anyone to get help from. It simply means that all the troubles are on the one

who has remained alive. The one who was solving his/her problems is gone and all the problems will just come on him or her without anyone helping. The helper is no more.

c) *Chalo chatikulila* (The world has grown big)

This means that you can go round and round but you cannot find someone to replace the one who has died; it could be a parent. Generally, most of these figurative expressions in laments are used by women.

#### **4.6 Use of Laments in Nsenga**

Among the Nsengas, the expression of poetry can also find its manifestation in moments of lamentation, such as those marked by grief, loss, or calamity. It is crucial to acknowledge that the sampled laments are not deemed exemplary by any established criteria. Rooted in an oral tradition and encompassing the essence of lamentation, the Nsengas do not have a prescribed set of explicitly formulated standards by which to gauge the quality of a formulated lament. It must be appreciated, however, that these laments emanate from distinct emotional sentiments, aiming to invoke equivalent emotions within others.

The process of collecting Nsenga laments mainly involved audio recordings and, in some cases, video recordings. In-field natural performance settings, such as funerals, were not recorded due to the sensitivity of the context. However, a lot was learned through observing. The recordings provided by research participants were analysed with special focus on the nuances of vocal delivery, including pitch variations, tonal shifts, and emotive expressions. In some cases, video recordings were also used to document physical gestures, facial expressions, and interactions between performers and observers. The collected laments were initially recorded and then transcribed before analysing them. Due to the cultural sensitivity and the alarming nature of the laments, it was deemed insensitive to organise group performances of laments because

doing so would alarm the community into thinking that there was a real cause for the group laments. Therefore, the sampled laments were performed by individual participants to avoid alarming the community. However, discussions concerning the historical background of the Nsenga culture and general knowledge of laments in Nsenga were done in groups, but in a structured approach (see the questions in Appendix A). Both men and women were involved in individual lament performances although women were the majority. Discussions with elders (traditional community leaders) stressed that Nsenga funeral laments were predominantly performed by women, particularly older women or those with ritual experience in funeral ceremonies. This aligns with the broader Bantu cultural practice where women serve as the primary vocal mourners in grief-related rituals. However, in some cases, men, especially elders or ritual leaders, also performed specific laments.

A cornerstone of laments in Nsenga culture, summarised in the adage “*Olila omukatalini ku kamwa*” (loosely translated as “Do not hinder the utterances of the lamenting individual”), underscores the imperative to refrain from interrupting or critiquing the act of lamentation, regardless of its nature. This notion serves as a perspective through which we glimpse the prohibition against critiquing the manner or style of lamentation. Nonetheless from an academic perspective, the features and structure of the Nsenga laments warrant attention—especially if we aspire to transpose laments from other cultural contexts into the Nsenga framework, including the ambitious endeavor of translating the book of Lamentations into Nsenga.

A pivotal consideration arises from the fact that the expressions that emerge within laments are rooted in emotions, a facet that universally defies logical categorisation across cultures, with Nsenga being no exception. That being duly acknowledged, the categorisation of these laments is based on the underlying event that produces the lament, rather than on the systematic details of the lament itself.

The first lament to be discussed is from a context of grief over the loss of property. The second lament is a funeral lament, and it has three examples depicting different funeral situations depending on the one who has died and the one who is lamenting. The third lament is addressing a situation when someone is in pain or agony. This could be agony of sickness or any excruciating body pain or problem. Apart from the sampled examples, there are other situations that automatically trigger a lament among the Nsenga people. For example, if one's house has caught fire, this situation will automatically trigger a certain type of lament. Laments may also occur when one is scared of something and in trying to release the emotions, people tend to lament as an expression of the felt emotions. These laments that come as a spontaneous release of emotions generally tend to be less formally structured. More formulaic laments would be categorised among what would be regarded as a funeral dirge performed by a chief mourner. This concept is more common among other tribes such as the Bembas, and other tribes that share similar norms. This type of mourning, though not very prevalent, is not totally absent among the Nsenga people. In other Zambian cultures, it is more on the performative side of mourning and there is a deliberate effort to be stylistic and formulaic

In some laments that have been recorded, it was observed that performers put both hands on their heads reflecting the weight of the grief as well as wailing and crying between phrases, which mainly heightens the emotional intensity. Above all, the laments recorded and analysed represent authentic Nsenga mourning traditions because they maintain cultural continuity. The participants followed traditional Nsenga lamentation styles that have been passed down for generations. These laments were endorsed by knowledgeable elders thereby validating the authenticity of the laments. From observation during the in-field natural laments in real calamities and funerals, the performance of Nsenga laments remains a significant cultural practice, deeply embedded in communal mourning rituals. The combination of solo and group singing, minimal instrumental accompaniment, expressive gestures, and interactive

participation all contribute to their distinctiveness. The collection, transcription, and analysis provided in the following section affirm the richness of Nsenga lament traditions while highlighting their evolving nature in contemporary society.

#### 4.6.1 Laments of grief and/or funeral laments

##### Example 1 (context: loss of property)

Amama Newo! (*oh my mother*)

Nicite Tyani? (*what will I do*)

Natamana Newo? (*I have suffered*)

Nafwa Newo! (*I have died*)

Niyavyeni Mwayangu (*Help me my colleagues*)

Nilôwele Kuni Newo! (*Which route will I take*)

Nazingwa Nacho Chalo! (*I am in deep trouble with this world*)

Nifwilenji? (*why will I die*)

Mayo! Mayo! (*Mother, mother*)

Ati Kuyipa Chalo Ici Mwewo! (*What a bad world*)

Mwanitamanisha! (*you have made me suffer*)

Calo Ici Kuyipa Mama (*This world is so bad*)

Nipulumukile Kuni Newo (*from where will my help come*)

Calo Cili Ukali Mama! (*This world is cruel*)

Nasala Pa Zuwa Mama! (*I am left in the sun*)

Nasala Neka (*I am left lonely*)

Caluta Cimfule (*My Shade has gone*)

Nizungulukile Kuni (*Where will I turn to*)

Menso Wangu Avalika (*My eyes have been closed*)

Ati Munthu Kuyipa Mtima! *(A human being is badhearted)*

Chalo Cuwawa Mama! *(The world is so painful)*

Niyavyeni Mwayangu! *(Help me my colleagues)*

Eeeee! Amama! *(Oh! My mother)*

Nasala Pa Zuwa Newo! *(I have remained in the sun)*

Mwanitamanisha Nemuyanu *(You have made me suffer)*

Watianiyavye Niwani *(Who will help?)*

### **Example 2 (context: funeral lament)**

Uyu mwana mwewo mwe banthu *(This child please)*

Ni cinji cawacita? *(What have you done?)*

Wafwilanji wewo, wafwilanji *(Why have you died? Why have you died?)*

Wenzokula na nzelu wewo *(You were growing with a lot of wisdom)*

Lomba wona vawacita *(See now what you have done)*

Nibani wati asunge banja *(Who will keep the family?)*

Wasiya anyoko pa zuba *(You have left your mother in the sun)*

Wasiya awuso pa zuba *(You have left your father in the sun)*

Ona ni akulukazi wonse *(See, both your mother and your father are old)*

Nibani wati abayavye *(Who will help them?)*

Wewo mwanawe *(You child please)*

Osacita teti *(Do not do this)*

Wafwilanji wewo *(Why have you died?)*

Ona banthu kupaka pa malilo bako *(See the multitude of people on your funeral)*

Walakwa kuya wewo *(You have made a mistake)*

Zyoka! *(Can you come back?)*

Ukalute nsita iyakine *(You will go at another time)*

Nicinji cawacitila teti *(Why have you done this?)*

Wona lomba *(See now)*

Okuyimya akuya nawe *(They are now carrying you, taking you)*

Nafwa eeeee! (*I have died eeeee!*)  
Nafwa eeeee! (*I have died eeeee!*)  
Waluta mwana (*The child has gone*)  
Ukabape moni ambuya wako (*Greet your grandparents*)  
Mukasungane paweme (*Take care of each other with them*)  
Amama newo (*Oh my mother*)  
Waluta mwana, mwana mwanakazi (*The child is gone, the girl child is gone*)  
Twala moni kwawukuya (*Greet them where you are going*)  
Ulute paweme (*Go well*)  
Uyo mwana ama (*There comes the child to you my mother*)  
Mpokeleni mzungu wangu (*Receive you grandchild*)  
Monhkala paweme (*Stay well with her*)

### **Example 3 A Lament of an Orphan**

Kandola kokula mailo kangatwange (*What can a virgin who has just reached puberty stage say?*)  
Nibani angakakonshye? (*Who can ask her?*)  
Kangalabile nocita vukopangwa? (*Can she speak and do what she wants?*)  
Nibani angakaleshye? (*Who can stop her?*)  
Kalinawisi okachinjilizya? (*She has a father who protects her?*)  
Kalisoti na longosi okalwila! (*She also has a brother who speaks for her*)  
Nikochinjiliziwa mbali zonse! (*She is protected in all areas*)  
Nikochinjiliziwa namukokanda! (*She is protected where she steps*)

Nine bani newo, kuti banganiloleshe? (*Who am I that they may loom at me*)  
Nine bani kuti banganiyavye? (*Who am I that they may help me?*)  
Nili ngani koni kalikeka kaliye nyina? (*I am like lonely bird without its mother*)  
Pakuti nyina wakashiwa muwukuka! (*Because its mother has been caught in trap*)  
Nine koni kalikeka mucimuti (*I am a lonely bird in a tree*)  
Nili ceba-ceba kusakila woniyavya! (*I am only looking around to see who will help me*)  
Nili ngani chenda yeka (*I am like an animal that moves alone without others*)

Nusoba napofisama! *(I have nowhere to hide myself)*

Nicitenji pakuti nilineka *(What will I do since I am alone?)*

Niliye woniyavya! *(I have no one to help me)*

Niwutukile kuni! *(Where will I run to?)*

Nanjila kumo yunisoba! *(I cannot find the way)*

Mfinzi yakulisha mu menso mwangu *(The darkness is too much in my eyes)*

Kuliye wonisanikila! *(There is no one to look for me)*

Vimiti nivitali, musanga nimotimba *(The trees are tall, the bush is thick)*

Nibande tyani, niliye na pwitika! *(How will I walk through? I do not even have a sword.)*

Nili mucisengu *(I am in a ditch)*

Nukanga kufuma! *(I am failing to come out)*

Kansi yitani cimbwi, aze anilye *(In that case, call the Hyna to come eat me)*

Nicitenji kansi kuti nane niwoneke? *(What will I do so that I am also recognised?)*

Nikuwetyani kuti nimvwike? *(How will I shout so that I am heard?)*

Kutemwa kwangu kufume kuni? *(Where will my joy come from?)*

Nibani wati anikate kwanja? *(Who will hold my hand?)*

Nibani wati anilabilile? *(Who will speak for me?)*

Nubawona alinawusu wawo *(I am seeing those who have their father)*

Zucitomekela! *(They are proud of their parents)*

Nubawona alina nkhoswe *(I am seeing those who have their counsellors)*

Zucitotwanga! *(They are boasting)*

Nubawona alinanyina wawo! *(I am seeing those who have their mother)*

Kutowa kweka nisola! *(I will pick the beauty!)*

Kansi nimatepo yotyani aba yakulya mweka? *(What type of leaves are these which you are eating alone?)*

Sewo ansiwa mutileshe! *(We the orphans are prevented from eating!)*

Niwutukile kuni! *(Where will I run to?)*

Cendi-cendi sembe nenze koni *(Truly, truly, if I were a bird)*

Mucimuti ningalale! *(I would sleep in a tree)*

Kuti nenze koni *(If I were a bird)*

Nganubulukila patali! (*I would fly far away*)  
 Sembe nenze na bata (*If I had a father*)  
 Nga nane nucitila lona! (*I would also be celebrating*)  
 Sembe neze na bata (*If I had a father*)  
 Nga banisekesha! (*He would have made me happy*)  
 Sembe nenze na bata, (*If I had a father*)  
 Sembe nane nakuwa! (*I would have shouted*)  
 Sembe nenze na mukwasu, (*If I had a sister/brother*)  
 Sembe nane natwanga! (*I would be boasting*)  
 Sembe neze na bama, (*If I had a mother*)  
 Sembe nane nucita citala! (*I would be showing my pride*)  
 Lomba nicite tyani newo? (*But what will I do now?*)  
 Pakuti niliye aliyense?! (*I do not have anyone on my side*)  
 Kansi yitani cimbwi, aze anilye, (*Just call a hyena to come and eat me*)  
 Koba mwe! Koba mwe! (*Alas! Alas!*)  
 Nilineka newo niliye nkhoswe! (*I am all alone and I do not have a counselor*)

#### **4.6.2 Laments when in pain or agony**

An Nsenga person laments when he or she is in agony. It may be that sometimes he or she can shed tears or not. This is how he or she may start the lament:

Nafwa newo! (*I am dying*)  
 Nafwa newo! (*I am dying*)  
 Napapata nafwa newo. (*Please I am dying*)  
 Nicitetyani newo mwewo (*What will I do, you people?*)  
 Nikubabalini kuweme uku mwandi (*It is so painful*)  
 Nafwa newo (*I am dying*)  
 Sembe nafwa tyala mwe! (*Let me just die*)  
 Sembe Nafwa nikapumule (*I should just die so that I go and rest*)  
 Kubaba koteti nikuyipa! (*This kind of pain is just too much*)

Nafwa newo! *(I am dying)*

Nafwa newo! *(I am dying)*

Ungapumule tyani teti *(How can you rest like this?)*

Eeee! Eeeee! *(Eeee! Eeee!)*

Mwewo mwayangu nafwa newo! *(You my friends, I am dying)*

Nibani anganiyavye mwewo! *(You, who will help me)*

Niyavyeni *(help me)*

Niyavyeni nipumuleko, *(Help me so that I can rest)*

Nicitetyani teti! *(What will I do?)*

Nicite tyani mwewo mwe banthu? *(You people what will I do?)*

Niyavyeni nemuyanu! *(Help me your friend!)*

Nipokezyenkoni patontho tyala nipumuleko! *(Take this pain on my behalf)*

Nibani anganipokezye! *(Who will take this pain for me?)*

Nibani Mwewo! *(Who will? You people)*

Amvweko mwacubabila, *(So he/she can just feel how painful it is)*

Nazingwa newo mwewo *(You people I have suffered)*

Natamana mwandi *(I have surely suffered)*

Napapata mwewo niyavyeni *(Please you people help me)*

Mwanilekelela! *(You have abandoned me)*

Amama newo! *(Oh my mother!)*

Amama newo! *(Oh my mother)*

Mwewo napapata *(Please you people)*

Nibani amvweko kubaba koteti? *(Who will feel this kind of pain?)*

Nikumwa mankhwala ngani kumwalini. *(I am taking medicine as if I am not taking any)*

Ni mankhwala banji anganipozye newo cikomo vababa? *(What kind of medicine will heal me, because it is so painful)*

Mwewo mwe banthu nafwa eeeee *(You people I am dying – Eeee!)*

Nga amama alikuni *(What about my mother, where is she?)*

Azeniwone newo nikaliyokufwa *(Let her come to see me before I die)*

Nikufwa kuno lomba *(I am now dying)*

Ni kubaba kwanji Koteti *(What kind of pain is this?)*

Nga kuyingonipaya tyala visile vobaba? (*Why not just kill me so that I stop feeling the pain?*)

Lomba bana bangu niye batiatamane mwewo (*But my children are the ones that will suffer?*)

Nibani bati asunge bana bangu nikafwa newo (*Who will take care of my children when I die?*)

Nibani teti? (*Who will?*)

Bana bangu akati novuta mwewo (*As troublesome as my children are.*)

Mwewo Mulungu navutika newo (*God, I have suffered*)

Onani bana bangu mwasawukila (*See how poor my children have become*)

Cikomo colwala kwa newo (*Because of my being sick*)

Cukanga nakuti zilye (*They cannot eat*)

Mwewo napapata nafwa newo (*Please I am dying*)

Nafwa newo bati (*I am dying surely*)

Nipumule nsita yanji nayivi vobaba (*What time will I rest with this pain?*)

Nivobaba vanji visasila (*What kind of pain is this which does not stop?*)

Mwenelwalila ponse Pala (*I have been sick for too long*)

Nga Kunipaya tyala kuti Nikapumule (*Why not kill me so that I can go and rest?*)

Nafwa newo! (*I am dying*)

Amama newo! (*Oh my mother*)

Atata newo! (*Oh my father*)

Nazingwa newo! (*I have suffered*)

Keno kuli weneluvyila awele aniwuzye (*If there is someone I have offended please come and tell me*)

Keno kuwuzya munekwasu aliyense (*Or you can tell any of my relatives?*)

kuti munilekelele (*So that you can forgive me*)

Natamana newo (*I have suffered*)

Nilekeleleni (*Please forgive me*)

#### **4.7 Laments in form of a dirge**

Laments in Nsenga are also coined in the form of funeral songs. The songs will talk about the person that has passed on, concerning his goodness and beauty. These funeral songs cut across all the Nsenga dances that have been mentioned. Nsenga dances and songs can be

contextualised to fit a specific situation facing the people. For example, there is *chipalu* dance for entertainment only while there is also another *chipalu* for mourning and the songs will be full of laments in memory of the deceased. This applies to all the other remaining dances such as *Nsongwe*, *Chitelele*, *mbingu*, etc. This is more paramount if the person who has died was a lover of a particular dance, the mourning and lamenting during such a person's funeral will not go without being treated to a funeral song which they used to enjoy. On the other hand, if the person who died was a hunter, the dance that was generally performed included a mention of the hunting skills of the deceased. However, this kind of performance associated with the hunters in the modern times is slowly fading away because poaching has been criminalised. Due to this criminalisation, the skill can no longer receive praise. What is important to note however is that the funeral songs and dances have a historic presence among the Nsenga people. To that effect, most of the funerals would have somebody whose laments at the funeral would be more of a song in their mourning.

#### **4.8 Similarities between Nsenga laments and the laments in Lamentations**

It is important to have a broader understanding of the similarities between the Nsenga laments and the laments in the book of Lamentations if a meaningful translation is to be attained. The similarities are a good starting point for the translator of these laments into Nsenga. Once similarities have been captured, the differences can then be looked at with an eagle's eye.

##### **4.8.1 Both have specific words that signal a lament**

The Nsenga language is rich in so far words of lament are concerned. In the olden days, the most common words that would signal a lament in Nsenga were:

*Aweni Eee, Aweni Eee mwanisiya pa zuba*

*Aweni amama newo, Aweni Bata Eee, mwanitenda mutu*

The words used for lamenting are *Aweni Eee* and *Amama newo*. These words are expressions used for lamenting but they have no lexical meaning. Perhaps some people may try to find the lexical meaning of the words by trying to delve into their etymologies but consensus would be difficult to be attained on the exact meaning. However, the words are very significant for signaling lament. In modern times, and this could also be a dialectical issue, most Nsenga drop “*Aweni*” and just use “*Amama neo*” as a signal for lament. The meaning of “*Amama neo*” is “my mother,” but in any lament in Nsenga, *Amama neo* has nothing to do with literally calling for your mother but it is a sign of mourning or lamenting. This is quite common for everyone regardless of one’s age. A quick comparison with the first words of Lamentations shows that the similarity in terms of the absence of a convincing lexical form is clear for both instances. Whether the term used is the modern term *Amama newo* or *Aweni Eee*, the contextual use of these words can not be located in any lexicon. It is not the lexical form at play in this case, the lexical meaning of the words have no value, but the contextual meaning which suggests that the words do not have any meaning other than just signaling a lament.

Lamentations opens with the word אִיכָה as a word that signals a lament. The word is not to be translated with its lexical meaning. The literal meaning of אִיכָה as defined in BDB is: *How, Where or In what manner?* Interestingly, Lamentations begins with a questioning word as a signal for the lament. The Nsenga word on the other hand has nothing to do with a question but generally, as the lament progresses, the laments are full of unanswered rhetorical questions. Following through all the examples of laments above, one realises that the Nsenga laments are full of questions as opposed to answers, whether the lament is about mourning a deceased person or lamenting about the pain that one is experiencing.

The words that have been used in the translation for the same purpose of signaling a lament are: “*Amama newo*” for the modern Nsenga speakers at the influence of the English translations of course. The most appropriate word for the lament in this case would be *Amama*

*nwo!* This expression does not have any local literal meaning in Nsenga apart from it being used as a mourning expression to signal a lament.

#### **4.8.2 Both are specific to a situation**

From the laments that have been presented in Nsenga, it is clear that these laments are never abstract. These laments will always address a specific situation that triggers that particular lament. This is a very important aspect for the Bible translator to understand before thinking of translating laments into a target language. The Nsenga laments have shown that there are laments for a funeral, laments when a tragedy like fire has befallen you. Concerning the funeral laments, it is clear again that the laments will differ depending on the person that has died. The lament will also try to be specific to the age of the person that has died. This is another critical point because we cannot solve the problem of communication in translation of laments if we cannot attach specificity to each lament. The presence of the variety of words for lamenting in Nsenga is testament to how specific Nsenga laments can be. The choice of the specific words that are used places each lament within a specific situation. Biblical laments are generally true to specific situations too.

#### **4.8.3 Both evoke emotions**

Both the Nsenga laments and the laments in the book of Lamentations have an effect of evoking emotions in the listeners. They are both meant for the heart and not for the mind alone. They describe the gravity of the situation and also show the helplessness of the mourner.

#### **4.8.4 Both have the oral as a primary context**

The primary context of the Nsenga laments is oral. The laments in Nsenga are never intended to be written down, but rather to be heard. Given the history of the biblical text, it is generally accepted that the laments were initially oral in nature.

#### **4.8.5 Both have repetitions**

Laments in Nsenga have a lot of repetitions which seem to be on the extreme side but that is fine for an oral culture. Some expressions may repeat the same idea but express it slightly different. This is also the case for the Lamentations.

#### **4.8.6 Figurative expressions or proverb-like sayings**

Nsenga laments have a lot of figurative expressions which try to show the state of affairs of the situation. Lamentations also has figurative expressions which should not be understood literary when reading the book. These proverb-like sayings should be well understood and utilised in Bible Translation into Nsenga due to their rich impact.

### **4.9 Differences between Nsenga laments and the laments in Lamentations**

#### **4.9.1 Absence of acrostics**

Lamentations has acrostics which are very difficult to be replicated in the Nsenga language. However, this becomes a very important aspect for probing the orality of Lamentations in its primary stage. Any translation of Lamentations that wishes to evoke the same emotions that were evoked by the primary author of these laments should consider probing the oral clues of the laments. If all a translation would do is to look at the written text without getting into the oral world of the text, that translation begins to fail immediately. It will not justify how acrostics will be dropped without being replicated in the target language.

#### **4.9.2 Unwritten Laments**

The unwritten manifestations of the laments within the Nsenga cultural context exhibit a visible abundance of repetitions. This pertains not solely to the recurrence of particular linguistic elements, but also extends to the inherent lack of a methodical structure characterising these

laments. It is noteworthy to emphasise that despite the apparent absence of a cohesive framework, the Nsenga laments do not lack in conveying their intended messages.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

The chapter has discussed the Nsenga people as an ethnic group and their language. The origin of the name Nsenga has received different opinions according to Poole (1949) and the debate is inconclusive. As an ethnic group, the Nsengas are a large group which is orally dominant. Oral tradition still remains a way of sharing information and teaching of norms. Much of the wisdom in this language is passed on through oral expressions.

It has been stated that the language has recorded wins in as far as linguistic battles are concerned especially among the Ngoni people of Chipata. Due to this, the Nsenga language is not limited to the Nsenga people only. The fact that the language is tonal, calls for special attention to intonations when one is speaking between because the change in tone has a great bearing on the meaning intended by the speaker. The absence of much literature in Nsenga only justifies that the culture is orally dominant and that any translation work to be done in this language should be orally sensitive.

The presence of singing and dancing in the Nsenga language is indicative of a strong presence of poetry. Similarities and differences between the Biblical Hebrew poetry and the Nsenga poetry should be used as a springboard from which a translation approach should be derived especially when dealing with a poetic book like Lamentations. A comparison of the types of laments in Nsenga and those found in Biblical Hebrew presents an opportunity for informed translation decisions that will not put one language at a lesser level of accepting impositions. Expert translation decisions should be more informed of nuances that are formed by intonations in such an orally dominant context. In other words, the various semiotic systems need to be consulted in the entire process for a more accurate translation to be attained in Nsenga.

In the following chapter, we explore the critical role of Biblical Performance Criticism in understanding and applying intersemiotic translation, emphasising the interplay of oral, literary, and cultural features within texts like Lamentations to inform a more nuanced and effective translation process.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: BIBLICAL PERFORMANCE CRITICISM AND ITS ROLE IN INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The assumption so far appears to be that intersemiotic translation involves translation between texts, taking meanings from one text and transposing them as accurately as possible into another text in a different media. While this is probably the most important aspect of intersemiotic translation for professional translators, there is also the phenomenon of intersemiotic translation within a text. That is, in the same text meanings encoded by one semiotic resource are often re-encoded, or resemiotised, through another semiotic resource: for example, information in a graph could be re-expressed in language or a photograph could be resemiotised as an infographic. Phenomena such as these are important for people designing and creating these texts and for the people who read and view them. Beyond this, as intersemiotic translation forms the basis for explaining and circulating ideas in society and culture, it has implications that extend well beyond translation and multimodal text design.

Against the traditional understanding of intersemiotic translation, there is intersemiotic translation within a text to consider. For example, if the text to be considered is the book of Lamentations, one should consider the intersemiotics within the book of Lamentations. By intersemiotics within the book I mean checking the semiotic resources that can be deduced within the book such as the oral features and cultural features that can be discerned from the book and how they have been represented in the written form. What oral features do you find in the text in question? What literary features do you find in the text in question? What cultural aspects do you find in the text in question? All these questions bring to visibility the fact that intersemiotics is actually present even in the text to be considered. This shows that the composition of Lamentations was a complex undertaking, thus, its translation should inevitably

be treated as a complex undertaking that should consider more than the traditional translation theories.

To address this matter, Biblical Performance Criticism is useful as an exegetical tool. It helps establish the presence of an intersemiotic process in the production of the biblical text and that the same process should be used when translating such kind of a text into the target language. Therefore, this chapter will mainly focus on the Biblical Performance Criticism and its role in intersemiotic translation.

## **5.2 Biblical Performance Criticism**

To better understand this concept, there is a need to start from the field that has received more attention which functions almost the same as Biblical Performance Criticism. The aspect in question is textual criticism. A better understanding of textual criticism will help one understand Biblical Performance Criticism. Textual criticism involves the meticulous examination and assessment of textual evidence, as articulated by Anderson and Widder (2018:90). This intricate process encompasses the scrutiny of both external and various forms of internal evidence. The ultimate goal of textual criticism is to discern and identify the most prime reading among the variants presented (Anderson and Widder 2018:42). Deist (1978) observed that in the context of textual criticism, to “criticise” is essentially engaging in an evaluation or judgment of the worth of a text. Therefore, textual criticism can be defined as the assessment of a text with the aim of evaluating the precision with which a text has been conveyed, transmitted, or passed down through time. In the same vein, Biblical Performance Criticism represents a continuation of the lineage of critical inquiries aimed at enhancing our comprehension and translation of the biblical text. Biblical Performance Criticism aims to rediscover the oral and performative nature of biblical content as it existed in its early stages. This involves delving into the oral traditions of ancient cultures, comprehending the intricacies

of writing, reading, memory processes, and the dynamics of performance situations (Rhoads, 2012: 26).

The core contribution of Biblical Performance Criticism lies in emphasising the oral and aural dimensions inherent in the composition, transmission, and reception of biblical texts by their respective audiences. This contribution has prompted a re-evaluation of various academic disciplines that intersect with the biblical text, encompassing textual criticism, exegesis, and translation. Notably, in the realm of translation studies, it has reshaped the understanding and translation of source texts into target texts, expanding the concept of “text” beyond traditional print media.

Recent research in translation studies has underscored the fundamentally oral nature of biblical texts. This proposition draws support from diverse factors, including the educational milieu of the Ancient Near East, the material constraints of writing during that epoch, and the prevailing modes of communication (Wendland 2008:6-24; Fowler 2009:6-11). Consequently, this insight has influenced how we must grasp source texts and the essence and objectives of translation.

Given the oral orientation of biblical texts, both in their creation and their presentation to human audiences and recognising that the objective of translations is to replicate the impact of biblical texts on their audiences, translators must identify textual cues revealing their oral nature. Subsequently, these cues should be integrated into their translations to enable a similar impact on the potential audiences of the translated works.

This approach extends Nida’s (and De Waard and Nida’s) concept of functional equivalence and his aim to achieve comparable impact among source and target audiences by situating the interplay between text and audience in the domain of oral performance rather than printed texts and readers.

Consequently, any literary, rhetorical, or poetic analysis of biblical source texts must acknowledge the oral-aural dynamic between the source text and its audience. Within this dynamic, the evaluation of impact, whether on the source or target audience, becomes paramount. This approach guides translators in producing “proclamatory” or “performance” translations, thereby upholding the inherent communicative nature of translation (Thom 2008:i-ii).

In light of the foregoing, Biblical Performance Criticism assumes a dual exegetical role. Concerning New Testament documents, it strives to comprehend the performance of Christian traditions within the oral cultures of the early church (Maxey, 2007: 6). Regarding Old Testament documents, Performance Criticism interprets the texts as containing remnants of oral performances and investigates their conceptual framework. It acknowledges that these remnants have been influenced by scribal performance (Doan and Giles 2005:ix, 157).

To achieve these objectives, Biblical Performance Criticism engages in dialogue with various pertinent and necessary disciplines and fields of study, encompassing orality-scribal studies, ethnopoetics, social-scientific criticism, ancient and modern rhetoric, drama, reader-response criticism, inculturation hermeneutics, ideological and post-colonial interpretations, among *others* (Wendland 2012:5). Biblical Performance Criticism, a term introduced by David Rhoads in 2006, represents an emerging paradigm within biblical studies. Its influence extends to the field of Bible translation (Maxey and Wendland 2012:2; Rhoads 2006). It is worth noting that the concept of “performance criticism” is not novel in itself, having roots in the tradition of theatre studies. However, its application to biblical analysis necessitated the term “Biblical Performance Criticism,” aligning it explicitly with the study of the Bible (Maxey 2012:3).

Central to Rhoads’ (2006) proposition is the reconceptualisation of ancient Israel and the early church as predominantly oral cultures. This reimagining involves the construction of scenarios

portraying ancient performances, facilitating a fresh interpretation of biblical traditions. Furthermore, it prompts a reconsideration of the methodologies employed in studying these cultures, embracing the analytical tools associated with oral traditions.

James Maxey's exposition on Biblical Performance Criticism and Bible translation underscores two pivotal components: "translations of performance" (centred on antiquity) and "translations for performance" (focused on contemporary contexts). This approach entails recognising the inherently performative nature of biblical material and subsequently addressing the challenge of conveying this essence in modern languages and media (Maxey 2012:4).

Maxey (2012:4) further emphasises that early translation studies were particularly concerned with the phenomenon of sound, especially intentional auditory elements within the initial compositions of biblical texts. Additionally, the absence of sound posed an equally intricate challenge for translation. Maxey's analysis acknowledges that executing such translation tasks is not without difficulties, exacerbated by the canonical status of the Bible and its transition to print as a medium in recent times. Consequently, he highlights the inadequacy of contemporary translation methods and theories to address these multifaceted challenges.

This is where the concept of intersemiotic translation gains relevance as a theoretical framework for addressing such complexities. Intersemiotic translation concerns itself with the translation of content from one medium to another. Its application becomes pertinent to the task at hand, bridging the gap between the performance-oriented aspects of biblical texts and their translation into a different medium.

In conclusion, Biblical Performance Criticism, as introduced by David Rhoads, marks an emerging paradigm in biblical studies, with implications for Bible translation. This approach calls for the reimagining of ancient cultures and performances, encouraging the utilisation of oral tradition analysis. James Maxey's delineation of translation components underscores the

challenge of maintaining performative qualities in translation. Moreover, the evolving field of translation studies, encompassing diverse performance features, grapples with the intricacies of conveying biblical content to modern audiences. Amidst these challenges, the concept of intersemiotic translation emerges as a promising framework for addressing the multi-layered task of translating performative biblical material into contemporary media.

### **5.2.1 Proponents of Biblical Performance Criticism**

Roads (2012), one of the proponents of Biblical Performance Criticism, makes a profound observation on the orality of the ancient biblical societies. He notes that the ancient societies of the Bible were overwhelmingly oral. People originally experienced the traditions now in the Bible as oral performances. Focussing on the ancient performance of biblical traditions enables us to shift academic work on the Bible from the mentality of modern print culture to that of an oral/scribal culture. Conceived broadly, Biblical Performance Criticism embraces many methods as means to reframe the biblical materials in the context of traditional oral cultures, construct scenarios of ancient performances, learn from contemporary performances of these materials, and reinterpret biblical writings accordingly. The result is a foundational paradigm shift that reconfigures traditional disciplines and employs fresh biblical methodologies such as theatre studies, speech-act theory and performance studies.

Maxey (2012) highlights Eugene A. Nida's significant influence, noting that Nida emphasised the role of orality and the sound features in Bible translation, a focus evident even in his early works. Maxey's statement is in reference to one of the principal steps highlighted by Nida (1964:246) in procedures that a competent translator should consider: "Reading aloud for style and rhythm. Because of the primacy of the oral over written forms of language, it is essential that the form of a translation be read aloud in order to test its styles and rhythm." This step alone is very significant in as far as orality and performance is concerned in Bible translation.

It emphasises an aspect of intersemiotic activity in a written translation in the sense that there is a back-and-forth switch between the written text and the oral expression, which is expected to have correct features of sound in the target language. This point from Nida's early writings is very significant and perhaps a bedrock of Biblical Performance Criticism in Bible translation as well as a bedrock for intersemiotic thinking within a written interlingual translation. It helps establish how old the thinking about Biblical Performance Criticism has been in Bible translation and also how important it is to think intersemiotically when producing a written Bible translation for an orally dominant culture. It can be argued that Eugene Nida was not thinking about oral Bible translation when he was putting up these important guidelines for Bible translation, but we cannot rule out the fact that Nida was deep into intersemiotics. To bring this intersemiotic aspect into visibility and trigger a deliberate consideration of the thinking, Biblical Performance Criticism can be considered a good approach for reflection.

Biblical Performance Criticism as a distinct name of a method is associated with David Rhoads' (2006) article titled: "Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies."

Maxey (2012:3) notes that the definition of Biblical Performance Criticism is eclectic in nature because it acknowledges the tremendous contributions of other, very established biblical methodologies. This means that Biblical Performance Criticism is not coming as a call to a paradigm shift but is aimed at enhancing Biblical studies and Bible translation in particular. It endeavours to re-emphasise the importance of this intersemiotic thinking in the process of doing biblical studies and Bible translation. This is not to suggest that intersemiotic thinking has not always been absent but perhaps it has been neglected in the process. It is even more critical for Bible translation when the translation of the Bible is done into a language of an orally dominant culture. According to Rhoads (2006) Biblical Performance Criticism can be defined as a methodology that seeks to re-imagine ancient Israel and the early church as

predominantly oral cultures, to construct scenarios of ancient performances as means to interpret the traditions of the Bible anew, and to reconsider the disciplines we use to study the Bible so as to take account of oral modes of analysis. Although performance criticism is an established discipline within theatre studies, in order to distinguish the new approach, Rhoads called it “Biblical Performance Criticism” simply by adding the object of study, which is biblical texts (Maxey 2012:3).

### **5.2.1.1 Performance**

What is performance? In the context of our study, performance would be defined as an act of performing a play, concert, or other form of entertainment; the rendering of a dramatic role, song, or piece of music (Soanes 2004). Wendland (2013:26) defines performance as “a public communication event whereby one or more speakers presents a verbal text, whether originally oral or written, in a dramatic or documentary (plain, unembellished) form and in the presence of a communal listening audience.” Therefore, oral performance in the context of biblical texts today is “a means of transforming silent texts into sounds and movements through the mediums of speech and gesture” (Ward 1994:95). Speaking on the Old Testament laments and specifically the book of Lamentations, it is true that embedded in the poetic literature of the Old Testament are echoes of the poetic performances, only now layered over and sometimes co-opted by a scribal performance. The media transferability (from oral to written or vice versa) of performative structures, conventions and characteristics results in the ghosting or echo of those original performances in the written form the material has now assumed within the pages of the biblical text (Giles 2012). “People took their oral performances seriously and carefully prepared and practiced them, whether formally or informally” (Wendland 2013:30). Rhoads (2009) helps us to reflect critically on the nature of the ancient text when he points out some key components that were involved in preparation for performance. He further highlights the importance of memory training as a fundamental aspect of performance. Techniques were

specifically designed to strengthen natural memory, with a clear focus on enhancing performance capabilities

The use of memory techniques would be a partial explanation for the structure of the book of Lamentations which has paid special attention to the Hebrew alphabet as a mnemonic device. This can be seen in the first four poems.

If the ancient text of Lamentations that we are dealing with had all the oral features that are expected in a performance, it is important to give life to these texts by taking them into a performance form in the target language so that the written translation in the target language is dependent on the performed text. This is not necessarily a proposal but a deliberate realisation of what ought to be in the mind of every translator of ancient texts, namely, that an intersemiotic “dance” is always active in the process of doing translation. The translator of Lamentations needs to know that the text was initially orally performed and then it was written down. It is therefore inevitable for the translator to think of the performance form of the ancient text before putting it into the written form of the target language. The linear presentation of this process would be *Oral-Written-Oral-Written* or better still *Performance-Written-Performance-Written*. The reason for doing this is simple: “A linguistic representation in the form of printed text, no matter how detailed and accurate, is by no means sufficient to give one an adequate appreciation of this art form and its dynamic communicative potential in society” (Wendland 1976:1). This is very true in the words of Wendland (1976:1) that “The bare printed word also eliminates a variety of nonverbal adjuncts of performance, such as the use of changes of voice to convey impressions of anger, fear, anxiety, etc; facial expressions; gestures, especially of the hands and head; rhythmic and mimetic body movements.” This point highlights how the written word, when presented in a bare printed form, lacks the nonverbal elements that are present in spoken or performed communication. The absence of changes in voice, facial expressions, gestures, and body movements can limit the conveyance of emotions and nuances

that are typically expressed through these nonverbal cues. In essence, Wendland suggests that written text alone may miss out on the richness and complexity of communication that comes with the inclusion of nonverbal elements. If the performance is seriously considered in the target language before penning down the text into the written target language, let there be performance and then from the performed text, write down the translation. It is obvious and guaranteed that such a translation will be richer than the one that had no deliberate consideration of the intersemiotic activity as a process of getting to the meaning of the text being translated. Performance is an aspect that is needed even in Jakobson's understanding of "interlingual written translation," and if this is true, then it is also true that performing a written text is an intersemiotic activity. Therefore, there is a serious need for an intersemiotic activity in the process of translating ancient texts that were initially oral in nature before they were written down. Only then would a translator be doing justice to such ancient texts. For this study, it has to be kept in mind that the text in question is Lamentations.

Actually, this intersemiotic activity of moving from one sign system to the other sign system has always been there in ancient times and it is an activity that informed the written biblical texts that we are translating today. Talking about orality, memory and literacy in ancient text, Rhoads (2009) emphasises that understanding orality and literacy requires recognizing how memory functioned as the foundation, with literacy primarily serving to enhance and support oral traditions and performances. This is a profound statement that should affect how we think about intersemiotic translation in the way it has been taught to us. It emphasises the interconnectedness of orality and literacy, highlighting the role of memory and literacy in that context. It suggests that to comprehend either oral communication or written literacy, one must understand how memory and literacy functioned, particularly in the order in which they operated. The statement implies that in ancient times, literacy primarily served to aid memory and support oral performance, emphasising the symbiotic relationship between these elements.

This is a clear testimony of the intersemiotic activity in the ancient text. Therefore, if literacy was an aid for memory and good performance, then it means that the text that we are working with is a product of an intersemiotic activity and that our translation work today should be intersemiotically conscious, regardless of the final form of the translation.

In the face of the way memory and literacy worked in the ancient times, it is becoming careless to translate a book like Lamentations without considering how the laments were performed and how the target audience performs laments. The words of Berlin (2002) hold significant value when she says you cannot translate Lamentations until you know how to lament.

### **5.2.1.2 Translation *of* performance and translation *for* performance**

Before analysing the orality features found in the source language text, it is helpful to have a clear understanding of the phrase “translation of performance” and how this is distinguished from “translation for performance”. According to the general definition of Nässelqvist (2012:49), he says *translation of performance* is that which aims at finding corresponding ways to express aural features that affected performance in antiquity and *translation for performance* as that which aims at creating a translation that is easy to read aloud today. However, there is need to make Nässelqvist’s definition clearer and more basic. To do this, it is necessary to start by acknowledging that oral traditions lay behind the written biblical traditions. This means that before what we see as the written text, everything was communicated orally. For the sake of preserving and also to help the memory of the performer, there was the need to translate oral performance into written material for farther reference in future performances. The originators of stories and speeches would have composed in their imaginations or sounded out what they were composing and later transcribed it (Rhoads 2012:26-30). This movement from oral to written is what comes out clearly as translation of performance in the sense that performance is being translated into literature. The concern in this thesis is to analyse this transcribed

performance which we now call the source-language text. With this in mind, it is right to stress that the text is full of the remnants of orality features which need to be identified. The text in question is the book of Lamentations. Laments in the Old Testament are typically an oral activity because of the artistic presentation. It is clear that composers of laments in the Old Testament composed them with imagination and probably sounded out what they were composing and later did the transcription. If they themselves did not do the transcription, the transcribers did it with imagination and probably sounded out what they were transcribing.

The first question should establish the criteria that one should use for analysing the source language text to expose orality features. The second question should aim at finding out how one can translate this analysed source language text into modern day language and communicate effectively. To do this, it is necessary to look through what others have suggested and see whether their suggestions are workable to the text of Lamentations. Addressing the second question which really comes after the analysis of the source text, three areas need to be taken into consideration according to Wendland (2008). These are meaning, style and the rhetorical effects that the oration may have had on an ancient listening audience, in an effort to replicate a similar impact upon a listening audience in a particular modern culture. In this regard, Wendland notes four aspects that play a role, namely, oral artistry, sound, memory, and context.

### **5.2.1.3 Performance criticism and orality**

Performance criticism examines how recurring, socially significant events—such as theatrical performances, ceremonies, or political inaugurations—utilise distinct methods to convey cultural values and themes with impact. Applied to the prophetic texts of the Old Testament, this approach assumes that certain passages are literary adaptations of oral compositions originally delivered to live audiences (Giles 2012).

Historically, according to Karlik (2012:179), the first-century world consisted of a predominantly oral setting in which the New Testament was composed. This is also true about the setting in which the Old Testament was composed. The message that was being passed orally was then transcribed to help the memory of the performers. Recent field studies in oral tradition and folklore have shown that many societies produced oral and written literature simultaneously and that literacy had a role of preserving oral poetry (Miller 2011:67). This means the source language text in circulation has some orality features. In Bible translation, orality and literacy can best be examined by understanding what is known as “translation of performance” and “translation for performance”.

### **5.3 Biblical Performance Criticism as an exegetical tool for Lamentations**

Biblical Performance Criticism should not be seen as a methodology that is only aimed at pushing people to begin performing written biblical text. Rather, the approach can also be significantly useful when conducting exegesis of the biblical text. It calls for awareness of the performance features found in the biblical text. The exegete should be conscious of the fact that in ancient communities, virtually all significant discourse was orally performed (Wendland 2013:30). Any unconsciousness to this fact would probably do a disservice to the exegesis of the biblical text, especially when dealing with laments. This view presupposes that before the text was written down, it was in oral form and communicated orally. This is a very significant point that need not skip our minds when dealing with an ancient text because it has implications in the way we should handle such texts.

### **5.4 Biblical Performance as a communicative tool for Lamentations**

Biblical Performance Criticism does contribute to effective communication, especially in the area of Bible translation. It is basic knowledge that Bible translation or translation in general serves one purpose and that purpose is communication. If translation does not serve this

purpose, it means that it is not translation. Therefore, Biblical Performance promotes rethinking our communicative process and builds on the Relevance Theory of communication. Relevance Theory of communication, developed by linguists Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson is a cognitive approach to understanding how communication works (Sperber and Willson 1986). According to this theory, communication is successful when the communicated information is relevant to the recipient's cognitive context. Among other important aspects of this theory, key points include optimising relevance and inferential processes. Optimising relevance means that speakers strive to convey information that is most relevant to the listener's current knowledge, beliefs, and goals. Concerning inferential processes, relevance is said not to be always explicit and it may rather involve inferential processes. This means that listeners often make inferences to derive the intended meaning from the communicated information.

In light of the above, Biblical Performance Criticism gives additional relevance and nuance to the Relevance Theory of communication. In the exegetical process of applying Biblical Performance, emotions are unearthed from the written scripture and translated into the target language by way of performance. Biblical performance pays attention to the whole cognitive environment of the source language text and the whole cognitive environment of the target language text to enhance communication. This makes inferences possible in the target community thereby validating the importance of performance in communication.

### **5.5 Biblical Performance Criticism as an evaluation tool for Lamentations**

Biblical Performance Criticism is an approach used to analyse and interpret biblical texts by focusing on the performative aspects of the text's composition and reception. It aims to understand how the texts were originally performed, how they were received by the intended audience, and how they continue to resonate with contemporary readers.

When applying Biblical Performance Criticism to the book of Lamentations, it offers a unique perspective on this poetic text that contains a series of laments mourning the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Here are some ways Biblical Performance Criticism can be used as an evaluation tool for Lamentations:

- a. **Oral Tradition and Performance Setting:** Performance criticism helps explore the oral tradition of Lamentations and how it might have been performed in communal settings. Understanding the performative aspects of the text can shed light on the emotional impact the laments had on the original audience during communal lamentation gatherings.
- b. **Theatrical Elements:** Performance criticism seeks to identify any theatrical or dramatic elements within the text. It can examine the use of language, metaphors, and vivid imagery to evoke emotions and create a sense of immediacy and involvement for the audience.
- c. **Role of the Performer:** Performance criticism allows us to consider the role and identity of the performer(s) of Lamentations. Were they professional mourners, priests, or members of the community? Understanding the performer's role can help in understanding the text's intended emotional impact.
- d. **Audience Response:** This approach also considers the audience's response to the performance. By examining the text's structure and content, we can gain insights into how the audience might have reacted and engaged with the lamentations.
- e. **Contemporary Application:** Biblical Performance Criticism does not solely focus on historical performance but also considers how the text continues to function in contemporary settings. It enables us to evaluate how Lamentations remains relevant and meaningful for readers and communities today, particularly those experiencing grief and loss.

- f. **Redaction and Editing:** Performance criticism can also help identify possible redaction or editing in the text, considering how the performance aspect might have influenced the final form of the book.

Overall, applying Biblical Performance Criticism to Lamentations can enrich our understanding of the text's emotional power, historical context, and ongoing significance. By exploring the performative dimensions of this biblical book, we can gain deeper insights into the intended messages and effects on both the original audience and modern readers.

### **5.6 The place of intersemiotics in Biblical Performance Criticism**

The major issue that needs to be addressed in this case is to establish the place of intersemiotics in Biblical Performance Criticism or vice versa. Firstly, a reminder of what intersemiotics deals with is important if we are to fully understand the development of the discussion. Intersemiotic translation comprises a “creative step in which the translator (artist or performer) offers its embodiment in a different medium. This process is facilitated by perceiving and experiencing non-verbal media through visual, auditory and other sensory channels, for example through dance or sculpture” (Campbell and Vidal 2019:xxvi). The key words in the statement include creativity, embodiment and switching of media. If any intersemiotic translation is to be successful according to Campbell, conscious creative steps should be taken by the translator or the performer. This creative approach should include embodying the message as the switch between media takes place. He further says that the focus should not be on translating senses or meaning, because that is not enough. He instead states that the “translator effectively plays the role of mediator in an experiential process that allows the recipients (viewer, listener, reader or participant) to re-create the sense (or “semiosis”) of the source artefact for themselves (Campbell 2017:179–180). He calls this a “holistic approach” that has the potential to help mitigate the biases and preconceptions a static, intralingual translation can sometimes introduce

(Campbell and Vidal 2019:xxvi). If the message of the source language text was communicated with a lot of creativity, the creativity should be made visible and translated into the target language so that the new audience in the target community can also experience the same impact. This activity is not possible in the absence of Biblical Performance Criticism. Biblical Performance Criticism is not the final form of the translation; it is rather the background work or the process that should shape the final translation in the target language. In this background work, the performance clues are identified, and the meaning is established, which is then embodied through internalisation and acted out (performed) in the target language in a much more natural way before a written translation is produced. This approach will evoke the necessary emotions that add the necessary meaning to texts like that of Lamentations. This process shows how intersemiotic is expected to be an active agent in the translation process and confirms the need for it.

### **5.6.1 Intersemiotics in the formation of the source language text**

It is clear at this stage that intersemiotics, also known as intersemiotic translation or transmutation, refers to the process of converting or transforming a text from one semiotic system to another. A semiotic system consists of signs and symbols used to convey meaning, and these systems can include language (verbal or written), images, sounds, gestures, and more. The concept of intersemiotics is particularly relevant in the context of Bible translation because it is dealing with elements from various semiotic systems. The written source language text of the book of Lamentations was obviously formed out of the language the people spoke (verbal or written), images, sounds, gestures and many more. These are the various semiotic systems that gave birth to the source language text in the form that we know currently. Therefore, in the context of the formation of the source language text, intersemiotics can come into play in various ways.

Firstly, the source language text should be treated as a multimodal text. Multimodality should be understood to mean that the source language text incorporates different modes of communication, or several semiotic systems were combined in the formation of the source language text to convey the intended message.

Secondly, intersemiotics is at play in the formation of the source language text when adaptations and retellings are considered. Biblical texts were generally adapted from traditional oral literature. In such cases, the process of transforming the original oral literature into the new medium of a written text requires intersemiotic translation to maintain the essence of the text while accommodating the characteristics and constraints of the new medium.

Thirdly, the consideration of the sign systems and symbols will show that intersemiotics was actively involved in the formation of the source language text. The formation of the source language text can involve the use of sign systems and symbols beyond standard linguistic structures. For example, mathematical equations, musical notations, or scientific diagrams are instances where semiotic systems other than language play a crucial role in expressing the intended content. For Lamentations, its acrostic nature would be categorised under the sign system.

The fourth aspect to consider are the non-verbal elements. The source language text of Lamentations in its original state obviously had some non-verbal elements such as gestures, body language, or symbolic representations that were shown during the performance of the laments. The incorporation of these elements during the formation of the source language text demands consideration of how they convey meaning and how they will be conveyed in the translation process. Therefore, when the written source language text of Lamentations was being compiled, there was a task of translating from visual or auditory mediums. When the

source language text is extracted from visual (non-verbal elements), music, or audio recordings, intersemiotics play a significant role in converting such elements into written.

In summary, intersemiotics was actively involved during the formation of the source language text. Understanding and navigating these intersemiotic challenges are fundamental for producing accurate and effective translations that maintain the intended meaning and impact of the original text.

### **5.6.2 Intersemiotics in the target language**

Given the definition of intersemiotics, one can wonder whether there is any intersemiotic activity taking place in the target language during the translation process. If intersemiotics is viewed in terms of the relationship between the medium of the source language text and the medium of the target language, one might conclude that there is no need to consider the intersemiotics in the target language. However, intersemiotics as an activity in the translation process is actively present in the target language especially when translators are working on the book of Lamentations. Even if the end product of the translation be in written form, translators cannot avoid consulting their oral faculties and worldview in trying to understand the written text of the Old Testament. They will put the visual aspects of their language, its oral aspects and its writing system together. At the process level, translators are expected to have this deliberate consideration and realisation.

### **5.6.3 Intersemiotic thinking and alterity of the translation**

Intersemiotic thinking within Biblical Performance Criticism will most likely help to achieve genuine alterity in translation.

It is important to acknowledge that indeed orality does not involve a fixed set of universal features as pointed out by Makutoane, Miller-Naudé and Naudé (2014). In their article, on similarity and alterity in translating the orality of the Old Testament in oral cultures, they

proposed using insights of Biblical Performance Criticism, expanding on Roads (2012). The absence of a fixed set of universal features has implications for how we should approach translating the orality of the Old Testament into an orally dominant language. In the first place, oral features can be different from one language to the other but the function or the purpose of them is very important, and this triggers the importance of the alterity, the “same other”. Therefore, performance translation involves maintaining similarity to the source text while respecting the cultural and literary aspects of the original work. This can also include incorporating oral elements of the target language to enhance the performance for the specific audience.

Aesthetic representation of alterity (Makutoane, Miller-Naudé and Naudé 2014; Bandia 2011), makes translation of orality possible through Biblical Performance Criticism. Translation of Lamentations, a book that has oral performance clues can only be possible if this factor of aesthetic representation is taken seriously in the translation process. The oral features in the target language may not be the same as those of the source language but the difference in the features should serve the same purpose that was served in the original audience. Biblical Performance is the best place to help realise this goal of having the “same other” or alterity of the text of the book of Lamentations.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The chapter has shown that intersemiotic translation involves translating between texts, taking meanings from one text and transposing them accurately into another. This is crucial for professional translators and the people who read and view them. However, there is also intersemiotic translation within a text, where meanings encoded by one semiotic resource are often re-encoded or resemiotised through another semiotic resource. This phenomenon is

important for designing and creating texts and for the people who read and view them. Intersemiotic translation has implications beyond translation and multimodal text design.

Biblical Performance Criticism has been cited as an effective approach to intersemiotic translation of the biblical text. Biblical Performance Criticism is a critical study that emphasises the oral-aural nature of biblical texts in their composition, transmission, and appropriation by audiences. This has led to the rethinking of academic disciplines in biblical studies such as textual criticism, exegesis, and translation. It has affected the way source texts are understood and translated into target texts, where “text“ has now transcended print media to include other modalities. Recent research in translation studies has highlighted the fundamentally oral nature of biblical texts, which is predicated on factors such as the educational environment of the Ancient Near East, the nature and cost of writing materials, and the prevalent mode(s) of communication. This has impacted the way we understand source texts and the nature and goals of translation.

In the next chapter, we present a new oral translation of Lamentations in the Nsenga language, rooted in the rich oral traditions of the Nsenga-speaking community. This chapter will not only provide an oral translation of the text but also compare its oral and written expressions, illuminating how the Nsenga oral tradition brings unique interpretive and performative dimensions to the ancient text. In doing so, we aim to highlight the dynamic interface between oral and written traditions in both the biblical and contemporary Nsenga contexts.

## **CHAPTER SIX: NSENGA TRANSLATION OF LAMENTATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we present a new oral translation of the book of Lamentations in the Nsenga language, which is intended for performance. We begin with the oral version, acknowledging the oral tradition from which Lamentations emerged and the oral tradition of Nsenga speakers. It is understood that the composition of Lamentations originated orally, being performed before it was transcribed (Cross 1973; Dobbs-Allsopp 2002; Berlin 2004 and Sparks 2005). This does not mean that current literary features in Lamentations such as the acrostics were part of the oral performance of the poem. Many scholars have argued that some literary features were a later addition during the transition from oral to written (Dobbs-Allsopp 2002:23-25; Berlin 2004:7-10, 24-27; Westermann 1994:56-58; Gerstenberger 2001:121-123). According to Naudé and Miller-Naudé 2016, there was no dichotomy between oral and written in ancient Israel, but rather an oral-written interface. This rationale underscores the decision to commence with the oral rendition of Lamentations before documenting any written version. To facilitate this, we will provide glosses in English for each Nsenga word in every verse, along with the literal translation. Subsequently, we will compare the transcribed oral version, followed by a comparison with an unpublished written Nsenga translation currently being produced by the Nsenga translation team, identifying any disparities in meaning as well as identifying translation choices. The goal is to show places where the written version is not suitable for oral performance and describe why the oral translation is suitable for oral performance. Additionally, we will briefly discuss oral features of each chapter in the Hebrew text as well as the oral features in my translation. While not exhaustive, this approach will focus on crucial complexities, aiding in a comprehensive understanding of the text and potentially unveiling hidden meanings that are more clearly seen by Nsenga speakers through an oral translation.

### **6.2 Oral translation of Lamentations**

This study is grounded in how the text can be performed, incorporating biblical performance principles and respecting the orality of the biblical text and that of the target language. The aim is to uncover meanings that traditional analysis and translation might overlook. The translation will be based on an examination of the performative aspects of the Hebrew source text as well as the oral lament features found in Nsenga laments. By scrutinising the performative elements, we endeavour to expose dimensions of the text that remain obscured without the experience of performance.

This study transcends mere textual analysis; it delves into the interplay of oral, written, and performative aspects, enriching our comprehension of this biblical masterpiece. It is for this reason that this section will provide a translation that will incorporate obvious oral components found in Nsenga natural laments. The lineation of the poetry will be flexible because it will be adjusted to suit the oral performance in Nsenga. For purposes of practical performance, different speakers in the five poems will be put in square brackets to indicate who is speaking.

### 6.2.1 The challenge of acrostic representation in Nsenga

Lamentations 1 is in an acrostic form and poses a great challenge to an oral rendition of the chapter into Nsenga. This issue relates also to the other acrostic poems in chapters 1-4 of this book. The challenge emanates from the discussion that acrostics are a literary feature and were only added during the transition from oral to written (Dobbs-Allsopp 2002:23-25). Dobbs-Allsopp discusses the poetic and literary features of Lamentations, including the acrostics, and how these may have evolved during the transition from oral to written form. The literary form became quite distinct from the oral form. Against this background, it is important to note that it has not been possible to replicate the acrostic nature of Lamentations in our Nsenga oral version.

### 6.2.2 Lamentations 1

1:1a **Amama newo! Kusala weka mzinda**  
 My mother me remaining alone/desolate city  
*My mother me! The city remaining desolate*

1:1b **koma wenze wozula na wanthu!**  
 yet was full with people  
*yet it was previously full of people.*

1:1c **Amama newo! Mzinda waŵa ngani nyankufwilwa, amama!**  
 My me city has like widow my  
 mother become mother  
*My mother me! The city has become like a widow. My mother!*

1:1d **Wenze mzinda wa mcinzi pakati pa mitundu**

Was city of glory among on nations

*It was a city of glory among nations.*

1:1e **Amama Newo! Enze mwana mwanakazi Wa mfumu**

My mother me She was child female of king

*My mother me! She was a female child of the king among the provinces of the world.*

1:1f **Enze Mwana Mwanakazi pakati pa vitwa va Mu calo**

She was child female among On/the provinces of in world

*She was a female child among the provinces of (in) the world*

1:1g **koma Lomba, onani waŵa muzha Mwana, amama newo**

but now behold has slave child My me

become mother

*but now, see! She has become a slave child, my mother me.*

1:2a **Onani osisima ngako mwana usiku wonse amama newo**

Behold she groans greatly child night all My mother Me!

*Behold! The child greatly groans all night. My mother me!*

1:2b **Ati misozi kumbwela mu mbovu Mwake, Amama newo!**

Look tears flowing in cheeks her my mother me!

*See the tears flowing in down her cheeks, my mother me.*

1:2c **Onani otemweka ŵake wonse amama**

Behold Loved ones her all My mother

*Look at all her loved ones, my mother.*

1:2d **koma paliye nayumo omutonhozha**

but There is no one comforting her

*But there is no one comforting her.*

1:2e **Ayake wonse Amuyalukila! Amama newo!**

Her friends all have abandoned her my mother me

*All her friends have abandoned her. My mother me!*

1:2f **Ayake wonse ayaluka alwani wake.**

Her friends all have become enemies her

*All her friends have become her enemies.*

1:3a **Yuda waya ku Uzha!**

Judah has gone to exile

*Judah has gone into exile.*

1:3b **Yuda waya kumatamano amama newo**

Judah has gone to sufferings my mother me

*Judah has gone to sufferings, my mother me!*

1:3c **Yuda wafuma mu ulemelelo**

Judah has come from in glory

*Judah has left his glory*

1:3d **Yuda wayokata mulimo wokosa amama newo**

Judah Has gone to do work hard My mother me

*Judah has gone to slavery, my mother me!*

1:3e **amama Yuda wankhala pakati pa amitundu**

My mother Judah is dwelling among the foreign nations

*My mother, Judah is dwelling among foreign nations*

1:3f **nipo aliyofwane malo opumulilapo**

And has not found place of rest

*And has not found a place where to rest.*

- 1:3g **Amama! Yuda wazungulukiwa na omuwutusha**  
 My mother Judah Is surrounded by/with pursuers  
*My mother! Judah is surrounded by pursuers*
- 1:3h **nipo aliye na njila Kozheŵela, amama newo**  
 and has no with Way/road to flee My mother me  
*And has no way to flee. My mother me!*
- 1:4a **Amama Newo! njila za ku ziyoni zulila**  
 My mother Me! The way/road of to Zion Cries/mourns  
*My mother me! The roads to Zion are mourning*
- 1:4b **chikomo kuliye akuza ku cisangalalo cosaluliwa**  
 Because There no One coming to feast Chosen/holy  
*Because there is no one coming to the chosen feast.*
- 1:4c **Onani! milyango yake yonse yiliye ŵanthu**  
 Behold! gates her all Has no people  
*Behold! All her gates have no people*
- 1:4d **onani ansembe ŵake wonse kumimila amama newo**  
 See priests her all groaning My mother me  
*See all her priests are groaning, my mother me!*
- 1:4e **asimbi ŵake nawo atamanishiwa amama**  
 Young women her also are in trouble/afflictions. My mother!  
*Her young women also are in trouble/afflictions. My mother!*
- 1:4f **nipo yeve naye watamanishiwa ngako**  
 And She also is in trouble/afflictions great  
*And she also is in great afflictions.*

1:5a **onani amama omulamulila alwani wake**

See my mother they are ruling enemies her

*See my mother, her enemies are ruling over him.*

1:5b **wala omutinkha ali na mtendere**

those Who hate her are with peace

*Those who hate her are at peace.*

1:5c **Amama newo! Leza wamutamanisha**

My mother me! The Lord has made her suffer

*My mother me! The Lord has made her suffer*

1:5d **cikomo ca viyipa vinyinji**

because of Evils many

*because of many evils.*

1:5e **Amama newo! wana wake aluta ku uzha**

My mother Me! children her Have gone to slavery

*My mother me! Her children have gone into slavery*

1:5f **akatiwa uzha na alwani**

they have been captured slavery by enemies

*they have been captured into slavery by enemies.*

1:6a **Amama newo! Mcinzi wake wonse wa mwana mwanakazi wa Ziyoni**

My me! Glory her all of child female of Zion

mother

*My mother me! All the glory of the female child of Zion*

1:6b **wasililatu mcinzi Wake!**

completely finished glory her

*Her glory is completely finished.*

1:6c **Amama newo! wana wake wanakazi wa mfumu ayaluka ngani cikwiwa**  
My me! children her female of king have like a deer  
mother become

*My mother me! Her female children of the king have become like a deer.*

1:6d **wana wake wanakazi wosowa msipu amama newo**  
children her female lack Pasturelands. My mother me!

*Her female children lack pasture lands. My mother me!*

1:6e **enzoyingo wutuka mosowa nzako**  
They were just running yet without strength

*They were just running yet without strength*

1:6f **pamenso pa alwani wawo**  
at the face of enemies their

*At the face of their enemies.*

1:7a **Amama newo! Yerusalemu wakumbukila!**  
My mother Me! Jerusalem has remembered

*My mother me! Jerusalem has remembered*

1:7b **wakumbukila masiku wa matamano wake noyenda yenda kwake**  
has days of sufferings her And wandering wandering her  
remembered

*She has remembered the days of her sufferings and her wandering.*

1:7c **Amama Yerusalemu wakumbukila vinthu vonse viweme**  
My mother Jerusalem Has remembered things all good

*My mother! Jerusalem has remembered all the good things.*

1:7d **wakumbukila vinthu vonse venze vake masiku akuvuli.**  
has remembered things all which were for her days past

*She has remembered all the things which were for her in the past days*

- 1:7e **Wanthu wake peenze mu manja mwa alwani**  
 people her when they were in hands of enemies  
*When her people were in the hands of the enemies.*
- 1:7f **penzeve na Omuyavya. Amama newo**  
 there was not even someone to help her My mother me!  
*There was no one helping her. My mother me!*
- 1:7g **Alwani wake Enzomufweya, amama**  
 enemies her were mocking her my mother  
*Her enemies were mocking her, my mother.*
- 1:7h **Alwani Enzomufweya mukupona kwake**  
 enemies were mocking her in falling her  
*Enemies were mocking her in her falling.*
- 1:8a **Yerusalemu waluvya ngako, amama**  
 Jerusalem has sinned greatly my mother  
*Jerusalem has sinned greatly, my mother.*
- 1:8b **tetyo waŵa woliyifya**  
 therefore has become made herself unclean  
*Therefore, she has made herself unclean.*
- 1:8c **Amama Newo! Wonse enzomupa mcinzi Yerusalemu omutafulila lomba**  
 My me! All who were glory Jerusalem they despise now  
 mother giving her him  
*My mother me! All who were giving Jerusalem glory, despise her now.*
- 1:8d **cikomo awona cinthaku cake**  
 because they have seen nakedness her  
*Because they have seen her nakedness.*

1:8e **Yelusalemu oyingomimila amama newo**

Jerusalem is just groaning My mother me

*Jerusalem is just groaning. My mother me!*

1:8f **Onani amama newo olifisa kumenso Yelusalemu**

see my mother me hiding herself the face Jerusalem

*See my mother me! Jerusalem is hiding her face out of shame.*

1:9a **Amama newo! kuyifyiwa kwake kwaonekela Ku vovwala vake**

My me uncleanness her can be seen on clothes her  
mother

*My mother me! Her uncleanness can be seen on her clothes.*

1:9b **Enzolingilakolini kuti Vinkhale tyani**

she was not concerned to say will it be how

*She was not concerned about how it would be.*

1:9c **tetyo kuwa kwake kwenze koyofya**

therefore fall her was terror

*Therefore, her fall was a terror*

1:9d **nipo penzeve nayumo kumo enzomutonhozha**

and there was no one even comforting her

*And there was not even one to comfort her.*

[Jerusalem Weeps]

1:9e **“Mwewo Leza onani matamano wangu**

“you Lord see afflictions my

*“You Lord see my afflictions*

1:9f **cikomo mulwani wacimfya**

because the enemy has triumphed

*because the enemy has triumphed*

[Jerusalem is no longer speaking]

1:10a **Amama newo! nicendi mulwani wayika kwanja yake**

My mother me! It is true the enemy has put hand his

*My mother me! It is true, the enemy has put his hand*

1:10b **pa vinthu viweme vonse va Yelusalemu**

on things valuable all of Jerusalem

*on all the valuable things of Jerusalem.*

1:10c **pakuti Yelusalemu wawona mitundu,**

for Jerusalem has seen nations

*For Jerusalem has seen nations*

1:10d **mitundu Yuloŵa mu malo ŵake atuŵa**

nations entering in place her holy

*Nations are entering in her holy place*

1:10e **yala mitundu yamusavomelezha Kuloŵa mu mpingo**

those nations which you forbade to enter in congregation

*those nations which you forbade to enter in the congregation.*

1:11a **amama newo onani ŵanthu ŵake wonse okungula**

My mother me See people her all lamenting

*My mother me, see all her people lamenting.*

1:11b **okungula Posakila-sakila cakulya**

lamenting as they search for food

*They are lamenting as they search for food.*

1:11c **onani osinthanisha mphango zawo na cakulya**

see They exchange wealth their for food

*See, they exchange their wealth for food*

1:11d **kuti afwaneko tyala nzako**  
So that they may find only strength  
*So that they may only find strength.*

1:11e **Yelusalemu Olila: Onani mwewo Leza nipo loleshani**  
Jerusalem Cries: behold You Lord and look  
*Jerusalem cries: behold, you Lord, and look.*

[Here Jerusalem speaks again]

1:11f **pakuti nusuliwa**  
for I am despised  
*for I am despised*

1:12a **Amama newo! kansi ivi vunicitikila muviyezha va Tyala-tyala**  
My me! Do these things that you think they nothing  
mother happen to mean are  
me  
*My mother me! Do these things happening to me mean nothing to you?*

1:12b **mwewo monse munipitilila**  
you all you are passing me by  
*You are all passing me by.*

1:12c **mwewo loleshani nipo onani**  
you look and see  
*You look and see*

1:12d **keno pali matamano ali ngani Matamano wangu**  
if there is sufferings that are like sufferings my  
*if there are sufferings that are like my sufferings*

- 1:12e **matamano beciniponeshela Leza**  
 Sufferings brought upon me by the Lord  
*sufferings brought upon me by the Lord.*
- 1:12f **pa nsiku yecinikalipila ngako**  
 on day he was angry with me very  
*On the day he was very angry with me.*
- 1:13a **onani Amama newo! Leza etuma mulilo kufuma kululu**  
 behold My mother newo! The Lord sent fire from heaven  
*Behold! My mother me! The Lord sent fire from heaven*
- 1:13b **mulilo weloŵa mkati mwa mafupa wangu**  
 Fire entered inside of bones my  
*Fire entered inside of my bones.*
- 1:13c **Leza eteya sumbu kuti akashe mendo wangu**  
 The Lord cast a net/snare to catch legs my  
*The Lord cast a net/snare to catch my legs*
- 1:13d **kuti anizhoshele kuvuli**  
 to make me return back  
*To make me return back.*
- 1:13e **Amama newo! Leza anisiya kwazi**  
 My mother me! The Lord has left me empty  
*My mother me! The Lord has left me empty*
- 1:13f **nili soti wokomoka nsiku yonse**  
 I was also fainted day all  
*I am also fainted all-day*

1:14a **viyipa vangu avimanga pamo kuwa joko amama newo**  
evils my he has bound together as a yoke my mother me  
*He has bound my evils together as a yoke, my mother me!*

1:14b **avimangilila pamo na manja wake**  
He has bound them together using hands his  
*He has bound them together with his hands.*

1:14c **Onani! Leza amangilila viyipa vangu mu mkosi mwangu**  
see the Lord Has bound evils my in neck my  
*See! The Lord has bound my evils in my neck*

1:14d **nonisilizha nzako zangu amama newo**  
and finished strength my My mother me  
*and has finished my strength, my mother me.*

1:14e **onani newo Asikulu anitwala mu manja**  
Behold me! The Lord took me in hands  
*Behold me! The Lord has taken me into the hands*

1:14f **mwa wa waningatweshelini kulwa nawo amama newo**  
of those I cannot manage to fight with/against My mother me  
*of those I cannot manage to fight against. My mother me!*

1:15a **Amama newo! Asikulu akandamizha**  
My mother me! The Lord has oppressed  
*My mother me! The Lord has oppressed*

1:15b **alumbwana ankhondo wangu wonse**  
Young men of war my all  
*all my young men of war.*

1:15c **Onani Asikulu awunganisha wumba ya wanthu owukila newo**  
See! The has gathered a group of people who are me  
Lord against

*See! The Lord has gathered a group of people who are against me*

1:15d **kuti iceneke alumbwana wangu**  
to destroy young men my

*To destroy my young men.*

1:15e **Amama Newo! Asikulu wacenekelatu msimbi mwana wa Yuda**  
My me! The has completely girl child of Judah  
mother Lord destroyed

*My mother me! The Lord has completely destroyed the girl child of Judah*

[Now Jerusalem is no longer speaking]

1:15f **Asikulu wam'ceneka ngani kufina mphesa Popangila-vinyu**  
The Lord has destroyed her like crushing vines on winepress  
(where they make wine)

*The Lord has destroyed her like crushing vines on winepress (where they make wine)*

1:16a **cikomo ca ivi nulila amama newo**  
because of These things I cry My mother me

*Because of these things I cry. My mother me*

[Jerusalem speaking now]

1:16b **onani misozi ili mbwembwembwe mu menso mwangu newo**  
see tears are full in eyes my me

*See tears are full in my eyes*

1:16c **amama Newo! onitontozha mtima ali patali nanewo**  
My mother me The one to comfort heart is far From me

*My mother me! The one to comfort me is far from me*

1:16d **wonikosesha mtima ali patali amama**  
The one to strengthen heart is far My mother  
*The one to strengthen my heart is far from me. My mother*

1:16e **wana wangu newo asala kwazi**  
children my me Have remained desolate  
*My children have remained desolate*

1:16f **cikomo mulwani wangu wanicimfya**  
because enemy my has triumphed over me  
*Because my enemy has triumphed over me*

1:17a **onani Ziyoni watambulula manja wake**  
Behold zion has stretched out hands her  
*Behold Zion has stretched out her hands*

[Jerusalem not speaking now]

1:17b **koma paliye nayumo kumo omutonthozha**  
but there is no with one even comforting her  
*But there is not even one comforting her*

1:17c **Leza elamula pa va Yakobo**  
The Lord commanded concerning of Jacob  
*The Lord commanded concerning Jacob*

1:17d **kuti wakunkhala nawo pafupi ayaluke alwani wake**  
that those dwelling With him near Should become enemies his  
*That those dwelling near him should become his enemies*

1:17e **Yelusalemu wayaluka cinthu amama newo**  
Jerusalem has become a thing My mother me  
*Jerusalem has become a thing, my mother me*

1:17f **wayaluka cinthu Comvwisha-tantha pakati pawo**  
She has become a thing detestable among them  
*She has become a detestable thing among them*

1:18a **Cendi Leza ni wolungama**  
Truly the Lord is right  
*Truly the Lord is right*

[Jerusalem speaking now]

1:18b **cikomo newo newukila malizu wake**  
because me I rebelled against word his  
*Because me I rebelled against his word*

1:18c **koma lombamba mvwani mwewo wanthu wonse**  
But now listen you people all  
*But now listen you all people*

1:18d **onani kutamana kwangu newo**  
see afflictions my me  
*See my afflictions*

1:18e **Asimba wangu na alumbwana wangu**  
Young women my and Young men my  
*My young women and my young men*

1:18f **atolewa kuwuzha**  
Have been taken into slavery  
*have been taken into slavery*

1:19a **Onani neyita ku onitemwa**  
behold I called to those who love me  
*Behold I called to those who love me*

**1:19b koma wêve Enitalizha-wenye**

but them they betrayed me

*but they betrayed me*

**1:19c ansembe wangu na Akulu-akulu ecifwa mu mzinda**

Priests my and elders died in the city

*My priests and my elders died in the city*

**1:19d peenzosakila sakila cakulya**

When they were searching searching food

*When they were searching for food*

**1:19e kuti awe na moyo**

that they should be with life

*That they should be with life*

**1:20a Loleshani mwewo Leza pakuti nili mmatamano**

look you Lord for I am In affliction

*Look you Lord for I am in afflictions*

**1:20b mmala mwangu mwacita mtumphila**

In belly my has developed discomfort

*In my belly, there has developed discomfort*

**1:20c mtima wangu wanyungulumwa mkati mwangu**

heart my Is disturbed inside of me

*My heart is disturbed inside of me*

**1:20d cikomo cakuti nawa wowukila ngako**

because that I have been a rebel great

*Because I have been a great rebel*

**1:20e mu njila wanthu opayiwa na pwitika**  
in the road people are slain by the sword  
*in the road people are slain by the sword*

**1:20f mu Ng'anda namo ni imfwa zeka zeka**  
in house also It is death only only  
*In the house also it is only death*

**1:21a wanthu ecimvwa kukungula kwangu**  
people heard lamenting of me  
*People heard my lamenting*

**1:21b koma penzeve wonitonhozha**  
but there was no one to comfort me  
*But there was no one to comfort me*

**1:21c Alwani wangu wonse amvwa matamano wangu**  
enemies my all have heard sufferings my  
*All my enemies have heard my sufferings*

**1:21d tetyo alwani niwosangalala ngako pa vamwacita**  
therefore enemies Are glad very about What you have done  
*Therefore, enemies are very glad because of what you have done*

**1:21e mwaleta nsiku yamwewilikizha**  
You have brought day you announced  
*You have brought the day which you announced*

**1:21f kuti nawo akatamane mwanatamanila newo**  
That they also should suffer as I have suffered me  
*That they also should suffer as I have suffered*

**1:22a lekani vicio vaô viyipa viwele pa menso panu**  
let deeds their evil come on face your  
*Let their evil deeds come on their faces*

**1:22b Muwape cilango weve**  
You give punishment them  
*You give them punishment*

**1:22c ngani mwemwepela cilango newo**  
Just like you gave punishment me  
*Just like you have given me punishment*

**1:22d cikomo ca viyipa vangu vorse**  
because of evils my all  
*Because of all my evils*

**1:22e kukungula kwangu kwapaka**  
lamentations my increasing  
*My lamentations are increasing*

**1:22f nipo mtima wangu wacomokelatu**  
and heart my has completely fainted  
*And my heart is completely fainted*

### **6.2.2.1 Comments on translation of Lamentations 1**

When analysing Lamentations 1 from an oral perspective, as presented above, the focus is on several key features that highlight how the text might have been experienced and conveyed orally, as captured in the Nsenga rendition. The analysis of Lamentations 1 will serve as an example of what is expected in all the poems of Lamentations.

**Mourning word:** This is the first aspect that I wish to highlight. Notably, mourning words in Nsenga laments are repeated multiple times, without which the laments cease to be laments in Nsenga. Examples given in chapter four on samples of Nsenga laments have shown the

presence of this feature. In this chapter, the mourning word *Amama newo* (“my mother me”) has been repeated multiple times, even in places where it does not exist in the Hebrew text, it is very important in Nsenga laments.

*Amama newo* (“my mother me”) translates the Hebrew word אֵיכָה at the beginning of Lamentations. There is an argument that אֵיכָה does not have a precise meaning apart from signalling a lament. The ambiguity of the Hebrew word אֵיכָה has been discussed by several scholars, particularly Robert Alter (Alter 1985:161-163; Alter 2019:1481-1483). In his work on biblical poetry and translation, Alter notes that the term is often used rhetorically in contexts of lament, mourning, or questioning, and its exact nuance can vary, making it challenging to pin down a precise meaning in English.

While אֵיכָה is commonly translated as “how” or “alas,” its use at the beginning of Lamentations and other biblical texts suggests a deeper, more emotional expression of bewilderment or despair. Alter points out that these nuances can be difficult to capture fully in translation, underscoring the complexity and somewhat elusive nature of the term in Hebrew (Alter 2011). However, in this oral Nsenga translation, the word has been understood as a mourning word, which should be translated with mourning words found in the target language. This may vary from one cultural context to another or from one language to another. Among the Nsengas, *amama newo* (my mother me) is a mourning expression. Sometimes *amama* (my mother) is used to express mourning and is considered more stylistic to intensify the emotional tone. The emotional tone of Lamentations 1 is one of deep sorrow and mourning, which would have been conveyed strongly in oral delivery in ancient Israel. It is for such a reason of retaining the emotional tone that the words like *amama newo* (my mother me) have been used repeatedly to convey this emotional tone in the Nsenga context.

**Repetition** in Nsenga lament is a very important feature of lament. This explains why *amama newo* (my mother me) has been repeated several times so that one does not lose track of the fact that this is a lament, hence the introduction of either *amama newo* (my mother me) or *amama* (my mother) in the Nsenga oral rendition of Lamentations 1. This is contrary to what is present in the Hebrew text, where the Hebrew text sparingly uses the mourning word. For example, the mourning word אֵיכָה is used only four times in the entire book of Lamentations (1:1; 2:1; 4:1; 4:2). Something to note from the usage of this term is the fact that it comes at the beginning of the three chapters as cited above. It should obviously be more interesting to note that the word that appears only four times in the entire book becomes the name of the

book. This can immediately suggest that the concept of the word אִיָּהָא applies at any other point in the entire book of Lamentations, if it were not so, it would not have been used as the title of the book. This should justify the usage of term in many other places in the Nsenga translation even if the Hebrew does not do so. If the Nsenga translation follows the same Hebrew style, the lament will no longer be a lament in Nsenga because it will have lost the emotional and rhetorical purpose. Therefore, the repeated reference to “my mother, me!” (*amama newo!*) as a mourning expression, intensifies the personal and emotional nature of the lament, reinforcing the anguish of the speaker.

**Repetition through parallelism.** In addition to the repetition of mourning words, Nsenga laments also feature repetition through parallelism, similar to Lamentations 1, which is rich in this technique. Parallelism, a common feature in Hebrew poetry, involves repeating ideas, structures, or sounds in adjacent lines or verses, emphasising themes of suffering, desolation, and lamentation throughout the chapter. Examples of repetition through parallelism can be found in Lamentations 1:2, 1:3, 1:6, 1:8, and 1:12.

In Lamentations 1:2, synonymous parallelism is employed in Hebrew to intensify the expression of grief through the repetition of related ideas in two closely connected phrases. This parallelism is evident in the comparison below, where the ideas of weeping and the absence of comfort are articulated through vivid imagery of tears and groaning. Lines 1:2a and 1:2b have been sampled to explain this technique and its importance in the Nsenga lament.

1:2a Onani osisima ngako mwana usiku Wonse, Amama newo!

*Behold! The child greatly groans all night. My mother me!*

1:2b **Ati misozi kumbwela mu mbovu mwake, Amama newo!**

*See the tears flowing in down her cheeks, my mother me!*

In the Hebrew, the text describes the desolation and mourning of Jerusalem, with a focus on the sorrow of the people. The parallelism in the text can be seen in how two separate expressions—one emphasising the groaning of the afflicted (1:2a) and the other emphasising the flowing of tears (1:2b) which serve to heighten the emotional intensity of the lament. In both lines, two different expressions of sorrow — “*osisima ngako*” (she groans greatly) and “*misozi kumbwela*” (tears flowing) — are used as synonymous elements. The groaning in 1:2a conveys a deep, audible sorrow, while the flowing of tears in 1:2b, offers a visual parallel to this sorrow.

In the context of Nsenga, as well as many other Zambian languages, synonymous parallelism plays a crucial role in the expression of laments, as illustrated in section 4.6. For a text to truly resonate as a *lament*—both in its emotional depth and cultural authenticity—it is essential that synonymous parallelism be given special attention in translation of Lamentations for oral contexts. The translation should not treat it as merely a linear and emotionless expression but should revitalise it to reflect the full emotional weight of the original while resonating with the local way of lamenting.

In Lamentations 1:3, the verse highlights Judah’s suffering and displacement, emphasising her exile and lack of rest. The entire verse is divided into eight lines, forming four pairs of synonymous parallelism. This structure is intentionally mirrored in the oral rendition of the verse in Nsenga, where synonymous parallelism is a key technique in laments. In Nsenga, this parallelism serves not only to clarify the meaning but also to heighten the emotional impact for the audience.

1:3a **Yuda waya ku Uzha!**

*Judah has gone into exile*

1:3b **Yuda waya kumatamano amama newo**

*Judah has gone to sufferings, my mother me!*

In these two lines, the synonymous parallels are more clearly articulated in this Nsenga translation. The phrase “*waya ku uzha*” (has gone to exile) in 1:3a is mirrored by “*waya kumatamano*” (has gone to sufferings) in 1:3b. While both expressions convey Judah’s hardship, the parallel structure amplifies the emotional depth of the lament.

The remaining three pairs of synonymous parallelism in **Lamentations 1:3** are also clearly reflected in the Nsenga oral rendition. The second pair, consisting of **1:3c** and **1:3d**, includes the phrases “*come out from his glory*” and “*gone to hard labour.*” In the Nsenga version, these two expressions are presented as synonymous because they both describe Judah’s state rather than suggesting a linear progression from one condition to another. The focus is not on a physical movement but on the description of Judah’s current condition—having fallen from a position of glory into a state of suffering and toil. From this perspective, the two lines (1:3c and 1:3d) are synonymous, as they both convey the same idea of Judah’s painful condition.

1:3c **Yuda wafuma mu ulemelelo**

*Judah has come out from his glory*

1:3d **Yuda wayokata mulimo wokosa amama newo**

*Judah has gone to hard labour, my mother me!*

The third pair consists of lines 1:3e and 1:3f and the parallel expressions in these two are “dwelling among foreign nations” (*wankhala pakati pa amitundu*) and “not found a place to rest” (*aliyofwane malo opumulilapo*)

1:3e **amama Yuda wankhala pakati pa amitundu**

*My mother, Judah is dwelling among foreign nations*

1:3f **nipo aliyofwane malo opumulilapo**

*And has not found a place where to rest*

The fourth pair includes lines 1:3g and 1:3h and the parallel expressions in these lines include: “wazungulukiwa na omuwutusha” (surrounded by pursuers) and “aliye na njila kozhewela” (has no way to flee).

1:3g **Amama! Yuda wazungulukiwa na omuwutusha**

*My mother! Judah is surrounded by pursuers*

1:3h **nipo aliye na njila Kozhewela, amama newo**

*And has no way to flee. My mother me!*

**Synonymous parallelism.** The sampled examples have demonstrated a clear need for special attention to synonymous parallelism, a literary device where two lines or phrases express the same or similar ideas in different words. The importance of this technique cannot be overemphasised when translating for an orally dominant culture and indeed for Oral Bible translation. The technique can effectively be used to deepen the emotional impact and reinforce the central themes of suffering and despair when translating lamentations.

Lamentations 1:6 employs emblematic parallelism, comparing Zion’s loss of glory to princes like deer without pasture, reinforcing the theme of desolation. This type of parallelism is also common among the Nsenga people and retaining it in the oral translation using local concepts enriches the lament.

In Lamentations 1:7b, c, d, the word “*wakumbulikila*” (“has remembered”) is repeated in the Nsenga oral version of the text, although this repetition does not appear in the original Hebrew. Repetition is a hallmark of the Nsenga oral laments (as illustrated in section 4.6) and serves as a common stylistic element in Nsenga poetry and storytelling. In this context, the repeated words or phrases are not simply redundant but function to create a rhythmic flow that enriches the emotional and poetic experience for the audience.

It is important to clarify that, in this instance; the repetition does not introduce any new layers of meaning or change the fundamental message of the verse. Rather, it serves a different purpose: enhancing the understanding of the lament. The repeated use of “*wakumbulikila*” (has remembered) amplifies the significance of remembrance, thereby deepening the emotional impact of the verse. This technique makes the lament more touching and memorable, especially for oral listeners, who are more attuned to the rhythmic qualities of speech, especially where laments are concerned. In the Nsenga version of Lamentations, the repetition of “*wakumbulikila*” makes the sorrow and suffering caused by Jerusalem’s destruction more immediate and tangible. While the Hebrew text may present a more direct expression of grief, the repeated phrase adds an emotional weight that brings the lament to life. The repetition does not alter the theological or narrative content of the verse, but it enhances its artistic and aesthetic dimensions, engaging the listener more deeply with the text. Thus, the use of repetition in the Nsenga version serves both a cultural and linguistic function. It aligns the text with the oral traditions of the Nsenga people, where repetition is an effective tool for reinforcing key concepts, evoking emotion, and strengthening the connection between the audience and the heart of the lament. This stylistic choice enriches the experience of the lament, making it not only more impactful but also more memorable for those who hear it.

Lamentations 1:8 features synonymous parallelism, describing Jerusalem’s sin and disgrace in 1:8a and 1:8b that mirror each other in structure and meaning. Finally, Lamentations 1:12 exemplifies synthetic parallelism, where the second line builds upon and expands the thought of the first, creating a deeper emotional appeal from 1:12a to 1:12f. This feature is mirrored in the Nsenga translation, further enhancing the lament’s emotional resonance.

**Attention seeking words:** One prominent feature of Nsenga laments is the use of attention-seeking words, which play a critical role in conveying the emotional intensity of the mourner’s distress. A key example of this is the word *onani* (“See!” or “Look!”). This term is employed to invoke emotions in those around the mourner, encouraging them to feel the sorrow and pain

the speaker is experiencing. It also functions as a call for divine attention, appealing to God for intervention. In the context of Lamentations, this feature mirrors the speaker's direct appeal to God or to an audience, invoking both a communal and divine response. The word *onani* appears in various lines across the text of chapter one, including 1:1g, 1:2a, 1:4c, 1:5a, 1:8f, 1:9e, 1:11a, 1:11c, 1:11e, 1:12c, 1:13a, 1:14c, 1:14e, 1:15c, 1:16b, 1:17a, 1:18d, 1:19a, and 1:20, emphasising the recurrent call for attention throughout the lament.

Interestingly, Nsenga laments are typically expressed in the presence of an audience. The speaker, while in deep distress, addresses this implied audience as though expecting a response, even though no answer is forthcoming. This rhetorical structure is not aimed at receiving a literal reply but rather at grabbing the attention of the listeners, drawing them into the speaker's emotional world. The lamenter's words are often framed as if engaging in a conversation, seeking empathy, or invoking divine intervention, hence the use of *onani* (See Or look!) in Nsenga. While no direct response is expected or given, the act of speaking out in this way highlights the dialogical nature of the lament.

This dialogical tension is particularly prevalent in Bantu languages, including Nsenga, which commonly use call-and-response structures in oral traditions (Finnegan 1970; Nyamnjoh 2005). These structures create the sense of a dialogue, but as with *onani*, the response is often absent, emphasising the emotional tension between the lamenter's cry and the silence that follows. In Nsenga, this feature of call-and-response enhances the feeling of dialogical engagement without the actual expectation of resolution, mirroring the same tension found in the lamentations of the Hebrew Bible, particularly in texts like Lamentations 1.

The use of this dialogical feature in the translation of Lamentations into Nsenga is crucial. Just as the Hebrew text conveys a yearning for a response—whether from God or the community—so too must the translation capture this emotional and spiritual longing, even if no answer is given. The unanswered expectation in the lament is a central element of its emotional and psychological depth. In the absence of a response, the speaker's sense of abandonment, isolation, and unfulfilled yearning are amplified, creating a profound sense of loss and desolation.

For Nsenga translators, it is essential to use *Onani* (See Or look!) in appropriate places in order to preserve the emotional intensity and psychological complexity of the lament. Finnegan (2007) reminds us that communication in Africa is diverse and it involves complex practices

which includes performance in order to convey knowledge, history and social norms. This is the case in this scenario. By accurately conveying the unanswered call for attention, whether through *onani* (See! or look!) or another equivalent in Nsenga, the translator ensures that the profound sorrow expressed in the original text is communicated clearly to the audience. This helps maintain the dialogical tension that is so crucial to the text's power, allowing the lamenter's voice to echo in the silence that follows the call for attention in Nsenga. In this chapter of the Nsenga translation of Lamentations, the word *onani* (See or look!) has been used not less than twenty times within the Nsenga rendition, but it does not suggest that each time it is used there is a Hebrew counterpart. The Hebrew has the word  $\text{הִרְאָה}$  (see or look) once in each of the following verses 1:9, 11, 12, 18, 20 where it is used for the same purpose of grabbing the attention. In the other places where it is used in chapter one of Lamentations, it has a different purpose. However, the used of *onani* (See! or look!) is very a very important feature in Nsenga laments. Therefore, it is important for the Nsenga translation to use it frequently if the poem is to remain a lament and resonate with the Nsenga way of lamenting. Examples of the places where the attention-grabbing word *onani* (See Or look!) has been used even if it is not in Hebrew include: 1:1g, 1:2a, 1:4c, 1:5a, 1:8f, 1:11a, 1:11c, 1:11e, 1:13a, 1:14c, 1:14e, 1:15c, 1:16b, 1:17a, and 1:19a. This accounts for 15 times where *onani* has been used in the first chapter of Lamentations in places where the Hebrew does not. This explains the importance of the feature in the target language.

### 6.2.2.2 Differences with the written translation of Lamentations 1

The written translation, which has yet to be published, and the translation provided in this script exhibit several notable differences across various aspects. When comparing the oral and written translations, some of the major distinctions include the use of repetitions, the handling of elliptical phrases, and the incorporation of attention-grabbing words, among others. Below are a few selected lines that highlight significant differences when the two versions are compared against each other. The English translation of each line is in parentheses to assist the reader to identify the notable differences.

A. **Oral line 1:1c:** *Amama newo! Mzinda waŵa ngani nyankufwilwa, amama!* (My mother me! The city has become like a widow. My mother!)

**Written:** *Nga waŵatyani ngani nyankufwilwa* (How have you become like a widow?)

In Example A, the oral version uses repetition for emphasis, which is a key characteristic of oral laments. This repetition creates a rhythm and emotional impact, calling attention to the intensity of the lament. The written version, however, is more succinct and less expressive, lacking the intermodal interplay between the written and the oral traditions. The written translation is more restrained, offering a direct translation with fewer emotional cues.

B. **Oral line 1:1g:** *koma lomba, onani waŵa muzha mwana, amama newo* (but now, see! She has become a slave child, my mother me!)

**Written:** *koma lomba waŵa muzha* (But now she has become a slave)

In Example B, the oral version includes the attention-seeking word *onani* (see!) and the repeated lament *amama newo* (my mother me), which add emotional weight and dramatise the lament. These features evoke a stronger emotional response from the listener. The written version, by contrast, omits these emotionally charged elements, providing a more straightforward narrative without any dramatic intensity.

C. **Oral line 1:2a:** *Onani osisima ngako mwana usiku wonse amama newo* (See/Behold! The child greatly groans all night. My mother me!)

**Written:** *Yeve osisima ngako usiku wonse* (She groans all night)

Example C highlights the use of *onani* (See/ behold!) in the oral version, which serves as a call for attention or response, emphasising the urgency and sorrow of the lament. The repetition of *amama newo* (my mother me) further enhances the emotional resonance. The oral version also reintroduces a noun referent instead of a pronominal form, “the child”. In contrast, once again, the written version is much more restrained, presenting a straightforward statement that lacks the dramatic appeal of the oral version.

D. **Oral line 1:2e:** *Ayake wonse Amuyalukila! Amama newo!* (All her friends have turned against her, my mother me!)

**1:2f:** *Ayake wonse ayaluka alwani ŵake.* (All her friends have become her enemies)

**Written:** *Ayake wonse amuyalukila,* (All her friends have turned against her)

----- *aŵa alwani ŵake* (they have become her enemies)

In Example D, we observe an elliptical construction in the Hebrew text that has been preserved in the written translation. The Hebrew phrases that correspond to the lines above here below:

כָּל־רֵעֵיהָ בָּגְדוּ בָּהּ (All her friends have turned against her)

הָיוּ לָהּ לְאֵיבִים: ----- (They have become her enemies)

In the oral version, however, the ellipsis is not preserved. The Hebrew phrase כָּל־רֵעֵיהָ translated as *Ayake wonse* (all her friends) is repeated for emotional emphasis. This repetition is a hallmark of oral laments in Nsenga, which rely on repetition to intensify the emotional impact on the audience. The written translation, in contrast, adheres more closely to the literal Hebrew text, resulting in a less dramatic and less emotionally charged rendering.

It is worth noting that while ellipsis may be acceptable in other literary genres of Nsenga, it is less effective in the context of laments, where repetition plays a crucial role in evoking deep emotional responses. Repeating the missing elements of the ellipsis in the oral version helps to create a richer and more evocative lament. Therefore, repetition in place of ellipsis is highly recommended for *Lamentations* in Nsenga, as it maintains the emotional depth of the oral tradition while respecting the intersemiotic interplay between oral and written forms.

**E. Oral line 1:3a:** *Yuda waya ku uzha!* (Judah has gone into exile)

**1:3b:** *Yuda waya kumatamano amama newo* (Judah has gone to sufferings, my mother me!)

**Written:** *Yuda waya ku wuzha cikomo ca matamano* (Judah has gone into slavery due to sufferings)

**F. Oral line 1:3c:** *Yuda wafuma mu ulemelelo* (Judah has come out from his glory)

**1:3d:** *Yuda wayokata mulimo wokosa amama newo* (Judah has gone to hard labour, my mother me!)

**Written:** *wafuma mu ulemelelo nakuyokata mulimo wokosa.* (has come out from glory to hard labour)

In summary, the oral and written translations of *Lamentations 1* exhibit notable differences, particularly in the use of repetition, attention-grabbing words, and the handling of elliptical phrases. The oral version employs repetition and emotionally charged phrases, such as *onani* (behold!) and *amama newo* (my mother me), to evoke a dramatic, sorrowful response from the audience. These elements are largely absent in the written version, which is briefer and more aligned with the literal Hebrew text. The written translation tends to minimise emotional

expression and intermodal interplay, whereas the oral version thrives on repetition and heightened emotion. These distinctions highlight the contrasting nature of oral and written traditions, with the oral version emphasising emotional depth through stylistic choices that are central to the lament genre.

### 6.2.3 Lamentations 2

2:1a **Amama Newo! Asikulu mwalili Mu ukali wake**

My mother Me! The Lord as he is in anger his

*My mother me! The Lord as he is in his anger*

2:1b **avwinikila mwana mwanakazi wa Ziyoni na mkumbi ufipa**

He has covered child female of Zion with cloud dark

*He has covered the female child of Zion with a dark cloud*

2:1c **Onani wapoza mchinzi wa Israeli pansi**

See! He has hurled glory of Israel down

*See! He has hurled down the glory of Israel*

2:1d **kuwufumya kululu mpakila pa calo**

from heaven to on earth

*from heaven to earth*

2:1e **Asikulu Aliyokumbukeko Ng'anda yake ituwa mu Yerusalemu**

The Lord has not remembered His holy house in Jerusalem

*The Lord has not remembered his Holy House (Temple) in Jerusalem*

2:1f **mu masiku wa ukali wake**

In days of anger his

*in days of his anger*

2:2a **Amama newo! Asikulu amelelatu malo wonse wa Yakobo,**

My mother me! The Lord has swallowed places all of Jacob

*My mother me! The Lord has swallowed all places of Jacob without mercy*

2:2b **Onani! Paliye na lusungu**

See! There is no even mercy

*See! There is no mercy*

2:2c **Asikulu wafwaya vipupa va mwana mwanakazi wa Yuda**

The Lord has broken walls of child female of Judah

*The Lord has broken the walls of the female child of Judah*

2:2d **mu ukali wawo**

in wrath his

*in his wrath*

2:2e **Asikulu waponsha pansu ufumu na acitangulila wake**

He has cast down on the ground the kingdom and rulers its

*He has cast down on the ground the kingdom and its rulers*

2:2f **mocitisha nsoni**

thereby causing shame

*thereby causing shame*

2:3a **Amama newo! Asikulu wafwaya nzako zonse za Israeli**

My mother me! The Lord has destroyed strength all of Israel

*My mother me! The Lord has destroyed all strength of Israel*

2:3b **mu ukali wawo woyofya**

in wrath his fierce

*In his fierce wrath*

2:3c **Onani Asikulu wazhosha kwanja kwawo kwendi**

The Lord He has withdrawn hand his right

*The Lord has withdrawn his right hand*

- 2:3d **pamense pa alwani wa Israeli**  
 before on enemies of Israel  
*before the enemies of Israel*
- 2:3e **Asikulu woyaka ngani mulilo wokakuka mwa Yakobo**  
 The Lord Is burning like fire flaming In Jacob  
*The Lord is burning like a flaming fire in Jacob*
- 2:3f **kushoka vonse vozungulila**  
 consuming all the things around  
*Consuming everything around*
- 2:4a **Asikulu walozha wuta kwa sewo ngani mulwani**  
 The Lord has directed bow to us like An enemy  
*The Lord has directed his bow to us like an enemy*
- 2:4b **na kwanja kwawo kwendi koteyewa ngani mulwani**  
 with hand his right ready like enemey  
*With his right hand ready like an enemy*
- 2:4c **nipo wapaya wonse wala otinsangalasha mu mense mwasu**  
 and has killed all those delightful in eyes our  
*And he has killed all those delightful in our eyes*
- 2:4d **Asikulu watila ukali wawo ngani mulilo**  
 The Lord Has poured wrath his like fire  
*The Lord has poured his wrath like fire*
- 2:4e **Onani wautila mu msasa wa mwana mwanakazi wa Zion**  
 See! He has poured it in camp of child female of Zion  
*See! He has poured it in the camp of the female child of Zion*

- 2:5a **Asikulu wawâ ngani Mulwani lombâ**  
 The Lord has become like Enemy now  
*The Lord has become like an enemy*
- 2:5b **Asikulu wamela Isilayeli**  
 The Lord has swallowed Israel  
*The Lord has swallowed Israel*
- 2:5c **Asikulu wamela misumba ya Isilayeli yonse**  
 The Lord has swallowed cities of his all  
*The Lord has swallowed all cities of Israel*
- 2:5d **Asikulu waceneka malinga kuwa matongwe wake**  
 The Lord has destroyed stronghold into desolate his  
*The Lord has destroyed his strongholds making them desolate*
- 2:5e **nipo wapasha kulila nokungula**  
 and he has multiplied weeping and lamentations  
*And he has multiplied weeping and lamentations*
- 2:5f **ku mwana mwanakazi wa Yuda**  
 to child female of Judah  
*to the female child of Judah*
- 2:6a **Asikulu Apasula Ng'anda yake ngani munda**  
 The Lord he has destroyed house his like a garden  
*The Lord has destroyed his house like a garden*
- 2:6b **waceneka malo wake wa msonkhano**  
 He has destroyed place his of meeting  
*He has destroyed his place of meeting*

- 2:6c **Leza walengsha Ziyoni Kuluwa**  
 The Lord Has made Zion forget  
*The Lord has made Zion forget*
- 2:6d **Walengsha Ziyoni Kuluwa Visangalalo na Masabata**  
 He has made Zion forget feasts and Sabbaths  
*He has made Zion forget feasts and Sabbaths*
- 2:6e **ndipo mu ukali wake woyofya wakana mfumu na anseme**  
 and in anger his fierce has rejected king and priest  
*And in his fierce anger he has rejected (both) king and priest*
- 2:7a **Asikulu atafulila mpupo wawo**  
 The Lord has despised altar his  
*The Lord has despised his altar*
- 2:7b **nipo akana Ng'anda yawo Ituwa**  
 and has rejected house his holy  
*And has rejected his holy house*
- 2:7c **Onani! Ayitwala mu manja ya alwani**  
 See! He has given it into hands enemy  
*See! He has given into enemy hands*
- 2:7d **Onani vipupa va Misumba, amama newo**  
 See the walls of Palaces, my mother me  
*See the walls of palaces, my mother me!*
- 2:7e **Alwani ewilikizha na cisangalalo mu Ng'anda ya Leza**  
 enemies shouted with joy in house of the Lord  
*Enemies shouted with joy in the house of the Lord*

- 2:7f **ngani pa Nsiku ya cisangalalo**  
 like on Day of feast  
*Like on a day of feast*
- 2:8a **Leza esimikizhilatu kuti aceneke**  
 The Lord determined that He would destroy  
*The Lord determined that he should destroy*
- 2:8b **cupupa ca mwana mwanakazi wa Ziyoni**  
 the wall of child female of Zion.  
*The wall of the female child of Zion*
- 2:8c **Leza etambulula Coyezhela-pomanga**  
 The Lord stretched a building measuring tool  
*The Lord stretched a plumb line*
- 2:8d **nipo aliyoleshe kwanja kwake kuceneka**  
 and He did not restrain hand his from destroying  
*And he did not restrain his hand from destroying*
- 2:8e **Leza elengsha cupupa ca kunja na ca mkati kukungula**  
 The Lord caused wall of outside and of inside to lament  
*The Lord caused the outside walls and the inside walls to lament*
- 2:8f **nipo vetamanishiwila pamo**  
 And they wasted away together  
*And together they wasted away*
- 2:9a **Onani Milyango yake yafwikilika pansi**  
 see Gates her are buried in ground  
*See her gates are buried in the ground*

- 2:9b **waceneka notyola mipilingizho yake**  
 He has destroyed and broken bars her  
*He has destroyed and broken her bars*
- 2:9c **mfumu yake na acitangulila ali pakati pa mitundu**  
 king her and princes they are among the Foreign nations  
*Her king and princes are among foreign nations*
- 2:9d **etulo kuliye**  
 law there is no  
*There is no law there*
- 2:9e **nipo aneneli wake Otweshalini**  
 and prophets her not able  
*And her prophets are not able*
- 2:9f **kuwona mensomphenya ofumila kwa Leza**  
 To see vision coming from to the Lord  
*To see vision coming from the Lord*
- 2:10a **Akulu-akulu wa wana anakazi wa Ziyoni**  
 Elders of children female of Zion  
*Elders of female children of Zion*
- 2:10b **ankhala panshi ali celele**  
 They are sitting on the floor/ground they are quiet  
*They are sitting on the floor, they are quiet*
- 2:10c **Azitila lukungu ku mitu kwawo**  
 They have poured dust on heads their  
*They have poured dust on their heads*

- 2:10d **nipo avwala Masaka**  
 And they clothed in sackcloth  
*And they are clothed in sackcloth*
- 2:10e **Asimbi wa Yelusalemu**  
 Young women of Jerusalem  
*Young women of Jerusalem*
- 2:10f **azholisha mitu yawo pansi**  
 have bowed heads their down  
*they have bowed their heads down*
- 2:11a **menso wangu avupa nolila, Amama newo**  
 eyes my are tired of crying My me  
*My eyes are tired of crying; My mother me!*
- 2:11b **mmala mwangu mwasambuluka**  
 stomach of me has churned  
*My stomach has churned*
- 2:11c **onani ciwu cangu catiliwa pansi**  
 See! liver my is poured on the ground  
*See! My liver has been poured out on the ground*
- 2:11d **cikomo ca kucenekeka kwa mwana mwanakazi wa wanthu wangu**  
 because of the destruction of child female of people my  
*Because of the destruction of the female child of my people*
- 2:11e **cikomo wana na malucece okomoka mu Luwanza lwa mu mzinda**  
 because children and infants are in open spaces of the city  
 fainting  
*Because children and infants are fainting in the open spaces of the city*

- 2:12a **Mvwani mwawolilila kwa Amanyinawawo**  
 Listen to how they are crying to their mothers  
*Listen to how they are crying to their mothers:*
- 2:12b **“Cinkhwa na vinyu vili kuni Amama?”**  
 bread and wine they are where mother  
*Where is bread and wine mother?*
- 2:12c **Amama newo, onani kukomoka ngani munthu wolasiwa**  
 My mother me! see the fainting like one who is pierced  
*My mother me! See the fainting, like one who is pierced*
- 2:12d **Okomoka mu Luwanza lwa mu mzinda**  
 They are fainting in the open spaces of in city  
*They are fainting in the open spaces of the city*
- 2:12e **Onani myoyo yawo yusila**  
 See! lives their ending  
*See! Their lives are ending*
- 2:12f **pa mendo pa amanyinawawo**  
 on the feet of their mothers  
*On the feet of their mothers*
- 2:13a **Ni cinji ca ningalaŵile pa va wewo?**  
 What is it that I can say on about you  
*What is it that I can say about you?*
- 2:13b **Ni cinji ca ningakulinganizhe naco wewo**  
 What is it that I can compare you with you  
*What is it that I can compare you with?*

- 2:13c **wewo mwana mwanakazi wa Yelusalemu?**  
 You Child female of Jerusalem  
*You female child of Jerusalem*
- 2:13d **Kansi ningakupalanishe na cinji,**  
 then can I compare you with what  
*With what then can I compare you?*
- 2:13e **kuti potetyo ningakutonhozhe**  
 So that in doing so I may comfort you  
*So that in doing so I may comfort you*
- 2:13f **wewo mwana msimbi wa Ziyoni?**  
 you child virgin girl of Zion  
*You virgin female child of Zion*
- 2:13g **cikomo kucenekewa kwanu nikukulu ngani Cimmana;**  
 because wound your is big like the sea  
*Because your wound is big like the sea*
- 2:13h **kansi niwani angakupozheni?**  
 then who can heal you  
*Who can heal you?*
- 2:14a **Aneneli wako awona mensomphenya pa wewo**  
 prophets your have seen visions concerning you  
*Your prophets have seen visions concerning you*
- 2:14b **koma ni mensomphenya atyala-tyala na opusa**  
 but they are visions worthless and misleading  
*But they worthless and misleading visions*

- 2:14c **ŵeve aliyokuwoneshe kuyifya kwako**  
 they did not show you sin your  
*They did not show you your sin*
- 2:14d **kuti uŵe soti paweme**  
 So that you be again restored  
*So that you are restored again*
- 2:14e **koma awona malizu atyala-tyala**  
 but they have seen oracles worthless  
*But they have seen worthless oracles*
- 2:14f **malizu opusa nipo niwokusoŵeshani**  
 oracles worthless and misleading  
*worthless and misleading oracles*
- 2:15a **wonse opita munjila**  
 all who pass by on the road  
*All who pass by on the road*
- 2:15b **okulambila mu manja mofweya**  
 They clap their hands mockingly  
*They clap their hands mockingly*
- 2:15c **olizha milozi nopukusa mitu yawo**  
 whistling whistles and shake heads their  
*They are whistling whistles and shake their heads*
- 2:15d **pa mwana mwanakazi wa Yelusalemu**  
 at child female of Jerusalem  
*at the female child of Jerusalem*

2:15e **kansi uyu niye mzinda wenzoyitiwa kuti wowamila kuwama**  
Is it true that this is the city that was called as perfectly beautiful  
*Is this truly the city that was called as perfectly beautiful,*

2:15f **mzinda wosangalasha calo conse ca pansi?**  
city regarded as Joy of earth whole of Earth  
*the city regarded as the joy of the whole earth?*

2:16a **alwani wako wonse**  
enemies your all  
*All your enemies*

2:16b **okuyasamila kukamwa nokufweya**  
open to you mouths and mocking  
*Open their mouths to you mockingly*

2:16c **olizha milozi nokukuta menu wawo**  
sound whistling gnash teeth their  
*They whistle and gnash their teeth*

[Enemies speak]

2:16d **Nolawila kuti “Tamuceneka!**  
and say that we have destroyed him  
*And say that we have destroyed him*

2:16e **Eee iyi niye nsiku yetenzopangwa**  
Yes! this is day we longed for  
*Yes! This is the day we yearned for*

2:16f **lomba tilinayo tayiwona**  
now we have it we have seen it  
*Now we have it, we have seen it.*

[End of enemies' speaking]

- 2:17a **Leza wacita mphela vecikonzekela kucita**  
 The Lord has done surely what he planned to do  
*The Lord has surely done what he planned to do*
- 2:17b **wacita Venzolaŵila**  
 He has done what he spoke about  
*He has done what he spoke about*
- 2:17c **mwecilamulila macezo**  
 As he commanded long ago  
*As he commanded long ago*
- 2:17d **wacenekelatu paliye lusungu**  
 He has completely destroyed there is no mercy  
*He has completely destroyed without mercy*
- 2:17e **wavomelezha alwani kuti asangalale pa mwewo**  
 He has allowed enemies to rejoice on you  
*He has allowed enemies to rejoice over you*
- 2:17f **nipo wapasha nzako za alwani ŵako**  
 And multiplied strength of enemies your  
*And he has multiplied the strength of your enemies*
- 2:18a **leka Vipupa vako vililile Kwa asikulu**  
 Let walls your cry out to the Lord  
*Let your walls cry out to the Lord*
- 2:18b **wewo mwana mwanakazi wa Ziyoni**  
 you child female of Zion  
*You female child of Zion*

2:18c **Leka misozi yawo icite kuti mbwembwembwe ngani kamana**  
Let tears their will be to flowing like a river  
*Let their tears be flowing like a river*

2:18d **Muzuŵa na usiku**  
day and night  
*day and night*

2:18e **Musazipe mpumulo**  
Do not give yourselves rest  
*Do not give yourselves rest*

2:18f **menso ŵanu asavupe**  
eyes your should not get weary  
*Your eyes should get weary*

2:19a **imani lilani Moŵilizha usiku**  
Arise! Cry out loudly night  
*Arise! Cry out loudly in the night*

2:19b **usiku wonse pamulonda**  
night all as you watch  
*All night as you watch*

2:19c **fumyani vonse va ku mtima ngani manzi**  
Pour out everything of the heart like water  
*Pour out everything of the heart like water*

2:19d **pamenso pa Asikulu**  
Before the face of the Lord  
*Before the face of the Lord*

2:19e **imyani manja kwa yeve**

Lift up hands to him

*Lift up your hands to him*

2:19f **cikomo ca moyo wa wana wanu**

For the sake of life of children your

*For the sake of your children's lives*

2:19g **awo okomoka na njala**

they are fainting with hunger

*they are fainting with hunger*

2:19h **mu njila zonse**

in roads all

*In all roads*

2:20a **onani mwewo Leza nipo loleshani**

Look You/O Lord and see

*Look O Lord and see*

2:20b **kansi niwani wamwecitila coteti**

do+ who else you did such

*To who else did you do such?*

2:20c **kansi anakazi acite kulya mbuto za mmala mwawo**

Do+ women do eat seed of womb their

*Will women eat the seeds of their womb?*

2:20d **wana wecitolela paweme**

Children they cared for properly

*Children they cared for properly*

- 2:20e **nga wansembe na mneneli apayiwe**  
 should the priest and the prophet be killed  
*Should the priest and the prophet be killed*
- 2:20f **mu malo Atuwâ wa Asikulu**  
 in place the holy of the Lord  
*In the holy place of the Lord*
- 2:21a **mu lukungu ya mu njila**  
 in dust of in streets  
*In the dust of the streets*
- 2:21b **ali Ngunda-ngunda alumbwana na akulukazi**  
 are lie dead boys and old men  
*lie dead boys and old men*
- 2:21c **asimbi wangu na alumbwana wangu**  
 young women my and young men my  
*My young women and young men*
- 2:21d **apayiwa na pwitika**  
 have been killed by sword  
*Have been killed by the sword*
- 2:21e **Mwaâpaya pa nsiku ya ukali wanu**  
 You have killed them on day of anger your  
*You have killed them on the day of your anger*
- 2:21f **Mwaâpaya paliye na lusungu**  
 You have killed them there is no with mercy  
*You have killed them with no mercy*

2:22a **mwaŵayita**                      **ngani**        **pa**        **siku** **ya** **cisangalalo**  
You have summoned them    like            on        day    of    feast  
*You have summoned them like on the day of feast*

2:22b **mwaniyitila**                      **voyofya** **kufuma** **ku** **vitwa** **vonse**  
You have called for me    terrors    from        to    side    every  
*You have called for me terrors from every side*

2:22c **Pa** **nsiku** **ya** **ukali** **wa** **Leza**  
on    day        of    anger    of    the Lord  
*On the day of the anger of the Lord*

2:22d **paliye**        **ezheŵako**                      **keno** **kupuzumuka**  
there is no    one who escaped    or        survived  
*there is no one who escaped or survived*

2:22e **wonse**        **ŵenevyala**        **Noŵalela**  
All those    I gave birth to    and brought up  
*All those I gave birth to and brought up*

2:22f **alwani**    **ŵangu**    **eŵaceneka**  
enemies    my            destroyed them  
*my enemies destroyed them*

### 6.2.3.1 Comments on translation of Lamentations 2

The comments on this chapter will build upon the comments provided on the first chapter. The principle of repetition cannot be over-emphasised. The domesticating of foreign concepts by avoiding crude terms but explaining the concepts is deliberate to ensure that the oral version is clear and understandable. Therefore, what has already been explained in the first chapter will not be repeated here but mentioned in passing.

**Repetition:** The repetition of mourning words “*amama newo*” and repetition through parallelism throughout this chapter is very important to note and sustain in Nsenga. These mourning words have been introduced even in verses where the Hebrew does not have them,

only for purposes of creating intensity and raising the emotions. As earlier stated, for oral cultures and Nsenga in particular, repetition aids in memory and enhances the emotional tone. These repeated expressions emphasise the gravity of the situation and evoke deep emotional responses. Without the mourning words being repeated where necessary, these poems cease being laments. It is the mourning words that will help any Nsenga person understand that the text in question is a lament and the key theme is kept alive. Repetition plays a key role in oral cultures by helping audiences remember key themes or ideas. In Lamentations 2, key phrases are also repeated to make them memorable and help an oral audience grasp the theological message that God's wrath has been poured out on Jerusalem.

**Emotional Intensity and Pacing:** The emotional tone of the chapter is one of intense sorrow, despair, and grief, which should be conveyed through pacing and tone. In verses 11-12, the speaker's emotional distress is evident:

**2:11a menso wangu avupa nolila, Amama newo**

*My eyes are tired of crying; My mother me!*

**2:11b mmala mwangu mwasambuluka**

*My stomach has churned*

**2:11c Onani ciwu cangu catiliwa pansi**

*See! My liver has been poured out on the ground*

**2:11d cikomo ca kucenekeka kwa mwana mwanakazi wa wanthu wangu**

*Because of the destruction of the female child of my people*

**2:11e cikomo wana na malucece okomoka mu Luwanza lwa mu mzinda**

*Because children and infants are fainting in the open spaces of the city*

**2:12a Mwani mwawolilila Kwa Amanyinawawo:**

*Listen to how they are crying to their mothers:*

**2:12b "Cinkhwa na vinyu vili kuni Amama"**

*Where is bread and wine mother?*

**2:12c Amama newo, Onani kukomoka ngani munthu wolasiwa**

*My mother me, see how they are fainting like one who is pierced*

**2:12d Okomoka mu Luwanza lwa mu mzinda**

*They are fainting in the open spaces of the city*

**2:12e Onani myoyo yawo yusila**

*See their lives are ending*

**2:12f pa mendo pa amanyinawawo**

*On the feet of their mothers*

These verses reflect deep emotional pain, requiring an oral translator to slow down and use pauses to allow the weight of the grief to sink in. There is an intensification taking place through synthetic parallelism. Additionally, to avoid turning the text into narrative, the translation has been changed into the present tense in Nsenga.

In translating Lamentations 2 for an oral culture, it is therefore important to retain the emotional intensity and the rhythmic repetitive nature of the text. Emphasis should be placed on dramatic pauses, and clear transitions between speakers (God, the lamenter, and the people). By maintaining these features, the translation can effectively communicate the depth of grief and the theological reflection on divine justice, making the message resonate deeply with the oral culture's listeners. By using these features (repetition, parallelism, emotional intensity), translators can convey the depth of grief and theological reflection in Lamentations 2 in ways that resonate with an oral audience. Each feature is designed to make the text memorable, emotionally engaging, and communicative.

### **6.2.3.2 Differences with the written translation of Lamentations 2**

The comments on Lamentations 1 discussed some important differences that are there between the Nsenga written translation, which still remains a work in progress, and the oral version of the translation presented in this chapter. These differences discussed in chapter one will not be discussed here but they keep on recurring in all the chapters. A key distinction between the written and the oral in chapter two of Lamentations lies in its pacing and intensity—two critical

elements that must be carefully preserved in any oral translation of the laments. Pacing, in this context of Lamentations, refers to the rhythm and speed at which the lament unfolds, directly affecting the emotional buildup and the way the text is delivered. The careful modulation of pacing is essential for conveying the sense of mounting sorrow and distress throughout the chapter. This pacing can only be fully realised through a live performance, where the rhythm can be adjusted to enhance the emotional impact of the lament.

While the intensity of the text has already been discussed, particularly in verses 11 and 12, the key difference between the written and the oral in chapter two is the pacing. The emotional power of the lament builds progressively through the chapter, and this gradual intensification is challenging to capture in written form. In a written translation, the pacing tends to be flattened, and the urgency and emotional weight of the narrative are often diminished as a result. A live oral rendition, however, allows for the pacing to fluctuate in ways that reinforce the text's emotional depth, something that a static written translation cannot fully replicate.

#### 6.2.4 Lamentations 3

**3:1a Newo nine mwanalume waona Matamano, amama**  
 Me I am a man who has seen afflictions, my mother  
*Me I am a man who has seen suffering, my mother*

**3:1b nawona matamano kufuma ku Muwango wa ukali wake Mulungu**  
 I have seen afflictions from the stuff of anger his God  
*I have seen afflictions from the stuff of God's anger;*

**3:2a Waniwinga noniyendesha mu mfinzi, amama newo**  
 He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness My mother me  
*He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness, my mother me*

**3:2b mu mfinzi muliye na Mngwelewezi kumo**  
 in darkness where there is not with light even  
*in darkness where there is not even light*

**3:3a Cendi cendi aniyalukila**

truly truly He has turned against me

*Truly truly he has turned against me*

**3:3b oninyata na kwanja kwake mowelezha- nsiku yonse  
welezha**

He strikes with hand his repeatedly day all  
me

*He strikes me with his hand repeatedly all-day*

**3:4a Anicita mu Muwili wonse**

He has hurt me in body all

*He has hurt me in all the body*

**3:4b nipo afwaya mafupa vangu**

and he has broken bones my

*And he has broken my bones*

**3:5a anizinga nonizunguluka**

He has besieged me and surrounded me

*He has besieged me and surrounded me*

**3:5b na matamano woŵaŵa**

and sufferings painful

*and painful sufferings*

**3:6a Aninkhazika mu mumfinzi**

He has made me reside in darkness

*He has made me dwell in darkness*

- 3:6b ngani wala ecifwa macezo amama newo**  
 like those who died long ago my mother me  
*like those who died long ago, my mother me*
- 3:7a Onani anivalila kuti nisazhewe**  
 See, He has closed me up so that I should not escape  
*See, He has closed me up so that I should not escape*
- 3:7b nipo animanga na myando yolema**  
 and he has tied me with cords heavy  
*And he has tied me with heavy cords*
- 3:8a Cukanga Panuwilikizha nosenga yavyo**  
 Even if when I call out and plead for help  
*Even if I call out and plead for help*
- 3:8b oyimvwalini lombelo yangu amama newo**  
 He does not hear prayer my my mother me  
*He does not hear my prayer, my mother me*
- 3:9a Wanivalila njila zangu na myala yowaza**  
 He has shut ways my with stones hewn  
*He has shut my ways with hewn stones*
- 3:9b nipo wazhongolasha njila zangu**  
 and he has made crooked ways my  
*And he has made my ways crooked*
- 3:10a Onani ali ngani nkhalamu yofisamila nyama**  
 See, he is like a lion hiding for its prey  
*See, he is like a lion hiding for its prey*

**3:10b Amama newo, ali ngani cimbalangondo cuniwêlamila newo**  
My mother me, He is like a bear waiting to ambush me  
*He is like a bear waiting to ambush me*

**3:11a Amama newo! Anifumya mu njila nonitenda-tenda**  
My mother me! He has taken me out from in path and has torn me  
*My mother me! He has taken me out from the path and he has torn me*

**3:11b Anisiya paliye Yavyo**  
And he has left me without help  
*And he has left me without help*

**3:12a alozha uta wake kwa newo, amama newo**  
He turned bow his towards me my mother me  
*He has turned his bow towards me, my mother me!*

**3:12b anilungamika na mumvwi wake**  
and pointed at me with arrow its  
*And pointed its arrow at me*

**3:13a anilasa ku mtima kwangu**  
He has struck to heart my  
*He struck to my heart*

**3:13b na mimvwi yofuma mucipokolo cake**  
with arrows from quiver his  
*With arrows from his quiver*

**3:14a nayaluka cinthu cosekewa ku wanthu wangu Wonse**

I have become a thing laughingstock to people my all  
*I have become a laughingstock to all my people*

**3:14b oniyimba            nzimbo    zonifweya            nsiku    yonse**  
They sing of me songs of mocking me day all  
*They sing of me songs of mocking me all day*

**3:15a wanikutisha                            na    vinthu    volula**  
He has fed and satisfied me with things bitter  
*He has filled me with bitter herbs*

**3:15b wanikolwesha                            vakumwa    volula    nipo    luvumo    yangu    yazula**  
He has made me intoxicated with drinks bitter and stomach my is full  
*He has made me intoxicated with bitter drinks and my stomach is full*

**3:16a alenga            menu    wangu    kukukuta    myala    pansi**  
He has caused teeth my gnash stones ground  
*He has caused my teeth gnash stones on the ground*

**3:16b wanimvumvunya    mu    lukungu**  
He has rolled me in dust  
*He has rolled me in dust*

**3:17a Umoyo    wangu    uliye    mtendele**  
Life my Has no peace  
*My life has no peace*

**3:17b Naluwa            kuti    kusangalala    ni    cinji**  
I have forgotten that happiness is what  
*I have forgotten what happiness is*

**3:18a tetyo nikuti: “kukoselela kwangu Kwacenekeka”**  
therefore I say “Ednurance my Has laid waste  
*Therefore I say: “My endurance has laid waste*

**3:18b cilolelo cangu cofuma kwa Leza naco cacenekeka**  
hope my from to the Lord also has laid waste  
*My hope from the Lord also has laid waste*

**3:19a kumbukilani matamano wangu na Kuyenda-yenda kwangu**  
remember sufferings my and wanderings my  
*Remember my sufferings and my wanderings*

**3:19b ivi ni ndulu yolula**  
these are poison bitter  
*These are bitter poison*

**3:20a mtima wangu upitilizha kukumbukila ivi**  
heart my continues remembering these  
*My heart continues remembering these*

**3:20b nipo mtima wangu Waŵaŵa**  
and heart my is in pain  
*And my heart is in pain*

**3:21a koma pali canukumbukila**  
but there is what I call to mind  
*But there is what I call to mind*

**3:21b tetyo nili na cilolelo mwa yeve**  
therefore I have with hope in him  
*Therefore I have hope in him*

**3:22a cisomo ca Leza cusilalini**  
grace of the Lord does not end

*The grace of the Lord does not end*

**3:22b lusungu yake yusilalini**  
mercy his does not end

*His mercy does not end*

**3:23a Cisomo na Lusungu vunkhala valomba mmawa mulimonse**  
grace and mercy they are new morning each and every

*Grace and mercy are new every morning*

**3:23b cikomo kucetekeleka kwanu Leza ni kukulu**  
Because faithfulness your Lord is great

*Because your faithfulness Lord is great*

**3:24a “Leza ni citwa cangu” Walaŵila tetyo moyo wangu**  
The Lord is portion my declares so heart my

*“The Lord is my portion” declares my heart*

**3:24b “tetyo Niŵe na cilolelo mwa Yeve”**  
therefore I will be with hope in him

*therefore I will be with hope in him*

**3:25a Leza ni muweme kwa ŵala omulindila**  
The Lord is good to those who wait on him

*The Lord is good to those who wait on him*

**3:25b Leza ni muweme kwa wonse ŵala omusakila-sakila**

The Lord is good to all those who seek him  
*The Lord is good to all those who seek him*

**3:26a ni ciweme kulindila Leza mwacelele**  
It is good to wait the Lord quietly  
*It is good to wait on the Lord quietly*

**3:26b kuti tiwone cipuzumusho ca Leza**  
So that we see the salvation of the Lord  
*So that we see the salvation of the Lord*

**3:27a Ni ciweme kuti muthu atakule**  
It is good that man bears  
*It is good that man bears*

**3:27b joko pa ulumbwana wake**  
yoke in youth his  
*Yoke in his youth*

**3:28a lekani ankhale pansi yeka nakuwa celele**  
let Him sit down alone and be quiet  
*Let him sit down alone and be quiet*

**3:28b pawatakula joko**  
As he is carrying yoke  
*As he is carrying the yoke*

**3:29a lekani ayike kamwa pansi mu lukungu**  
let him put mouth down in dust  
*Let him put his mouth down in dust*

**3:29b payakine cilolelo Cingaŵepo mphela**

perhaps hope May be there still

*Perhaps hope may still be there*

**3:30a lekani ape mbovu yake kwa omunyata**

let him give cheek his to the one who slaps him

*Let him give his cheek to the one who slaps him*

**3:30b nipo lekani alandile mitafu**

and let him receive insults

*and let him receive insults*

**3:31a cikomo asikulu akatayelini**

because the Lord Will not reject us

*because the Lord will not reject us*

**3:31b mpakila nsita zosasila**

until time everlasting

*until everlasting time*

**3:32a koma cukanga otwasha kupa cilango ali mphela na lusungu**

but though he is able to give punishment he is still with mercy

*But though he is able to give punishment, he is still with mercy*

**3:32b kulingana na kukula kwa cisomo cake cosasila**

according to the greatness of grace his everlasting

*According to the greatness of his everlasting grace*

**3:33a ovutishalini kufuma pansi pa mtima wake**

He does not afflict from deep down of heart his

*He does afflict from deep down of his heart*

**3:33b keno kutamanisha wana wa wanthu kufuma pansi pa mtima wake**  
or grieve children of people from deepdown of heart his  
*Or make children of people grieve from deep down of his heart*

**3:34a kukandilila pansi**  
To crush underfoot on the ground  
*To crush underfoot on the ground*

**3:34b akayidi wonse wa mu calo**  
prisoners all of in the earth  
*All prisoners of the earth*

**3:35a kusacitila munthu cilungamo**  
Not doing to a person justice  
*Not doing justice to a person*

**3:35b pa menso pa Wopula**  
in the presence of the Most High  
*in the presence of the Most High*

**3:36a kukondela popingula mulandu**  
partiality when judging a case  
*Partiality when judging a case*

**3:36b Asikulu ovomelezhalini**  
The Lord does not approve  
*The Lord does not approve*

**3:37a Niwani elamulapo kuti vicitike nakuti cecitika**

who ever said that things be done and that it happened  
*Who ever said that things be done and that it happened*

**3:37b keno Asikulu aliyovilamule kuti vicitike**  
if the Lord did not command that it be done  
*If the Lord did not command that it be done*

**3:38a Ni mkamwa lini mwa Wopula**  
Is mouth not of the most high  
*Is it not the mouth of the Most high*

**3:38b mufuma viweme keno viyipa**  
From where comes good or bad  
*From where comes good or bad?*

**3:39a Cikomo ni cinji munthu wamoyo odandaula**  
because of what person a living grumble  
*Because of what a living person grumbles*

**3:39b akamupa cilango cikomo ca miluvyo yake?**  
when given punishment because of sin his  
*When giving punishment because of his sin*

**3:40a Tiyeni tiyezhe nosanada unkhalo wasu**  
Let us test and examine ways our  
*Let us test and examine our ways*

**3:40b nipo nozhokela kwa Leza**  
and turn to the Lord  
*and turn to the Lord*

**3:41a** Tiyeni tiyimye mitima yasu na manja w̄asu  
Let us lift heart our and hands Our  
*Let us lift our heart and our hands*

**3:41b** kwa Mulungu kululu  
to God In heaven  
*To God in heaven*

**3:42a** sewo taluvya nokuwukilani  
we have sinned and rebelled against you  
*We have sinned and rebelled against you*

**3:42b** Nipo mwewo muliyotilekelele  
and you have not forgiven us  
*and you have not forgiven us*

**3:43a** mwazivwinikila mweka na ukali notiwutusha  
You have wrapped yourself alone with anger and you have pursued us  
*You have wrapped yourself alone with anger and you have pursued us*

**3:43b** kupaya paliye lusungu  
killing without mercy  
*Killing without mercy*

**3:44a** mwalifisa mweka na mkumbi  
You have hidden yourself alone with a cloud  
*You have hidden yourself alone with a cloud*

**3:44b** kuti malombelo w̄asu asafwike  
So that prayers our should not reach you  
*So that our prayers should not reach you*

**3:45a mwatyalusha wotafuliliwa nipo taŵa viswa-swa**  
You have turned us into despised ones and we have become filthy things  
*You have turned us into despised ones and we have become filthy things*

**3:45b pakati pa ŵanthu amitundu Iyakine**  
among the people of other nations other  
*among the people of other nations*

**3:46a Alwani ŵasu wonse**  
enemies our all  
*All our enemies*

**3:46b Avula makamwa ŵawo pa Sewo**  
have opened mouths their on us  
*have open their mouths on us*

**3:47a kuyopa na kupona mu mbwina vaza pali sewo**  
panic and falling in snare Have come on us  
*Panic and falling in snare have come on us*

**3:47b kupasuka na kucenekeka vaza pali sewo**  
devastation and destruction have come on us  
*Devastation and destruction have come on us*

**3:48a Misozi mu menso mwangu yumbwela ngani kamana**  
tears in eyes my flowing like a river  
*Tears in my eyes are flowing like a river*

**3:48b cikomo ca kucenekeka kwa mwana mwanakazi wa ŵanthu ŵangu**

Because of destruction of child female of people my  
*Because of the destruction of the female child of my people*

**3:49a menso yangu yombwela misozi kosalekezha**  
eyes my are flowing tears without ceasing  
*My eyes are flowing tears without ceasing*

**3:49b nipo yalekelini**  
and will not stop  
*and they will not stop*

**3:50a mpaka Leza kululu**  
until the Lord in heaven  
*until the Lord in heaven*

**3:50b aloleshe pansi nowona**  
looks down and see  
*looks down and see*

**3:51a menso wangu ocitisha newo citinhi mu mtima mwangu**  
eyes my make me sorrow in heart my  
*My eyes make me sorrow in my heart*

**3:51b powona vocita pa wana anakazi wa mu mzinda mwangu**  
seeing the on children female of in city my  
happenings  
*Seeing the happenings on the female children of my city*

**3:52a Na wa wozengelewa ngani kanyoni**  
I have been hunted like a bird  
*I have been hunted like a bird*

**3:52b na awo enze alwani wangu paliye cikomo**  
by those who were enemies my without cause  
*by those who were my enemies without cause*

**3:53a Anipoza mu cisengu nili moyo**  
They cast me in a pit while I am alive  
*They cast me in a pit while I am alive*

**3:53b Onani wonitema myala amama newo**  
See! They are throwing at me stones My mother me  
*See! They are throwing stones at me, my mother me*

**3:54a manzi ambizha mutu wangu**  
water has closed over head my  
*Water has closed over my heard*

**3:54b newo Nasila**  
Me I am finished  
*Me I am finished*

**3:55a Nuyita pa zina yanu, mwewo Leza**  
I call on name your you Lord  
*I call on your name you Lord*

**3:55b kufuma mu cisengu conoka**  
from in a pit deep  
*From in a deep pit*

**3:56a Mwewo Leza mukumvwa kulila Kwangu newo**

You Lord      you hear      cry      my      me

*You Lord, you hear my cry, me*

**3:56b**   **musavale**   **matu**   **wanu**   **panulomba**   **kuti**   **muzeniyavye**

Do not shut   ears   your   when I ask   so that   you help me

*Do not shut your ears when I ask so that you help me*

**3:57a**   **mwewo**   **mwevwendela**   **pafupi**   **peneyita**      **kwa**   **mwewo**

you      you moved      closer      when I called      to      you

*You you moved closer when I called to you*

**3:57b**   **nipo**   **Mweciti:**   **'usacite**   **Wowa!'**

and      You said:      'Do not      Fear'

*And you said: 'Do not fear'*

**3:58a**   **Mwenilawililako**   **pa**   **mulandu**   **wangu**   **mwewo**   **Asikulu**

You spoke for me   on   case      my      you      Lord

*You spoke for me on my case, you Lord*

**3:58b**   **mwanunula**      **moyo**   **wangu**

You have redeemed   life      my

*You have redeemed my life*

**3:59a**   **Mwewona**   **viyipa**   **venicitikila**      **mwewo**   **Leza**

You saw      evil      that happened to me      you      Lord

*You saw the evil that happened to me you Lord*

**3:59b**   **nipeni**      **cilungamo**

Give me      justice

*Give me justice*

**3:60a mwawona kuwezhamo kwawo konse**

You have seen vengeance their all

*You have seen all their vengeance*

**3:60b mwawona tuwupo twawo tonse pali newo**

You have seen plots their all on me

*You have seen all their plots on me*

**3:61a mwecimvwa kutafula kwawo mwewo leza**

You heard taunts their you Lord

*You have heard their taunts you Lord*

**3:61b Mwecimvwa za tuwupo twawo tonse pali newo**

You heard about plots their all on me

*You heard about all their plots on me*

**3:62a milomo na malingililo wa wanukangana nawo**

lips and thoughts of the ones I am against with

*Lips and thoughts of the ones I am against with*

**3:62b opangwa kulwana nane nsiku yonse**

seek to fight with me day all

*Seek to fight with me all day*

**3:63a onani milimo na vicio vawo**

see works and deeds their

*See their works and deeds*

**3:63b Nawa cinthu cotafuliliwa**

I have become a thing despised

*I have become a despised thing*

**3:64a Muw̄alipile mwewo Leza**

Pay them you Lord

*Pay them you Lord*

**3:64b pokonkha mulimo wecicita**

According to the work they did

*According to the work they did*

**3:65a Muw̄apumvye malingililo w̄awo**

confuse thoughts their

*Confuse their thoughts*

**3:65b kushamika kwanu kuw̄e paw̄eve**

curse your be on them

*Your curse be on them*

**3:66a Mukaw̄awutushe mwa ukali**

You pursue them in wrath

*You pursue them in wrath*

**3:66b Now̄acenekelatu mu calo mwewo Leza**

And completely destroy them in the land you Lord

*And completely destroy them in the land you Lord*

#### **6.2.4.1 Comments on translation of Lamentations 3**

Lamentations 3 is another emotional chapter, capturing the intense sorrow and personal lament over the devastation of Jerusalem. The chapter shifts between deep personal grief and a declaration of hope rooted in God's faithfulness. Verses 1-20 of Lamentations 3 are more personal in nature and the oral translation has endeavoured to keep it as a lament and enhance

its emotional impact. There is an intensification of personal sorrow and personal grief experienced.

**Changing Tenses in Oral Translation:** The change of tense from past to present is particularly significant in the oral translation of Lamentations 3. This helps improve on the emotional intensity and personal nature of the content. This does the following three things: (a) conveying emotional authenticity, (b) preserving the personal element of the Lament and (c) promoting dynamic engagement. If the tense is not changed, the translation will cease being a lament but it would rather come out as a report on what happened. The change to present tense revitalises the lament because it conveys the emotional authenticity, by allowing the mourner to speak for themselves, creating a more immediate and personal connection with the audience. The individual voice in Lamentations 3 is crucial. By switching to present tense in the oral translation, the translator enables the mourner's own voice to emerge clearly. This shift is important because it emphasises the personal nature of the suffering and the subsequent turn toward hope. The speaker is not just reflecting on someone else's pain; they are living it and speaking it. Examples of phrases where the tense has changed include the following:

- a) 3:1 *enipa chilango* (he gave me punishment) to *anipa chilango* (he has given me punishment)
- b) 3:3 *eniyalukila* (he turned against me) to *aniyalukila* (he has turned against me)
- c) 3:3 *efwaya* (he destroyed) to *afwaya* (he has destroyed)
- d) 3:7 *enivalila* (he closed me up) to *anivalila* (he has closed me up)
- e) 3:7 *enimanga* (he tied me) to *animanga* (he has tied me)
- f) 3:11 *enisiyisha njila* (he made me abandon the way) to *anifumya mu njila* (he has taken me out of the way)
- g) 3:12 *elozha uta* (he pointed his bow) to *alozha uta* (he has pointed his bow)
- h) 3:13 *elasa* (he pierced/struck) to *anilasa* (he has struck/pierced)
- i) 3:14 *neyaluka* (I became) to *nayaluka* (I have become)
- j) 3:16 *elenga* (he made) to *alenga* (he has made)

#### **6.2.4.2 Differences with the written translation of Lamentations 3**

The difference between the written and oral translation of Lamentations 3 in Nsenga lies in the change of tense to make the oral more emotional, personal, and appealing.

**Tense shift (Past to Present):** The written translation of Lamentations 3 in Nsenga typically uses past tense to recount historical events. In the written form, the focus is on the action as something that happened, which conveys a sense of distance or reflection. The use of the past tense in cited portions of the written version often serves a more narrative or report-like function, describing events that occurred. The oral version has employed a shift from past tense to present tense, making the experience feel immediate and ongoing. This change gives the speaker a more active voice in the lament, as if they are living through the experience right now rather than simply recounting past events. The oral translation becomes more dynamic and emotionally intense because it allows the mourner to speak directly from their current emotional state. It therefore enhances the emotional intensity of the text by capturing the continuous experience of sorrow and despair. It creates a sense of immediacy, where the mourner's grief is felt as an ongoing process, not something finished or in the past. Below are examples of tense changes in the oral translation with comments on each compared to the written translation:

1. Lamentations 3:1

- **Written:** *enipa chilango* (he gave me punishment)
- **Oral:** *anipa chilango* (he has given me punishment)

The present tense (has given) emphasises that the punishment is still being experienced, intensifying the sorrow.

2. Lamentations 3:3

- **Written:** *eniyalukila* (he turned against me)
- **Oral:** *aniyalukila* (he has turned against me)

The shift to “has turned” makes the feeling of abandonment more immediate, as if the speaker is still feeling the impact of God's turn against them.

3. Lamentations 3:7

- **Written:** *enivalila* (he closed me up)
- **Oral:** *anivalila* (he has closed me up)

The present tense highlights that the speaker is still trapped, and the sense of confinement is ongoing.

4. Lamentations 3:11

- **Written:** *enisiyisha njila* (he made me abandon the way)
- **Oral:** *anifumya mu njila* (he has taken me out of the way)

The present tense makes the feeling of being led away from the path more immediate, as though the speaker is still experiencing the consequence of being forsaken.

5. Lamentations 3:13

- **Written:** *elasa* (he pierced/struck)
- **Oral:** *anilasa* (he has struck/pierced)

Using the present tense (has struck) heightens the sense of violence and personal injury, suggesting that the harm is still ongoing.

The shift from past to present tense in the oral translation of Lamentations 3 is a deliberate choice to intensify the emotional experience and maintain the personal, immediate nature of the lament. The present tense brings the suffering into the present moment, allowing the mourner to speak directly and personally to the audience. Without this shift, the translation would risk becoming a detached historical account rather than an emotionally charged, immediate lament in Nsenga.

### 6.2.5 Lamentations 4

*[Wokungula – The Lamenters speak]*

**4:1a Amama newo! Onani Mwayazimila golide**

My mother me! see How has it grown dim gold

*My mother me! See how gold has grown dim*

**4:1b onani mwawayalukila golide muweme**

See how it has lost value gold good

*See how good gold has lost value*

**4:1c Myala ituŵa yamwazhikana**

stones pure have scattered

*Pure stones have scattered*

**4:1d mu manjila mamphindwe wonse amama newo**

in streets corner all My mother me

*In all street corners, my mother me*

**4:2a Ŵana aweme ŵa Ziyoni**

children good of Zion

*Good children of Zion*

**4:2b muyeso wa kulema kwawo ni golide iweme**

The measure of weight their is gold good

*The measure of their weight in good gold*

**4:2c Koma lombā onani owonewa ngani mapoto alito**

But now see, they are regarded as pots of clay

*But now see, they are regarded as pots of clay*

**4:2d mulimo wa wowumba na manja ŵake**

work of a potter with hands his

*the work of a potter with his hands*

**4:3a Cukanga ankhandwe onyonsha**

Even foxes breastfeed

*Even foxes breastfeed*

**4:3b nolela ŵana ŵawo**

and nurse children their

*and nurse their children*

**4:3c koma mwana mwanakazi wa wanthu wangu niwa lunya**  
but child female of people my is cruel  
*But the female child of my people is cruel*

**4:3d ngani Nthiwatiwa za msanga**  
like ostriches of wilderness  
*like ostriches of the wilderness*

**4:4a Onani lulimi ya mwana onyonkha yukangamila**  
See the tongue of child breastfeeding sticks  
*See the tongue of a breastfeeding child sticks*

**4:4b mu kamwa kululu cikomo ca njota**  
in the mouth up because of thirst  
*up in the mouth because of thirst*

**4:4c wana osenga cakulya**  
children beg for food  
*Children beg for food*

**4:4d koma paliye nayeka yumo owapa**  
but there is no not even one who gives them  
*but there is not even one who gives them*

**4:5a Awo enzokulya viweme**  
Those who were eating delicious things  
*Those who were eating delicious things*

**4:5b afwila mu Njila, amama newo**

have died in Streets my mother me

*have died in streets, my mother me*

**4:5c awo enzokulila mu mabanja onota**

those Who grew up in families rich

*Those who grew up in rich families*

**4:5d ali pansi akumbatila cingu**

are on the floor embracing ash heaps

*are on the floor embracing ash heaps*

**4:6a Kuyifya kwa mwana mwanakazi wa wanthu wangu ni kukulu ngako**

The sin of child female of people my is great very

*The sin of the female child of my people is very great*

**4:6b kupula mulvyo wa wanthu wa mu Sodoma**

more than the sin of people of In Sodom

*more than the sin of the people of Sodom*

**4:6c wala wecipa cilango pa kansita katonho**

those whom he gave punishment over a moment little

*those whom he gave punishment over a little moment*

**4:6d koma penzeve wocitapo kanthu kuti awayavye**

but there was no one who could do anything to help them

*But there was no one who could do anything to help them*

**4:7a Wanthu wake enze owala kupula matalala**

people her were purer more than snow

*Her people were purer more than snow*

**4:7b** **Atuŵa kupula mkaka**

whiter than milk

*whiter than milk*

**4:7c** **Miŵili yawo yenze isweta kupula myala ya lubi**

bodies their were red more than stones of coral

*Their bodies were red more than stones of coral*

**4:7d** **mawonekelo ŵawo yenze ngani myala ya safile**

appearance their were like stones of sapphire

*Their appearances were like stones of sapphire*

**4:8a** **koma Lomba onani vinso vawo vayaluka vifipa ngani misimbe**

But now see faces their have become black like soot

*But now see their faces have become black like soot*

**4:8b** **paliye na oŵalukana mu njila**

There is not even one recognising them in the streets

*There is not even one recognising them in the streets*

**4:8c** **nkhandu yawo yacita mankhwinya nomamatila ku vifupa vawo**

skin their has developed wrinkles and is sticking to bones their

*their skin has developed wrinkles and it is sticking to their bones*

**4:8d** **yayuma nipo yaŵa ngani cimuti**

It has dried up and has become like a tree

*It has dried up has become like a tree*

**4:9a** **ŵala epayiwa na pwitika enzeko paweme**

Those slain with the sword were better

*Those slain with the sword were better*

**4:9b kupula wala ecifwa na njala**  
than those who died with famine  
*than those who died with famine*

**4:9c Patonho-patonho eweŵa na kufwa**  
Slowly slowly they became tired and died  
*they slowly became tired and died*

**4:9d cikomo Cosoŵa vakulya va mu munda**  
because of lack of food from in farm  
*Because of lack of food from the farm*

**4:10a Manja wa anakazi wa lusungu**  
hands of women Of mercy  
*Hands of women of mercy*

**4:10b epika wana wawo**  
cooked children their own  
*cooked their own children*

**4:10c Wana wawo eyaluka cakulya cawo!**  
children their became food their  
*Their children became their food*

**4:10d pa nsita yeenzocenekeka mwana mwananakazi wa wanthu wangu**  
the time of destruction of children female of people my  
*The time of destruction of the female child of my people*

**4:11a Leza ewonesha ukali wake wonse**  
The Lord showed wrath his all  
*The Lord showed all his wrath*

**4:11b** epoza ukali wake woyofya

He threw wrath his fierce

*He threw his fierce wrath*

**4:11c** noyasha mulilo ku Ziyoni

And kindled fire on Zion

*And kindled fire on Zion*

**4:11d** nipo uyo mulilo weceneka maziko wa mzinda

and that fire destroyed foundations of the city

*and that fire destroyed the foundations of the city*

**4:12a** Mafumu wonse wa pa calo ca pansi

kings all of the land of earth

*All kings of the land of the earth*

**4:12b** keno aliyense onkhala mu calo

or everyone who dwells in the land

*or everyone who dwells in the land*

**4:12c** aliyocetekele kuti alwani keno ankhondo angaloŵe

did not believe that enemies or warriors would enter

*did not believe that the enemies or the warriors would enter*

**4:12d** pa milyango ya Yelusalemu

at gates of Jerusalem

*at the gates of Jerusalem*

**4:13a** Ivi vecitika cikomo ca miluvyo ya aneneli wake

These things happened because of sins of prophets her

*These things happened because of sins of her prophets*

**4:13b na vocita viyipa va ansembe wake**  
and deeds evil of priests her  
*and evil deeds of her priests*

**4:13c awo evwisha mulopa pakati pake**  
those who shed blood in her midst her  
*those who shed blood in the middle of the city*

**4:13d mulopa wa wanthu angwilyo**  
the blood of people righteous  
*the blood of righteous people*

**4:14a Wêve Enzoyingoyenda-yenda nga aliye menso mu njila**  
they were just walking around like they have no eyes in streets  
*They were just walking around in the streets like they had no eyes*

**4:14b enze eyifyiwa na mulopa**  
they Were defiled with blood  
*They were defiled with blood*

**4:14c mwakuti kuliye munthu angakate**  
Such that there is no person who could touch  
*Such that there is no who could touch*

**4:14d vovwala vawo**  
garments their  
*their garments*

**4:15a Wanthu ewilikizha kuti:**  
people shouted Saying:  
*People shouted saying:*

[Change speaker here for performance]

**4:15b Fumamponi! Oyifyiwa!**

Depart! You unclean!

*Depart! You unclean!*

**4:15c Fumamponi! Fumamponi! Musakumyane na sewo!**

Depart! Depart! Do not come into contact with us!

*Depart! Depart! Do not come into contact with us*

**4:15d Tetyo eciwâ owutushiwa nakuwâ oyenda-yenda**

therefore they became fugitives and became wanderers

*Therefore, they became fugitives and became wanderers*

**4:15e Wanthu eciti pakati pa mitundu**

people said among the nations

*People said among the nations:*

**4:15f Asankhale soti na sewo**

“They should not stay again with Us”

*They should not stay again with us*

**4:16a Leza mwine niye waŵamwazha**

The Lord himself is the one who Has scattered them

*The Lord is the one who has scattered them*

**4:16b aŵayikekolini nzelu**

He will not put them thought

*He will not put them to thought*

**4:16c ansebe enzopasiwalini soti mcinzi**

priests were not given also honor

*Priests were also not given honor*

**4:16d Akulu-akulu aliyowawamile mtima**

elders they did show good to heart

*They did not show good heart to elders*

*[wanthu wa mu Yelusalemu wokungula – The people of Jerusalem Lament]*

**4:17a Menso wasu evupa**

eyes our were tired

*Our eyes were tired*

**4:17b kulolesha paliye yavyo**

looking where there was no help

*looking where there was no help*

**4:17c mukulindila kwasu telindila**

In watching our we watched

*In our watching we watched*

**4:17d mtundu uliyotiyavye**

nation that did not help us

*a nation that did not help us*

**4:18a enzotizengela pokonkha malwayo wasu**

They hunted us by following footprints our

*They hunted us by following our footprints*

**4:18b kwakuti tingatweshelini kuyenda mu njila zasu**

Such that we cannot walk in streets our

*Such that we could not walk in our streets*

**4:18c kusila kwasu kwevwendela; masiku wasu enze opendeka**

end our drew near; days our were numbered

*Our end drew near; our days were numbered*

**4:18d cikomo nsililo yasu yafwika**

because end point our has come

*Because our end point has come*

**4:19a wanthu otiwutusha enze aluwilo**

people the ones pursuing us were swift

*The people pursuing us were swift*

**4:19b kupula nkhwazi zundalala mululu**

More than eagles flying in the sky

*More than eagles flying in the sky*

**4:19c Etiwutusha pa malupili**

They pursued us on the mountains

*They pursued us on the mountains*

**4:19d elala ku cipululu kuwendamila sewo**

They slept in wilderness to ambush us

*They slept in the wilderness to ambush us*

**4:20a Mphuye wa mu mphuno mwasu mfumu yozozewa na Leza**

breath of in nostrils our king anointed by The Lord

*The breath of our nostrils, the anointed king by the Lord*

**4:20b yekashiwa mu mbwina zawo**  
was trapped in snares their  
*Was trapped in their snares*

**4:20c iyo yetenzokuti: “Mu cimvwili-mvwili cake**  
that which we said “In shadow his  
*That which we said: “In his shadow*

**4:20d tinkhale pakati pa amitundu”**  
We shall live among the nations  
*we shall live among the nation”*

*[Wokungula olawila - The Lamenters Speaks]*

**4:21a Temwa nipo sangalala wewo mwana mwanakazi wa Edomu**  
Rejoice and Be glad you child female of Edom  
*Rejoice and be glad, you female child of Edom*

**4:21b wewo unkhala mu calo ca Uzi**  
you who dwells in the land of Uzzi  
*You who dwell in the land of Uzzi*

**4:21c koma wewo nawe nthumo ikakufwike**  
but you also Cup of judgment Will come to you  
*but to you also the cup of judgment will come*

**4:21d uzekolwe mpakila kuvula vovwala**  
drunk until removing clothes  
*You will get drunk until removing clothes*

**4:22a** Cilango ca viyipa vako wewo mwana mwanakazi wa Ziyoni casila  
punishment for evils your you child female of Zion has ended  
*The punishment for your evils, you female child of Zion, has ended*

**4:22b** atalifyelini nsita ya uzha wako  
He will not prolong time of slavery your  
*He will not prolong time of your slavery*

**4:22c** koma kuyifya kwako wewo mwana mwanakazi wa Edomu akakupe cilango  
but iniquity your you child female of Edom he will punish-  
give you ment  
*but he will give your iniquity punishment, you female child of Edom*

**4:22d** miluvyo yako akayilete patuwâ  
iniquities your he will bring them openly  
*Your iniquities he will bring them openly*

#### **6.2.5.1 Comments on Translation of Lamentations 4**

This chapter presents two primary voices: the Lamerter and the people of Jerusalem. Given that this translation emphasises the orality of the text for an oral audience, it is crucial to clearly distinguish the speakers at each point for a more effective performance and seamless transition between characters. The lament is both personal and collective in nature. The Lamerter speaks from verses 1 to 16, while the people of Jerusalem respond in verses 17 to 20. The Lamerter resumes speaking and concludes the lament in verses 20 to 22.

The first section (verses 1–16) constitutes a personal lament, focusing on recounting the tragic events that befell Jerusalem. Although this portion is attributed to the Lamerter, the voice of the Lamerter incorporates others, particularly in verse 15, which quotes the remarks of others regarding the people of Jerusalem. Additionally, in verse 16, other nations also comment on the situation, but these voices are still part of the Lamerter’s speech. This type of lament, where the lamenter also recounts the events that led to the tragedy, is typical of the Nsenga tradition of lamentation. In this context, it is not necessary to present the lament as if it is occurring in

real-time. Translators may choose to emphasise the act of recounting what led to the death of the person being mourned. However, interspersing the lament with expressions like *Amama newo!* (My mother!) will ensure that the lament retains its emotional depth, as the narrative unfolds within the broader framework of mourning. This is a vital element for preserving the meaning of the lament in an oral culture.

Examples of expressions that maintain the lament's tone include: 4:1a, 1b; 4:2c; 4:4a; 4:5b, which incorporate *amama newo* (My mother me) and *onani* (look) to capture the audience's attention. These expressions enhance the emotional power of the lament, ensuring it remains rooted in grief without introducing new meanings.

In 4:9c, the expression *Patontho-patontho ewewâ na Kufwa* (slowly-slowly they got tired and died) meaning "The pain lingered, and death came" is a particularly powerful use of reduplication, highlighting the excruciating, prolonged pain before death. The repetition amplifies the emotional intensity, inviting listeners to connect with the suffering described and feel empathy for both the lamenter and those enduring the pain.

In 4:10c, the phrase *Wana wawo eyaluka cakulya cawo!* (Their children became their food) is deeply shocking, as it describes a horrifying cultural taboo: the consumption of human flesh. To convey the horror of this situation, both verbal and non-verbal expressions will be needed to elicit a response from the listeners, emphasising the gravity of the act and its cultural unacceptability.

#### **6.2.5.2 Differences with the written translation of Lamentations 4**

The translation given is specifically intended for an oral audience. A look at this translation presents some differences between Nsenga written and oral translations. Below are a few examples of the key points and how the translation process adapts to an oral culture.

##### **a) Identification of speakers**

In written translations, the speaker roles (Lamenter and people of Jerusalem) are discernible, with the Lamenter speaking from verses 1 to 16, the people of Jerusalem from verses 17 to 20, and the Lamenter concluding from verses 20 to 22. The difference with the oral translation is in the manner in which the differentiation of speakers is going to be presented. For the oral

translation, the differentiation of speakers is crucial for clarity during performance. The oral performance requires the translator to make the shifts in speakers clear, ensuring the audience understands when the Lamentor is speaking and when the people of Jerusalem are speaking.

#### **b) Personal vs. collective lament**

The lament is both personal (Lamentor speaking from verses 1-16) and collective (voices of the people of Jerusalem from verses 17-20). In the oral translation, this personal nature is emphasised through the use of emotional language and expressions that connect the audience with the lamenting speaker. In the written version, these transitions are more formal, but in oral translation, the shift in voice must be performed dramatically to evoke a communal sense of mourning.

#### **c) Recounting vs. lamenting**

In the written translation, the Lamentor recounts what happened to Jerusalem, providing a detailed account of the tragedy. However, the written translation risks losing the emotional touch connected to this lament. The oral Nsenga style of lament in this chapter has blended recounting with mourning. In the oral translation, this recounting is done within the context of ongoing lament, meaning that while the Lamentor recounts events, the language remains emotionally charged to keep the audience engaged in the mourning process.

The oral translation should not just present events as facts (as might be in written form) but should include emotional calls like *Amama newo!* (my mother), which brings the lament back to the emotional core. This allows the oral performance to maintain its mournful tone while telling the story. These emotional calls are not enough in the written translation.

#### **d) Maintaining the lament's emotional core**

The use of emotional expressions like *amama newo* (my mother) or *onani* (look) serves to keep the lament alive in the oral tradition. These words are included not for their literal meaning but to reinforce the sense of mourning, even when recounting tragic events. This is a significant difference from the written translation, where such expressions are omitted or explained, making the text less emotionally charged.

e) **Reduplication for emotional impact**

This is an example of the similarity between the written and the oral in Nsenga. In Lamentations 4:9c, both translations have used *Patontho-patontho ewewa na Kufwa* (slowly-slowly they got tired and died). This reduplicated expression or ideophone is meant to evoke a deep emotional response from the audience, emphasising the prolonged suffering before death. In other written translations, this could be reduced to a simple description, but the Nsenga written and oral versions have amplified the emotion through such repeated phrases that resonate with the audience's empathy.

f) **Cultural context and shock value**

In the written translation in 4:10c, the phrase *Wana wawo eyaluka cakulya cawo* (Their children became their food) is horrifying, invoking a culturally forbidden act—cannibalism. In the oral tradition, this would not only be conveyed through words but also through non-verbal cues (such as body language, tone, and facial expressions). The shock of the message is intended to create an immediate intuitive reaction from the listeners. The written form may be more detached if there is no performance, but the oral translation requires a more dramatic delivery to convey the horror of such an act, triggering a strong emotional response from the audience. It is for this reason that the oral translation needs to be given priority for oral cultures because it has the potential to revitalise the emotional nature of the text for easy resonation with the audience.

In summary, the primary differences between the Nsenga written and Nsenga oral translation in this context lie in how emotions and shifts in speakers are handled. Oral translation requires a dynamic performance that uses vocal inflections, body language, and emotional expressions to keep the lament alive and impactful for the audience. Written translations, by contrast, focus on clear delineation of speaker roles and often downplay the emotional urgency, as the written word relies on the reader's interpretation of the text. The translation process, especially in the context of a lament, must consider these nuances to ensure that the oral audience fully grasps the pain and communal grief conveyed in the text.

## 6.2.6 Lamentations 5

### 5:1a Lukanani mwewo Leza vatiponela

Remember you Lord what has fallen upon us

*Remember you Lord what has fallen upon us*

### 5:1b loleshani nipo wonani voticitisha nsoni

look and see the things causing shame!

*Look and see the things causing shame!*

### 5:2a Visiyilano vasu vatolewa na ayendi-yendi

inheritance our has been taken by wanderers

*Our inheritance has been taken by wanderers*

### 5:2b Mang'anda ŵasu ali mu manja mwa alwendo

houses our are in hands Of sojourners

*Our houses are in the hands of sojourners*

### 5:3a sewo tâwa ŵana anchete aliye awusuwawo

we Have become children orphan without their father

*We have become orphaned children without their father*

### 5:3b Anyinawasu ali ngani anyankhufwilwa

Our mother is like A widow

*Our mother is like a widow*

### 5:4a Tukakamizhiwa kusita manzi ŵatukumwa

We are forced to buy water which we drink

*We are forced to buy water which we drink*

**5:4b Nkhuni nazo zatukozhela mulilo tucitosita na ndalama**  
wood also for making fire We just buy with money  
*Wood for making fire we just buy with money*

**5:5a otikonkha ali pa mikosi yasu**  
The ones pursuing us are on necks our  
*The ones pursuing us are on our necks*

**5:5b nise ovupa tupumuzhiwalini**  
We are exhausted; We are not given rest  
*We are exhausted; we are not given rest*

**5:6a Titekana ushamwali na Aejipto na ASiliya**  
We have kept each other as friends with Egyptians and Assyrians  
*We have kept each other as friends with Egyptians and Assyrians*

**5:6b kuti totalako cakulya cokwanila**  
So that We should be getting food enough  
*So that we should be getting enough food*

**5:7a Makolo w̄asu eluvya nipo esililatu**  
parents our sinned and wasted away  
*Our parents sinned and wasted away*

**5:7b Nipo sewo tulangiwa cikomo ca viyipa vawo**  
and we are punished because of evils their  
*And we are punished because of their evils*

**5:8a Lomba w̄azha otilamulila sewo**  
now slaves rule over us us  
*Now slaves rule over us*

**5:8b** paliye na yumo kumo otipuzumusha kufuma mu manja mwawo  
There with one even to save us from in hands their  
is not

*There is not even one to save us from their hands*

**5:9a** Tutola cakulya motamanisha myoyo yasu  
We get food By risking lives our

*We get food by risking our lives*

**5:9b** cikomo ca pwitika mu cipululu  
because of the sword in the wilderness

*Because of the sword in the wilderness*

**5:10a** Nkhanda yasu ni yakupya ngani uvuni  
skin our is hot like furnace

*Our skin is hot like furnace*

**5:10b** na kupya kwa njala  
with heat of famine

*With heat of famine*

**5:11a** Anakazi onkhala nawo malo wamo mokakamizha mu Ziyoni  
women they sleep with place same forcefully in Zion

*They forcefully sleep with women in Zion*

**5:11b** asimbi ocita nawo tetyo ku Yuda  
Young women they do to them like this in Juda

*They do to young women like this in Judah*

**5:12a** **wana anakazi wa mfumu owapanyika nowamangilila manja wawo**  
children female of the king are crucified and tie hands their  
*Female children of the king are crucified and tie their hands*

**5:12b** **Akulu-kulu owapalini mcinzi**  
elders they do not give honor  
*They do not give elders honor*

**5:13a** **Alumbwana akuleni owakakamizha kupela pa mphelo**  
boys grown-up are forced to grind at millstones  
*Grown-up boys are forced to grind at millstones*

**5:13b** **alumbwana Atontho-atontho ozupila nayo mitolo ya nkuni**  
boys young stagger with heaps of wood  
*Young boys stagger with heaps of wood*

**5:14a** **Akulu-akulu afumapo pa mulyango wa mzinda**  
elders have left at the gate of the city  
*Elders have left the gate of the city*

**5:14b** **alumbwana aleka nzimbo zawo**  
youngmen have abandoned songs their  
*Young men have abandoned their songs*

**5:15a** **Cisangalalo cafumamo mu mitima mwasu**  
joy has left from in hearts our  
*Joy has left from our heart*

**5:15b** **kuvina kwasu kwayaluka kulila**  
dancing our has turned into mourning  
*Our dancing has turned into mourning*

**5:16a Cisote ca ufumu capona ku mutu**  
helmet of kingship has fallen from the head  
*The helmet of kingship has fallen from the head*

**5:16b shamu kwa sewo cikomo taluvya**  
woe to us because we have sinned!  
*Woe to us because we have sinned!*

**5:17a Cikomo ca ivi mitima yasu yalefuka**  
Because of these hearts our have become weak  
*Because of these, our hearts have become weak*

**5:17b cikomo ca ivi menso w̄asu azima**  
because of these things eyes our are dim  
*Because of these things our eyes are dim*

**5:18a Lupili ya Ziyoni yayaluka matongwe**  
mountain of Zion has become desolate  
*The mountain of Zion has become desolate*

**5:18b ankhandwe Oyingokandapo-kandapo**  
foxes Trample on it  
*Foxes trample on it*

**5:19a Koma mwewo Leza nimwe mfumu mpaka māwelo-māwelo**  
but, you Lord, you are king until everlasting  
*but you Lord you are king until everlasting*

**5:19b mpando wanu wa ufumu ukāwepo ku maluko wonse**  
throne your of kingship Will be there to generations all  
*Your throne of kingship will be there to all generations*

**5:20a Cikomo ni cinji mutiluwa nsita zonse**

because of what you forget us time all

*Because of what do you forget us all the time*

**5:20b Cikomo ni cinji mutisiya nsita itali**

because of what you abandon us time long

*Because of what do you abandon us for a long time*

**5:21a Mwewo Leza mutizhoshele kwanu mwewo**

you Lord turn us back to yourself you

*You Lord turn us back to you yourself*

**5:21b mutizhoshe kuti tiwe mwetENZELE macezo**

Turn us so that We become What we were Long ago

*Turn us so that we become what we were long ago*

**5:21c mutipe soti masiku ngani wala wa macezo**

Give us again days like those of long ago

*Give us days like those of long ago*

**5:22a But now lomba mwatitayilatu**

But now You have completely abandoned us

*But now you have completely abandoned us*

**5:22b notikalipilatu kopula**

and you are angry with us much

*and you are angry with us much*

### 6.2.6.1 Comments on translation of Lamentations 5

The translation carries both oral and some formal elements from its source. The oral elements of Nsenga as a target language have also been considered so that the translation can easily resonate with the orality of the target audience.

#### a) Sentence structure and simplicity

The sentence structure in this translation is relatively simple and direct, which reflects the characteristics of oral language. For instance, the Hebrew phrase *מִיַּמֵּינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שָׁתִּינוּ* (literally: “our water we drink for silver” or “we drink our water for silver”) is rendered in Nsenga as “Tukakamizhiwa kusita manzi wātukumwa” (5:4a). This translates to “We are forced to buy water which we drink.” This translation follows a clear and straightforward subject-verb-object structure, mirroring how someone might speak in a more direct and understandable way, facilitating easy comprehension.

In contrast, many English translations of Lamentations (such as the King James Version or New International Version) often use more formal or elevated sentence structures, incorporating additional modifiers and more complex phrasing. For example, in the NIV, the same verse reads, “We must buy the water we drink,” which sounds more formal and less conversational than the translation presented here. The Nsenga translation quickly highlights the circumstances that compel people to buy water, emphasising that it is not part of their normal way of life, as it might be understood today.

#### b) Repetition and emphasis

Orality often involves repetition for emphasis or to reinforce a point, and this translation uses repetition to mirror that oral quality. For instance, in (5:5b) *יָגַעְנוּ לֹא הִנַּח-לָנוּ nise ovupa tupumuzhiwalini* (We are exhausted; We are not given rest), the structure of repeating “We are” followed by a state of being (“exhausted” and “not given rest”) is both emphatic and conversational, similar to how someone might speak when expressing frustration or weariness in Nsenga.

English translations might condense this, losing some of the repetitive rhythm of oral language. A more formal English version might say, “*We are exhausted and unable to rest,*” which, while accurate, loses some of the oral flavour.

### c) Use of direct address

The translation uses a conversational and direct form of address, as seen in *Lukanani mwewo Leza vatiponela* (Remember you Lord what has fallen upon us) (5:1a) or *Mwewo Leza mutizhoshele kwanu mwewo* (You Lord turn us back to yourself) (5:21a). This direct address mirrors the immediacy and urgency often present in spoken language, especially in lament or prayer.

### d) Simplified vocabulary

Lamentations 5:22 (בִּי אִם-מְאִסָּם מְאִסְתֶּנּוּ קִצְפֹּתַ עָלֵינוּ עַד) is another example of the simplified translation of a very difficult Hebrew construction. A direct translation of the Hebrew into English would be: “For if rejecting you have rejected us you have become much angry to us.” The difficult part of this verse is the conditional phrase בִּי אִם which makes the translation difficult. To make it more clear and meaningful to the context, the conditional phrase has been interpreted as “but” to signal an explanation or a continuation. The other parts which include the infinitive absolute and the qal perfect just fall in place once the decision has been made on the conditional phrase. Therefore, the translation can be: “But you have utterly rejected us; you are very angry with us.” The Nsenga translation simplified it as: *Koma lombwa mwatitayilatu notikalipilatu kopula* (But now you have completely abandoned us and you are much angry with us). The Nsenga translation is striving to emphasise the sense of abandonment and the intensity of God’s judgment as experienced by the people in their suffering.

### e) Tone and emotional intensity

The translation maintains an emotional intensity appropriate for oral lamentation, which often involves an immediate, raw expression of pain and suffering. Phrases like “*Shamu kwa sewo, cikomo taluvya!*” (Woe to us because we have sinned!) (5:16b) or “*Cisangalalo cafumamo mu mitima mwasu*” (Joy has left from our hearts) (5:15a) carry a tone that sounds like someone speaking directly from the heart, capturing the emotional and urgent nature of the original text.

This translation retains many features that reflect oral language, particularly in its simplicity, directness, repetition, and emotional intensity.

#### **6.2.6.2 Differences with the written translation of Lamentations 5**

The key differences between the oral and written Nsenga translations of Lamentations 5, are as follows:

##### **a) Sentence structure and simplicity**

The sentence structure in the oral Nsenga translation is meaning-based, simplified and more direct in many instances. It reflects the way people speak conversationally. For example, the translation of 5:4a above simplifies the Hebrew phrase into an easy-to-understand expression that resonates with everyday spoken Nsenga language. The written Nsenga has also considered making the translation meaning based for this verse, which is a good thing.

Complex Hebrew phrases are simplified in the oral translation to make the meaning more accessible. For example, the difficult Hebrew conditional phrase is simplified in the Nsenga translation as *Koma lomba mwatitayilatu notikalipilatu* “But now you have completely abandoned us and you are much angry with us” (5:22), making it easier to understand in a conversational style. The Nsenga has added the words *koma lomba* (but now) to make the translation transitional and simple though with a slight difference with the Hebrew.

##### **b) Tone and emotional intensity**

The oral translation retains a high level of emotional intensity, using expressive phrases like “*Cisangalalo cafumamo mu mitima mwasu*” (Joy has left from our hearts) (5:15a). Such phrases capture the raw, unfiltered emotion of the lament, reflecting how someone might express pain and sorrow aloud. The Nsenga written translations has adopted this approach, prioritising clarity and structure over the raw emotional weight found in oral forms of lamentation. This again is a good thing in the Nsenga written translation.

Overall, the oral Nsenga translation of Lamentations 5 prioritises directness, simplicity, repetition, and emotional intensity, all of which are hallmarks of spoken language. The written

translation, on the other hand, may lean toward a more formal, structured approach, which can sometimes tone down the immediacy and emotional urgency of the original text.

### 6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the oral rendition of Lamentations in Nsenga provides a profound illustration of how linguistic and cultural features shape the experience and communication of lamentation. By emphasising key aspects such as the repetition of mourning words, parallelism, attention-seeking expressions, and emotional tone, the translation ensures that the deep sorrow of the original Hebrew text is fully conveyed in a culturally resonant manner. The frequent use of “*amama newo*” (“my mother me”) as a mourning expression and the attention-grabbing term “*onani*” (“See!”), even when they do not appear in the Hebrew, highlight the necessity of adapting the text to fit the oral tradition. These features are not just stylistic but are integral to maintaining the emotional intensity and the dialogical nature of the lament.

The translation also demonstrates the contrast between the oral and written forms. The oral rendition incorporates repetition and emotional cues that engage listeners in a dynamic, almost participatory experience, whereas the written translation is more restrained and straightforward. This shows the unique role of oral traditions in expressing grief and despair, where rhythmic repetition, emotional appeal, and a call for divine attention are central. In Nsenga, such techniques do more than convey the words; they embody the communal and spiritual essence of the lament, amplifying the text’s emotional impact and making it resonate deeply with the audience. Therefore, to fully preserve the emotional and rhetorical power of Lamentations, it is essential to retain these oral features, ensuring that the lamentation remains a living, impactful expression of grief.

Additionally, the primary distinctions between the Nsenga written and oral translations of Lamentations lie in their handling of pacing, intensity, emotional engagement, and the immediacy of the lament. While the written translation tends to present a more formal and structured approach, often flattening emotional urgency, the oral translation thrives on dynamic performance techniques, such as pacing, vocal modulation, and emotional expression, which bring the text to life. The shift to the present tense in the oral version intensifies the emotional immediacy, ensuring that the mournful tone of the lament is felt in real time. Ultimately, oral translation requires a more flexible, live interpretation that engages the audience deeply, whereas written translation relies on the reader’s engagement with the text. Both forms have unique strengths in conveying the communal grief and sorrow of the original Lamentations,

and the differences discussed highlight the critical role of performance and emotional intensity in oral translation. This shows the importance of symbiosis between the written and the oral, thereby validating that intersemiotic interplay is the main activity of translation and that it is ever present in such a complex undertaking.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

### **7.1 Findings**

This research sought to address the challenge of meaningfully translating the book of Lamentations for an orally dominant culture. To tackle this, we built on two core assumptions: first, that all translation is inherently intersemiotic, and second, that intersemiotics offers a framework for addressing alterity in Bible translation. Throughout the process, two guiding questions shaped our investigation. The first was: How can intersemiotics provide a solution for meaningfully translating Lamentations? The second was: Is intersemiotics present in all translation typologies?

To address this, chapter one has given an introduction to the problem while Chapter two of the thesis has explored the theoretical framework underpinning intersemiotic translation. This investigation delved into the evolution of intersemiotics by examining the contributions of notable proponents in the field. A pivotal juncture was Jakobson's outlining of three distinct categories within translation typologies, serving as the foundational point from which the specialised realm of intersemiotic translation diverges. The discourse has rightly illuminated the intricate and multifaceted essence of intersemiotic translation, revealing a continuous interplay between different semiotic systems throughout the meaning-making process. This complex dynamic warrants careful consideration in the formulation of a theoretical framework conducive to the transposition of meaning into a predominantly orally oriented cultural environment.

Consequently, it has been suggested that the incorporation of an immersive approach into both the source and target semiotic systems is imperative in any theoretical construction aiming to facilitate a meaningful translation, particularly when dealing with a work such as Lamentations within an orally dominant cultural context. The chapter has showcased the viewpoint that any

prospective theoretical framework must not overlook the tenets of cognitive linguistics and contextual frames of reference. The interaction between these two elements stimulates the feasibility of drawing inferences during the process of semiosis, thereby contributing to the establishment of meaning.

Given the complex nature of this undertaking, a complexity theory of intersemiotic translation is thought to offer significant insights. This proposed framework should be familiar to the complexities of both the source and target semiotic systems, thus providing a robust foundation for addressing the diverse dimensions inherent in the task at hand.

In Chapter three, an examination of sociolinguistics has been undertaken, encompassing both its general framework and its specific implications for translation, with a specialised emphasis on the book of Lamentations. Within this context, pertinent sociolinguistic attributes relevant to the scope of this study have been illuminated. The backdrop of the book, including considerations of authorship, literary characteristics with relevance to sociolinguistics, and prevailing social challenges of the era, has been addressed.

An outstanding focal point of this investigation acknowledges the poetic nature of Lamentations. This chapter offered valuable insights into aspects such as the interplay between meter and rhythm, the presence of parallelism, and the distinctive acrostic structure inherent in the book. In particular, the investigation into the acrostic nature of Lamentations was intrinsically tied to a comparative analysis with Babylonian acrostic compositions. Through this inquiry, the study aimed to incite a contemplation of the correlations between the oral-aural communication inherent in Lamentations' original sociocultural context and its manifestation within the Biblical Hebrew text. The ultimate objective was to establish a profound comprehension of the oral-aural transmission of the five laments and the subsequent implications for the domain of intersemiotic Bible translation.

Furthermore, the research has demonstrated that sociolinguistic facets of Lamentations necessitate a perpetual engagement with multiple semiotic systems. These encompass the oral, visual, and written domains, intricately intertwined in a continuous process of interchange.

The fourth chapter summarises the Nsenga ethnic group and its language, delving into multifaceted dimensions including the etymology of the name Nsenga, cultural practices, linguistic battles, and the interplay between oral tradition and written expressions. The etymology of the name “Nsenga” remains a topic of scholarly debate, as evidenced by divergent perspectives from Poole (1949) that have yielded inconclusive outcomes. The Nsenga people, constituting a substantial ethnic populace, possess a pronounced oral dominance, with oral tradition persevering as a fundamental conduit for the dissemination of information and the inculcation of societal norms. Central to this tradition is the transference of wisdom through oral discourse, bringing about a strong legacy of communal knowledge.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the Nsenga language has triumphed in linguistic battles, particularly within interactions with the Ngoni people of Chipata. This linguistic prowess has conferred an expansive influence upon the Nsenga language, extending its reach beyond the confines of the Nsenga ethnic group. The tonal nature of the language necessitates acute attention to tone patterns and intonation, as variations in tone exert significant implications for the intended meaning conveyed by the speaker. Consequently, a comprehensive immersion in the language is imperative to grasp the nuances therein.

The rareness of written literature in Nsenga serves to underscore the dominantly oral nature of the culture, affirming the sensitivity required for any translation endeavour in this linguistic sphere. The coexistence of song and dance within the language’s realm underscores a rich poetic tradition, producing opportunities for discerning parallels and disparities between Nsenga and the Biblical Hebrew poetry of Lamentations. This comparative analysis serves as

a springboard for crafting a skillful translation approach, particularly pertinent when tackling poetic works such as Lamentations. Performance is a component that cannot be detached from the Nsenga culture as evidenced by the presence of songs, dances and the various types of laments.

Crucially, an investigation of distinct lament types in Nsenga and their counterparts in Biblical Hebrew provides a platform for informed translation choices, striving for equitable treatment of both languages. A translation approach should be attuned to the nuances fostered by intonation within this orally dominant context. Evidently, the consultation of various semiotic systems is pivotal throughout the translation process to yield a faithful and accurate rendition in Nsenga.

Chapter five has discussed the concept of intersemiotic translation in light of Biblical Performance Criticism. This practice holds significant importance for professional translators and their audiences. Moreover, the chapter also illuminates the presence of intersemiotic translation within a singular text, where meanings initially encoded in one semiotic resource undergo re-encoding or resemiotisation through another. This phenomenon plays a crucial role in the creation and design of texts, influencing the experiences of readers and viewers. The implications of intersemiotic translation extend beyond the realms of translation and multimodal text design. Notably, the chapter introduces the concept of Biblical Performance Criticism as an effective method for intersemiotic translation of biblical texts. This approach emphasises the oral-aural nature of biblical compositions, transmissions, and audience appropriations. As a consequence, established academic disciplines within biblical studies, such as textual criticism, exegesis, and translation, have been reexamined and redefined. The understanding of source texts and their translation into target texts has undergone transformation, expanding the scope of the term “text” beyond traditional print media to encompass alternative forms. Recent research in translation studies underscores the inherently

oral nature of biblical texts, influenced by factors such as the educational context of the Ancient Near East, the materials used for writing, and prevalent modes of communication. These insights reshape our comprehension of source texts and refine the objectives and essence of the translation process.

Chapter six has shown the interplay between the oral and the written in the translation of Lamentations into Nsenga. This illustrates the essential role of intersemiotic adaptation which is key to preserving the rhetorical and emotional essence of Lamentations, ensuring it remains a powerful expression of grief across different media. The oral rendition of Lamentations in Nsenga demonstrates how linguistic and cultural elements shape the communication of grief. Through features such as repetitive mourning phrases, parallelism, attention-seeking expressions, and emotional tones, the translation adapts the Hebrew text into a form that resonates deeply within Nsenga oral traditions. Key expressions such as *amama newo* (“my mother me”) and *onani* (“See!”), though absent or occurring only rarely in the Hebrew text, are used frequently in Nsenga to highlight the necessity of aligning the target text with its cultural and oral context in order to maintain the lament’s emotional intensity and dialogical nature. While written translations offer a formal, structured approach, oral translations rely on dynamic techniques—such as repetition, pacing, vocal modulation, and emotional cues—to create a participatory and immediate experience. The change of past tenses to present tense in some cases in the oral version help to enhance the emotional immediacy, making the sorrow and lamentation more vivid and impactful for listeners. These differences underline the unique strengths of both oral and written forms in conveying communal grief, emphasising the importance of performance and emotional depth in oral translations.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

The study has shown the importance of an intersemiotic approach that recognises the complex nature of translation. The thesis has endeavoured to show that complexities involved in translation can be addressed by using an approach to translation that will pay attention to all aspects of the nature of the text, the entirety of the historical context and the whole nature of the target language and community. Biblical Performance Criticism has proven to be an approach for translating for an orally dominant community within a complexity theory of translation for dealing with all aspects of translation complexities.

### **7.2.1 Translating everything**

This research has demonstrated the nuanced complexity of translation, emphasising that it goes beyond a mere conveyance of meaning; it involves the intricate task of translating the very form in which the meaning is embedded. The proposal is not a return to literal word-for-word translation; rather, it advocates for the translation of form. It contends that merely translating the message while neglecting the specific form that the translated message should assume in the target language constitutes an incomplete task.

In the source language text, the meaning is intricately tied to a particular form, and it is crucial that this form be faithfully rendered in the target language. The objective is for the meaning of the source language text to adopt a new form in the target language without altering its essence. This transformed form in the target language serves as a bridge, facilitating the understanding and connection of the target community with the translated version. The argument suggests that the translated form should be attuned to the cognitive environment of the target community, demanding a careful consideration of every element in the translation process.

In the specific case of translating laments into Nsenga, the importance of comprehending the artistic nature of Nsenga lament is highlighted. A successful rendition requires a deep understanding of the orality features inherent in both the source and target languages. The focus is not on transplanting these features verbatim but on a thoughtful and artistic translation that respects the unique characteristics of each language.

The thesis underscores the necessity of delving into local communication genres, especially concerning laments, to ensure the success of the translation assignment. This exploration extends to researching the culture of the target language, as a comprehensive translation involves not only the translation of meaning but also the translation of culture and all semiotic systems involved. The holistic translation approach becomes indispensable to ensuring a faithful and meaningful translation, emphasising that translating the book of Lamentations, or any text, requires a profound engagement with the entirety of the linguistic and cultural context. By “holistic translation approach” we mean a translation approach that recognises all the translation typologies in one process of doing translation. This is a call to a process that acknowledges that every translation involves indispensable interplay between different semiotic systems in the process of meaning making.

### **7.2.2 Deliberate consciousness to Frames of Reference**

Rendering the book of Lamentations into an oral-dominant culture like Nsenga demands a careful awareness of the complex dynamics involved in constructing meaning in the target language. The translation team must deliberately navigate the intricate web of linguistic and cultural nuances inherent in both the original text and the target language. These frames of reference serve as pivotal yardsticks in the creation of meaning because they have a prototypical responsibility in meaning making.

Frames of references are easier mentioned in Bible translation circles than they are deliberately explored in the translation process. The translation team's deliberate engagement with the frames of reference in both the source language and the target language is indispensable as well. In the source language text, frames of reference will show how the whole life system of the source community contributed to what we have as the written text. These frames of reference act as the lenses through which the layers of meaning are perceived and interpreted. Should the translators neglect a deliberate exploration of these frames, the translated text risks becoming an alienated entity for the readers or the target community.

Failure to be intentional about the frames of reference not only compromises the translation but also hinders the readers or the target community from establishing a meaningful connection with the text. The translated content, devoid of a conscious consideration of these cultural and linguistic contexts, would remain a riddle, distancing itself from the comprehension and emotional resonance intended by the original work. Therefore, a nuanced and deliberate approach to the frames of reference is imperative for a successful and resonant translation of Lamentations into an orally dominant culture.

### **7.2.3 Resemiotisation during the translation process**

Resemiotisation during the translation process is a proposal that calls for careful consideration of all the semiotics interplays that take place as the translator exegetes and translates the text. All semiotic switches must be carefully examined if we are to be faithful to the translation itself. From the discussion in this thesis, it is becoming more and more clear that resemitisation refers to the process of transforming meaning from one mode of representation to another. In this case, it involves translating or adapting meaning from one semiotic system, such as language, into another, like visual or gestural modes. It highlights how meaning can be reshaped and conveyed across different forms of communication. This is a call to semiotic

consciousness in the translation process as well as exegetical process. This consciousness will make it clear that translation is not just about translating the meaning but also translation of the different semiotic systems that house the meaning. It is translating the different semiotic systems that contributed to the formation of the source language text, and it is the translation and transformation of the semiotic system that receives the meaning in the target community.

To achieve this, training and deliberate engagement with the community reviewers on the nature of the intersemiotic activity that takes place can free the reviewers. It can give them the freedom to contribute effectively once they receive better understanding that we translate everything, as opposed to telling them that we only translate meaning. To have the courage to unearth everything, the translators must have the right information that set them free to provide a good contribution. Such knowledge would free both the community reviewers and the translators.

#### **7.2.4 Resemiotisation during consultant checking**

This phase is highly crucial as it necessitates the consultant's deep immersion into the target culture to assist the team in managing intersemiotic switches. Without this immersion, the risk is akin to producing a translation that lacks consideration for the target audience, hindering inferences and meaning. This is particularly undesirable as inferences play a vital role in constructing meanings. A consultant with substantial immersion in both the target community and the studies of the source language context becomes significantly more beneficial for the translation project. Immersion emerges as a pivotal aspect at this stage.

#### **7.2.5 Deliberate consciousness to Biblical Performance Criticism**

The call to translate everything demands that aspects that contribute to awareness of ignored elements in the process of Bible translation should be approached with deliberate consciousness. One such aspect that need deliberate consciousness is Biblical Performance

Criticism. Each time one engages in the translation of ancient texts such as the Bible, one should have a deliberate consciousness to this important exegetical aid called Biblical Performance Criticism. The benefits of Biblical Performance Criticism would include the following:

**a) Bringing visibility to all the orality features in the written source language text**

As earlier alluded to, Biblical Performance Criticism focuses on identifying and understanding the oral elements present in written biblical texts. It seeks to bring attention to aspects of the text that may have originated in oral traditions, such as linguistic features, stylistic elements, and performative aspects. By examining these oral features, one gains insights into the way these texts were originally communicated and transmitted in oral settings before being written down.

**b) Exposing the oral culture of the ancient community**

This method of analysing the text will uncover the performative aspects of the biblical texts, shedding light on how they were recited, chanted, or dramatised within the community. By exploring the oral dimensions, the aim is to understand the cultural and social context in which these texts originated and were transmitted. That being said, it leads to justifying that what the translator should translate is not just words but everything that formed the life of the source language community. It exposes the complex nature of the source language text thereby demanding the use of an intersemiotically complex approach to translation.

**c) Showing the inseparability of the oral and written**

It is the role of BPC to make bare the inseparability of the oral and the written in Bible translation. In this context, it highlights how the Bible, as a sacred text, is not solely a

written document but is deeply connected to its oral traditions, emphasising the inseparability of these two modes of communication in understanding the biblical narrative and its reception. This in itself is coming as a challenge to the Bible translation community especially those yielding to the temptation of thinking that they can do a purely written translation or a purely oral translation. Biblical Performance Criticism has shown that the two are in no way separable. Instead, we are called to embrace a complexity approach that recognises the inseparability of the two, a complexity approach that recognises the ever-present intersemiotic activity.

**d) Promoting deeper understanding of the source language text**

From the earlier discussion, it is clear that Biblical Performance Criticism adds depth to the comprehension of the source language text by unveiling cultural, linguistic, and contextual dimensions embedded in the performative aspects of biblical narratives. This approach enriches the interpretation of the Bible, offering a more vibrant and contextually informed understanding of the sacred texts. It explores how the context of the performance, including the setting, occasion, and participants, contributes to the overall meaning of the text. This contextual richness adds layers of understanding beyond what a static, written analysis might reveal.

**e) Enriching the message of the text to be translated**

Biblical Performance Criticism enriches the message of the text to be translated by providing a deeper understanding of its oral and performative dimensions. This insight allows translators to convey not only the content but also the intended impact, cultural context, and communal aspects of the original performances. The approach can enrich

the translation process by providing insights into the intended impact of the text beyond its written form.

**f) Freeing target community translators to use the available oral/visual features in their culture**

This approach enables community translators to incorporate oral and visual aspects relevant to their culture, providing them with freedom in the translation process.

Firstly, it encourages cultural relevance by prompting translators to consider the cultural context of the target community. This involves understanding how biblical texts were originally performed in their cultural settings, allowing translators to convey the message in a way that aligns with the cultural sensibilities of their audience.

Secondly, it supports the integration of oral traditions, particularly in cultures where oral communication is dominant. The freedom lies in recognising the oral nature of ancient biblical texts, allowing translators to prioritise oral communication during the translation process. This ensures that the translated text maintains its impact and engagement when spoken aloud.

Thirdly, the approach considers visual elements in biblical performances, which is valuable in Bible translation into sign language. Translators can incorporate visual aspects, such as rituals, symbols, or visual storytelling, enhancing the overall impact and effectiveness of the message.

Fourthly, the approach promotes a dynamic interpretation of the biblical text, emphasising its dynamic nature in performance. This empowers translators to approach their work with creativity and flexibility, adapting the translation to suit the evolving nature of their community's language and culture.

Fifthly, it recognises the communal nature of biblical performances, emphasising community involvement in the translation process. Translators can seek input and feedback from the community to ensure the final translation resonates with their collective understanding and expression.

In summary, Biblical Performance Criticism provides a framework that allows translators to go beyond literal translation, engaging with the living aspects of their culture. It grants them the freedom to adapt and enrich the biblical message by incorporating meaningful oral and visual features relevant to the target community, helping them retain their oral culture in the translation.

#### **7.2.6 Recognise intersemiotic translation in all translation typologies**

Intersemiotic interplay is present in both Jakobson's intralingual translation and interlingual translation. It has been established that in Bible translation, this interplay among different intersemiotic system is inevitable and that it is these different intersemiotic interplays that constitutes the biblical source language text. An awareness of such interplays will help the translator handle the text with all the complexity sensitivity it deserves. Eco (2001) suggests that a translator who understands the semiotic nature of translation is significantly more effective than one who does not. This highlights the importance of recognising the deeper layers of meaning in the translation process, as semiotics plays a crucial role in ensuring that

translation is not merely linguistic, but also interpretive and culturally aware. This view underscores the significance of understanding the semiotic aspects in the process of translation. Essentially, it suggests that a translator who is cognizant of the broader meaning-making systems, symbols, and cultural nuances involved in communication is more effective and valuable than two translators who lack this awareness.

In the realm of translation, semiotics refers to the study of signs and symbols and their interpretation. Language is not merely a direct representation of words; it involves layers of meaning, cultural context, and subtle nuances that may not have direct equivalents in another language. Therefore, a translator well-versed in semiotics appreciates these complexities, enabling them to navigate the intricacies of conveying not just words but the intended messages and cultural connotations.

The statement implies that such a translator, armed with a deep understanding of semiotics, has a distinct advantage. They can capture the essence of the source text more accurately, maintain cultural relevance, and bridge potential gaps in meaning. This proficiency can essentially render the work of two less-aware translators obsolete, as the semiotically aware translator brings a richer, more nuanced understanding to the task. The awareness significantly enhances the translator's effectiveness, making them doubly valuable compared to counterparts who may lack this crucial insight.

### **7.3 Future Research**

An intersemiotic complexity theory that is applicable for both intralingual translation and interlingual translation at the process level is worth further exploration. A theory that is defined by the process and not the product media. A theory of intersemiotic translation should be defined by the process it involves, rather than the specific characteristics of the source text or the final translation product. This approach shifts the focus from a rigid classification of the

text types to understanding how translation functions across different media. In this framework, the essence of intersemiotic translation lies in the process of interpreting and transferring meaning between different semiotic systems (e.g., text to image, speech to sign language), rather than being constrained by the traditional product-based distinctions between source and target texts. A change in the way the source language text is defined as “print” in the case of the biblical text is inevitable because this same printed text is a witness to the whole oral culture of the Old Testament times. A choice to bring to visibility or a choice not to bring visibility to these oral features is the only difference. Hence there is the need to explore an intersemiotic complexity theory that will help shed more light on the important place occupied by intersemiotic interplay in the translation process. The more we know that intersemiotic Bible translation is not another type of Bible translation the better, because it is the whole type of Bible translation.

This research has primarily focused on translating the book of Lamentations for an orally dominant culture, emphasising the unique challenges and methodologies involved. However, future studies could expand the scope by exploring translation strategies for cultures that are not orally dominant, maintaining the assumption that intersemiotics is a fundamental component of all translation types. This approach would enable a broader understanding of how semiotic systems interact across various forms of translation, irrespective of the culture’s primary mode of communication.

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#### **NSENGA BIBLE TRANSLATIONS**

1923            *Mapangano Alomba* [New Testament]. Lusaka: Bible Society of Zambia.

2016            *Uthenga Uweme wa Yesu Kristu Wolembewa na Maliko* [The Gospel according to Mark]. Lusaka: Bible Society of Zambia.

2016            *Malizu w̄a Mulungu: Cipangano ca lombā*. [The Word of God: New Testament] Lusaka: The Bible Society of Zambia

In progress    *Malizu w̄a Mulungu: Cipangano ca kale na ca Lomba* [The Word of God: Old Testament and New Testament]. Lusaka: Bible Society of Zambia.

## **APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE DOCUMENTATION**

- UFS GHREC [General Human Research Committee] Ethical Clearance
- Request to Chief for permission to research in Nsenga area
- Chief's permission to research in Nsenga area
- Participant consent form

**GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)**

03-Aug-2022

Dear Rev Gift Nyirenda

**Application Approved**

Research Project Title:

**INTERSEMIOTIC BIBLE TRANSLATION FOR AN ORALLY DOMINANT  
CULTURE: THE CASE OF TRANSLATING LAMENTATIONS INTO NSENGA**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2022/0921/22**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Adri Du Plessis**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

Dr Adri  
du  
Plessis

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by Dr Adri du  
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205 Nelson Mandela  
Drive  
Park West  
Bloemfontein 9301  
South Africa

P.O. Box 339  
Bloemfontein 9300  
Tel: +27 (0)51 401  
9337

[duplessisA@ufs.ac.za](mailto:duplessisA@ufs.ac.za)  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



# REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTER

His Royal Highness Senior Chief Kalindawalo of  
the Nsenga Speaking People  
Nsenga Traditional Council

Your Royal Highness,

## **Re: Permission to Conduct Research in the Nsenga Community**

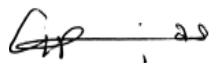
I, Gift Nyirenda, I am doing research on how to translate Laments into Nsenga language for my Doctoral Degree under the supervision of Professor Cynthia Miller-Naude and Professor Jacobus Naude at the University of the Free State, in South Africa. My Doctoral Thesis topic is: “Intersemiotic Bible Translation for an Orally Dominant Culture: The Case of Translating Lamentations into Nsenga.”

This research is expected to be done in the Nsenga community in the period covering 2022. The study will involve recording and transcribing Nsenga traditional Laments from Nsenga citizens. The Laments will be analysed and studied to assist with the translation of the book of Lamentations and/or other biblical laments into the Nsenga language.

The study will not have monetary compensation for the participants, but it will surely help Bible translators in Nsenga and other neighbouring languages to understand the importance of paying attention to the styles and features of Laments in the target culture to enhance the translation of the Bible and achieve the much-needed naturalness and acceptability. The study will take care so that in all aspects, the community members that will participate in the research have extremely minimal risk, consisting primarily of the loss of time. The findings will be processed as anonymous, and high confidentiality levels will be followed. Although some members of the community will be requested to perform the Laments in Nsenga and also transcribe them, the interaction will be limited to the topic of research and nothing more. When the research is completed, the thesis will be an additional reference material for the Nsenga people because it will have documented Nsenga Laments for generations to come and will be published as an academic dissertation. Additionally, this research will document Nsenga cultural heritage and enhance its prestige within the community. Participants will not be penalised if they choose to discontinue their involvement in the research.

Given the above information, I hereby request your approval so that I can carry out this research in the Nsenga community.

Yours sincerely



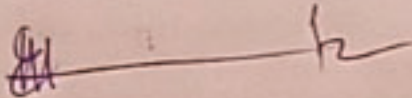
Rev. Gift Nyirenda  
Bible Translation Officer  
The Bible Society of Zambia  
Phone: +260977993250  
Email: gponyirenda@yahoo.com

28<sup>th</sup> February, 2022

**Date**

PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT AND/OR PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

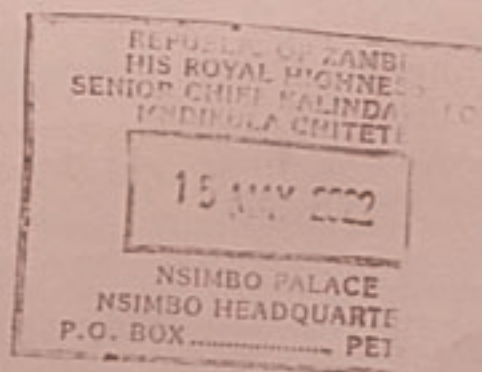
I, HRH Chief Kalindawalo, Senior Chief of the Nsenga people, willingly welcome Rev. Gift Nyirenda to conduct research in the Nsenga Community. Consent is hereby also given to members of the Nsenga community to help in this research which is for the good of our community, so that word of God can be translated in a manner that will be acceptable to the Nsenga people while respecting and upholding our culture and language. I have been fully informed of the benefits, the potential risks, the procedure thereof, the requests associated with this research and your efforts to minimize risks for participants. I am also aware that some of the demands may include recording Laments in Nsenga. Rev Gift Nyirenda has made it clear to me that the participants' identities will be withheld to uphold confidentiality and that the findings will be processed as anonymous. My consent does not in any way compel Nsenga people to be involved in this research against their wish but that they should do so willingly for the benefit of the community. I am particularly elated by the research because, apart from it being helpful in the Translation of the Bible, the Thesis will be additional literature about the Nsenga people once completed.



HRH Chief Kalindawalo

Kalindawalo Royal Establishment

Petauke District



**PARTICIPANT CONSENT TO BE INVOLVED IN A SEMI-STRUCTURED  
INTERVIEW WHEN COLLECTING NSENGA LAMENTS**

The researcher will do “semi-structured interviews” in which I will ask individuals to sing laments while I will record, and then I will ask the following questions:

1. On what social occasion is the lament sung?
2. Who sings the lament?
3. Who participates in the event?
4. What is the significance of the manner in which the lament is sung?

All the data that will be collected will be securely kept in a password-protected file on my computer, and the participants will not be identified in my research.

The Participant will give consent to provide the above details willingly. If the participant chooses to sign, the identity will be kept confidential, and the data will be processed anonymously.

Participant Sign (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

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