BIBLICAL TRANSLATION AS INVASION IN POSTCOLONIAL NORTHERN GHANA

Nathan A. Esala

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by

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Contents

Figures

Maps

Fig. 1. Map of Ghana. United States Central Intelligence Agency. Source: University of Texas Libraries, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ghana_rel_2007.jpg. Public Domain.
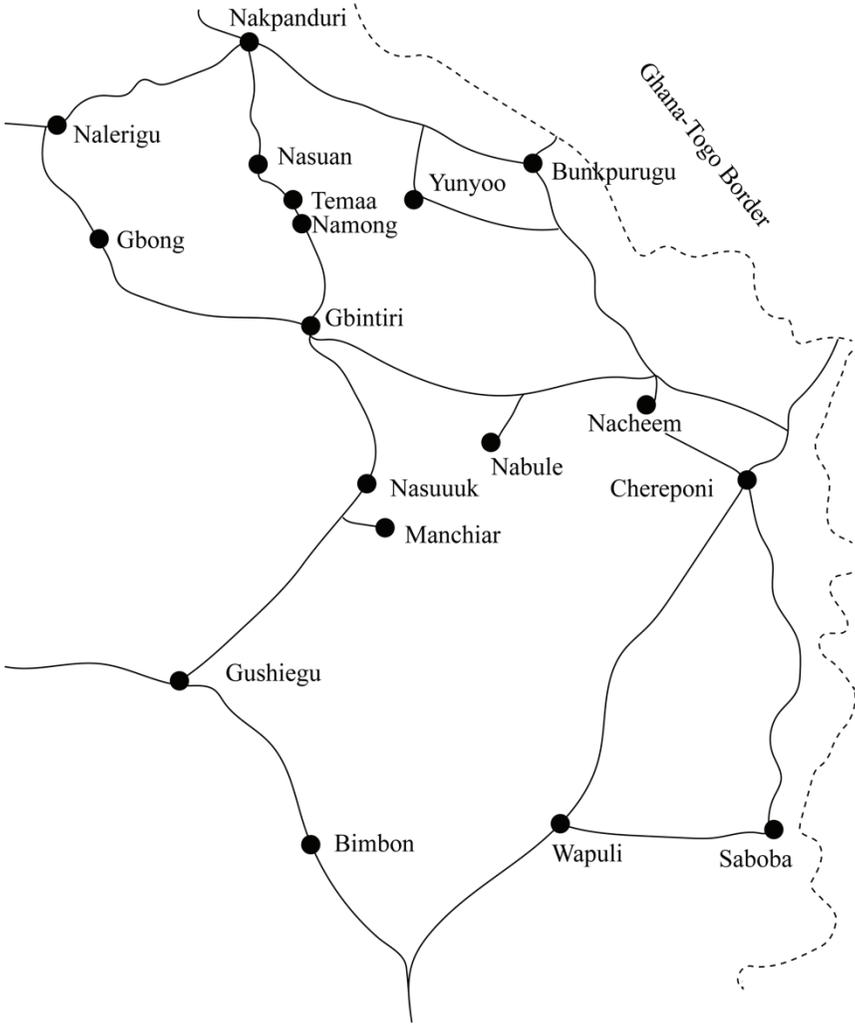
Fig. 2. Map of Some of the Communities South of the Escarpment. Painted by Yajim Amadu, digitally adapted by David Federwitz and Nathan Esala. Used with permission.

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Abbreviations

AcT	*Acta Theologica*
AcTSup	*Acta Theologica Supplementum*
AIC	African Independent Churches
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BT	*The Bible Translator*
CBS	Contextual Bible Study
FGM	female genital mutilation
FGP	female genital power
Forerunners	Forerunners: Ideas First from the University of Minnesota Press 53
GPBS	Global Perspectives on Biblical Studies
HvTSt	*HTS : Theological Studies*
IBMR	*International Bulletin of Missionary Research*
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JIBS	*Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies*
JFSR	*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JTSA	*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*
KJV	King James Version
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NGO	Nongovernmental Organizations
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*

Introduction

A provocative title requires a bit of explanation. The background for the title of this book, "Biblical Translation as Invasion in Postcolonial Northern Ghana," begins with two autobiographical stories.

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

The situation was complex. Bible translation began in a southern dialect of Konkomba in the 1960s. The early linguistic analysis suggested a need for a separate language development project for the northern dialect of Konkomba.[2] Sociolinguistic factors had caused local people to press for a unified written

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[1] The Komba people sometimes refer to themselves as Bikɔɔm. The Komba language is also referred to as Likɔɔnl, a member of the macro language family of Likpakpaaln. J.-C. Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire 37 (Dakar: IFAN, 1954), 245–46. David Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana* (London: Published for the International African Institute and the University of Ghana by the Oxford University Press, 1964), 151. The reader should note that I choose not to use italics to mark words as foreign.

[2] Mary Steele, "Konkomba Dialect Survey" (Ghana Institute of Linguistics, 1966).

standard.[3] In the 1980s, community and church leaders were content to work in the southern dialect of the Konkomba language. I wondered what had caused the change in strategy.

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

Research indicated the conflict was about land rights. Since the colonial era, land rights in northern Ghana are connected to paramount chieftaincy. The Konkomba were asserting their rights to the land based on their presence on the land since precolonial time. Additionally, they were attempting to get a paramount chief that would be over all Konkomba kinship groups. The Dagomba took offense to this because it was an innovation in the chieftaincy system. A conflict erupted.[7]

In the early 2000s, much of the literature about the conflict that I was able to procure in print and on the web described the Konkomba as foreigners from Togo

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

[4] The term Dagomba is an anglicized term that refers to a subset of the macro ethnic term Dagbamba who inhabit the eastern kingdom of Dagbon. See section 1.3.3 below.

[5] In colonial times ethnic and cultural groups were made into political units called *tribes* with defined territories. See Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 24, 185. See also Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native* (Harvard University Press, 2020), 11. In the 1970s academic literature began using the term *ethnic group* instead of tribe. See Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, 3rd ed, Anthropology, Culture, and Society (London: Pluto; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 11. For a discussion of the various theoretical models of ethnicity, see Steve Tonah, "Introduction: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives on Ethnicity, Conflicts, and Consensus in Ghana," in *Ethnicity, Conflicts, and Consensus in Ghana*, ed. Steve Tonah (Accra: Woeli, 2007), 3–24.

[6] Julie Kaye and Daniel Béland, "The Politics of Ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Case of Northern Ghana," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 27.2 (2009): 184.

[7] I address this conflict more fully in chapter 6.

who had settled in Ghana only recently.[8] Ghanaian media sources contributed to the perception that Konkomba were foreigners who settled in Ghana.[9] Whereas classic anthropological sources indicated that Konkomba had been present on the land for a long time.[10] Furthermore, Ghanaian historians had claimed that the ancestors of the Dagomba, not the Konkomba, were invaders from the east.[11]

Invasion has long been a contested term in northern Ghana, with political consequences. In the colonial era, from the perspective of the British, to be an invader was a good thing that had legal ramifications. An ethnic group that had invaded other ethnic groups in precolonial history could claim the land based on the rights of conquest. The popular perception of history, "the received history" in northern Ghana, indicates that the Dagomba invaded and conquered indigenous groups, slaughtering the territorial elders.[12] However, after the 1994 conflict, the label invader was applied pejoratively to so-called foreign ethnic groups because it was more important in the postcolonial era to be indigenous to the land.[13]

The second autobiographical story that I offer as background for the title of this book took place four years later. In 2006 the recently formed Komba Literacy and Translation Project (KOLIBITRAP), a representative organization of local leaders headquartered in Gbintiri, Ghana, received some grant money from Lutheran World Relief to produce literature for women in the vernacular. To generate ongoing interest in reading, people needed texts about women to read. One booklet had already been published in the Likɔɔnl language called "Better Child Care." The next booklet published pictures of the story of the biblical book of Ruth. Each picture had a simple sentence so women could practice decoding the local orthography. A local artist, Yajim Amadu, was commissioned to draw the pictures, and the project coordinator at that time, Rev. Samson Bilafanim, authored the story using the orthography that was being developed.

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

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[8] Benjamin Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 171.

[9] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 177.

[10] Tait, *Konkomba of Northern Ghana*.

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

[12] Wyatt MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers: History, Politics, and Land Ownership in Northern Ghana* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 23–24.

[13] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 144.

Fig. 3. Yajim Amadu, *Ruth Went Gleaning*. Used with permission.

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

Historical before Metaphorical

These two autobiographical stories indicate that notions associated with the English word invasion have become part of the local consciousness; invasion is wielded with the great flexibility of metaphor. The research in this book is an attempt to understand the relevance of invasion in the present and the past. The invasion of the Volta Basin is a historical event that occurred in the late nineteenth century. The British actually invaded northern Ghana in 1896 with soldiers and weapons.[14] They took over the rule of the area. I argue that the British used translation in a particular way to extend the notion of invasion into the local consciousness.

In this study, I approach *translation as invasion* as historical before metaphorical. Scholars in the discipline of translation studies have explored many metaphors to help describe what translation is and what it is not.[15] I am following a different track. I describe the variety of ways translation has been used in a particular geographic and social context over time. The chapters focus on the context of northern Ghana, focusing especially on the area surrounding and south of the Gambaga escarpment, hereafter, the escarpment area. I apply theoretical tools to that context to help elucidate the breadth of the language, communication, and translation practices that are appropriate to the evolving material and social realities in that context during particular eras. From the observations of these historical practices in that context across time, I offer a theory of translation as invasion that I derived from observing the lasting impact of the colonial practice of translation on the practices of translation that preceded and followed it. Colonial translation as invasion has reinterpreted indigenous/precolonial translation and continues to shape postcolonial/neocolonial practices of translation.

I am suggesting that the translation of what Wyatt MacGaffey calls the precolonial invasion myth, was culturally invasive.[16] Over time it has influenced the public consciousness regarding the popular sense of history in northern Ghana.

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

[15] James St. André, ed., *Thinking through Translation with Metaphors* (Manchester, UK; Kinderhook, NY: St. Jerome, 2010). Several chapters in the book consider translation as X: translation as clothing (Van Wyke), translation as acting (Benshalom), translation as cross-identity performance (St. André), and translation as smuggling (Heniuk). Many metaphors for translation have been employed by scholars in the humanities with varying degrees of sophistication in their understanding of the complexities involved in translation such as colonization, migration, and education. Deborah Shadd, "On Language, Education and Identity: Minority Language Education Within the Canadian Context" (PhD Thesis, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, 2015), 204–6.

[16] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 19. See also Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2004), 56.

Any analysis of the present or the past must deal with the colonial translation *of* invasion, and colonial translation practice *as* cultural invasion. The purpose of colonial translation was to support the logic of invasion. Accordingly, its method was also culturally and politically invasive in ways described in chapter 2.[17] Chapter 3 reveals the link between colonial political translation and missionary-colonial theological translation. Chapters 4–7 develop a postcolonial practice of retranslation that moves beyond the translation-as-invasion paradigm.

I am not suggesting that translation is ontologically invasive.[18] Chapter 1 argues that invasion is not as useful to describe the intention or the method of indigenous/precolonial translation practices. I am also not suggesting that invasion was the same everywhere in Africa. "There were literally hundreds of European conquests of Africa, not one."[19] I theorize about invasion and conquest because colonial invasions and conquests were so pervasive and relentless across the continent and the world. Even though contexts and histories are different across Africa, by focusing on the translation practices associated with the experience of invasion and conquest, I hope the theorizing done in the northern Ghanaian context will be useful elsewhere in Africa and beyond.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 describes the breadth of language and translation practices in indigenous/precolonial time. Despite the common perception in contemporary northern Ghana, I argue against invasion as an appropriate description of the social dynamics in that era. Precolonial translation practices were not designed to support indigenous invasion and conquest. Translation practices were focused on creating social unity for survival in the local context. In precolonial time, the boundaries between ethnic groups and the distinctions between one language and another were more porous than they were made to be in the colonial era. In honor of that porousness, I make the decolonial choice not to mark foreign words with italics in this manuscript. Drawing on Achille Mbembe's notion of the time of entanglement, I recognize there were different trajectories concomitant with each other in

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[17] See Okot p'Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1970), 80. See also Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for de-Colonization*, rev. ed. (New York: Monthly Review, 1970), 12–13.

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

[19] Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 97.

the precolonial era.[20] The influx of technologies, such as horses and guns, and the practices of trade, especially the slave trade, influenced by the colonial presence on the coasts of Africa, began to influence interior African societies. The great demand for slaves linked rural West African economies to the world economic system, such that local practices of translation were affected. Colonial-era translation picked up on technological and economic dominance in precolonial time, conflating them in a way that made indigenous raiding appear to foreshadow colonial invasion.

Chapter 2 discusses the practices of translation in the colonial era. In 1896 the British invaded the Volta Basin, what is now called northern Ghana. British colonial administrators engaged in translational interaction with African agents. Translation participants had to deal with the fact of British invasion. Colonial administrators tried to press their agenda to rule an area that was not economically profitable as cheaply and easily as possible. African translation participants had to work within that reality, either resisting it without appearing to be directly resisting it or making the best of the situation by finding some local advantage through the interactions.[21]

As time progressed the British employed a strategy of governance called "indirect rule."[22] Colonial administrators used written translation to support the underlying logic of indirect rule. Administrators called for and made use of written translations of indigenous/precolonial narratives that recounted actions of raiding practices as invasions and conquests. The colonial publications of these coopted precolonial invasion narratives helped colonial administrators establish customary constitutions for kingdoms. Under indirect rule, the colonial government formally established large tribal kingdoms and gave them relative autonomy under the colonial government. Colonial law made armed conflict illegal.[23] Colonial administrators called upon translation services to support colonial policy and to help create official customary law that could be used to extract wealth from the populace to offset the expense of colonial overrule. Customary law replaced raiding and armed conflict as a tool to extract wealth from the masses.

Chapter 3 discusses religious translation and introduces three practices of Christianity, all of which are active in present-day northern Ghana. Each practice of Christianity has associated practices of translation. The first version, missionary-colonial Christianity, introduced written Bible translation to Ghana in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The translated Bible in Gã and Twi was presented to Africans in a frame circumscribed by missionary-colonial Christian

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[20] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001), 14–16.
[21] African cultural translators became entangled with colonial translation, becoming, to a greater or lesser extent, neoindigenous African agents.
[22] Mamdani argues that Americans invented indirect rule in the way they governed native Americans (Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*, 3).
[23] Customary law was not allowed to reestablish the use of guns.

doctrine. The second version, African independent Christianity, responded to missionary-colonial Bible translation by accepting the Bible but exiting from spaces under missionary-colonial control. For African Independent Churches (AICs) the Bible was used as a divining set for the purpose of social healing. It was also interpreted in a participatory manner by African Christian prophets who participated with the biblical characters and in the biblical narratives. They extended trajectories in the narrative into their present world. The African prophets used the Bible to help them build communities for Africans who were being marginalized by colonial systems. For the prophets, God's law was larger than social and political life and was not subservient to colonial market or military practices. The prophets and their communities engaged in rewriting the Bible using an active spirituality and authority. The third version of Christianity is called the new Christianity.[24] It is an African version of charismatic neo-Pentecostalism, proclaiming the prosperity gospel, a teaching that originated in the 1960s and 70s in the United States. New Christianity's prosperity gospel works well with African beliefs about the primacy of the spiritual world and spiritual causation. However, the prosperity gospel individualizes the way it interprets the spiritual world in a way that African religions do not. The new Christianity works hand-in-glove with neoliberal political and economic policies because the new churches interpret suffering and poverty as related to individual causes, and not systemic political or economic causes. The doctrinal framework of the new Christianity interprets the Bible in concert with the extractive interests of neocolonialism. Chapter 3 argues that in the twenty-first century, appropriations of the translated Bible in Africa are circumscribed by these three entangled forms of Christian practice.

Chapter 4 introduces a postcolonial experimental practice of retranslation that attempts to rework the translation-as-invasion paradigm. It begins with a discussion within postcolonial African theology between translation theology and liberation theology, concluding that translation is a site of struggle at its sites of production and its sites of reception. Translation as a site of struggle is compared with notions of competing intentions in translation as discussed in Skopos theory, a common approach developed in European translation studies and increasingly being used in African Bible translation. To help negotiate the reality of neoindigenous/postcolonial bodies entangled with neocolonial forces, the chapter suggests that the bodies of Africans that are being marginalized by the current political, economic, and religious systems must become agents who retranslate texts of Scripture that they find relevant to social problems they are facing in their communities. Contextual Bible study (CBS) is introduced as a method that reworks who is privileged to translate a biblical text. Those who would qualify as translators under the missionary-colonial system actively collaborate with marginalized groups in such a way that privileges the perspectives of poor and marginalized

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

groups as they engage in translational action. In translation studies terms, CBS is described as a form of retranslation governed by an alternative logic, the logic of liberation. Liberation shapes CBS's translational purpose and processes. The case study explores how a group of Komba Bible translators began to experiment with the CBS methodology. The translators became CBS facilitators who collaborated with people living with physical disabilities who retranslated selected portions of the book of Job by responding to a set of structured CBS questions. The chapter highlights how the facilitators emphasized the emancipatory logic of liberation. The logic of liberation involves retranslating with an overtly emancipatory purpose using an inclusive emancipatory process that engages different sectors of people living with disabilities in retranslational dialogue. The retranslations of Job expressed by groups of people living with disabilities show signs of breaking through (irrupting) the dominant theologies of their context: the neocolonial health and wealth gospel, and the missionary-colonial developmentalist gospel. The process of retranslating for liberation culminates with suggestions of translating the text into contemporary social action led by people living with disabilities. The chapter concludes by arguing that postcolonial retranslation for liberation continues the tradition of the irruption of the third world into dominant and destructive theological and translational methods and discourses.

Chapter 5 pursues the issue of agency raised in chapter 4 as it relates to African women's theologies and the prosperity gospel in contemporary northern Ghana. Chapter 5 also continues a discussion from chapter 1 as it discusses the lenses colonial anthropologists have used to misinterpret matrifocal cultural practices that have been passed down from the indigenous precolonial era. Present-day African church communities have made an analogous move to colonial anthropologists by insisting on translating the name of God in more masculine ways than the grammatical categories and theological dispositions of most African languages would suggest. African women's theologies began responding to gendered translations in African theological discourse in the same way that African theological discourse responded to EuroAmerican theological discourse. Mercy Amba Oduyoye called African women's theology in the developing world as "the irruption within the irruption."[25] The theoretical portion of the chapter discusses feminist approaches and activist approaches to translation compared to CBS's overt theory of change. The chapter's case study engages young women in northern Ghana who are in school and vocational training by inviting them to engage in the process of retranslating the book of Ruth in the context of sugar daddy

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

relationships. The case study compares notions of women's agency in the individualist neoliberal version of Christianity that prioritize the consumption of luxury items as a measure of theological and social worth with notions of women's agency in African women's theologies. The case study indicates that women's solidarity within and across age groups in northern Ghana is lacking. The conclusion argues for patient engagement with groups of women and men over time as they use CBS to retranslate biblical texts, reworking their theologies and solidarities at the same time as they do the deep substructural work to sustain the irruption within the irruption.

Chapter 6 analyzes the legacy of the translation as invasion model as it has been applied politically and religiously in postindependence Ghana. The chapter argues that application of the colonial model of translation as invasion in dominant political and theological translation does not result in thorough-going postcolonial liberation. Rather, the result of the application of the translation as invasion model lends itself to interethnic and intraethnic conflicts. The first part of the chapter discusses the legacy of ranked ethnicity in northern Ghana. In the colonial era, colonial translation made some kinship groups into tribes of a lower status or caste.[26] The Konkomba were the largest such tribe in northern Ghana. The Konkomba identity emerged in postcolonial Ghana in response to their collective experience of tribally motivated marginalization. Neoindigenous Konkomba organized themselves based on their emerging sense of common tribal identity. Missionary-initiated language development and Bible translation work among the Konkomba also began after Ghana's independence. These two strains of tribal organizing, neoindigenous and missionary-initiated, are brought into dialogue as strategies that politically and theologically responded to Ghana's hierarchical tribal caste system. Two major conflicts resulted. An analysis of the results of these conflicts is offered, including the role conventional (Bible) translation, based on the translation-as-invasion paradigm, plays in the process. The second part of the chapter shifts to analyzing the intratribal/intraethnic conflicts that have characterized the early twenty-first century in northern Ghana, asking how conventional Bible translation engages the stark realities of intraethnic conflict given elite males' competition for traditional power, representative power, and economic power in Ghana's neopatrimonial system. The chapter concludes with a call for religious retranslation offering a CBS that responds to the contemporary situation in which elites are actively seeking to manipulate tribe/ethnicity as part of their quest for power. Postcolonial retranslation resists the colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm without imitating its internal logic. The CBS offered brings indigenous religious resources together to respond to the devastating

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[26] I use tribe following Mahmood Mamdani's choice to highlight a tribe's colonial construction and the ongoing impact of that construction. The term ethnic group is descriptively broader, reaching into precolonial time, but is less salient, politically. See the introduction, n. 5, above.

effects ethnic conflicts have on women's bodies and the environment, both of which have been moral building blocks to African communities since indigenous/precolonial time.

The concluding chapter argues that CBS as postcolonial retranslation has the potential to do more than reverse the logic of invasion. In the three case studies, explored in chapters 4–6, CBS as postcolonial emancipatory retranslation, led by marginalized groups in African communities, articulated visions that are the inverse of invasion. CBS is governed by an alternative logic to the logic of invasion and domination, a logic whose purpose and process facilitates life-giving discourses for social healing initiated by those on the bottom of social hierarchies. Through CBS marginalized groups rework their ideotheologies, enacting healing for themselves, and offering that healing to other sectors in their communities. The theory of social change CBS works with argues that the pain-bearers of society are in a unique position to start the process of healing, beginning from the core of the community's collective social wounds, moving outward, offering healing to each layer of the social body, including the layers of the social body inhabited by conventional postcolonial translators.

From Historical to Metaphorical: Translating with a Dangerous Logic

The two stories I shared in the introduction above illustrate how the historical practice of translation as invasion has become a metaphor in northern Ghana with a dangerous internal logic. As colonizers invaded northern lands, they projected invasion onto the local people to justify the logic of what they had done, simultaneously establishing the grounds for ongoing relationships that engage in exploitative (neo)colonial extraction. Bible translation is no exception. As elites translate using the dispositions of the translation-as-invasion paradigm in their local contexts, they are in danger of reproducing the logic of invasion and extraction in their society. Certain Dagomba warriors projected invasion onto Konkomba ethnic groups, groups they have perceived to be a lower caste due to the logic of invasion, established through colonial-era translation. Educated men in local kinship groups project invasion onto women's gleaning practices, weakening traditional matrifocal practices while consolidating their rights to their exclusively defined patrimony. The internal logic of invasion has imprinted itself in African social systems through colonial (Bible) translation. This book describes how Africans have and continue to retranslate biblical texts for social healing, reworking exploitative pathways that the logic of invasion has established in their social bodies.

1.

Reconstructing Precolonial Translating Practices in Northern Ghana

The title of this book, "Biblical Translation as Invasion in Postcolonial Northern Ghana," suggests that the colonizers who invaded what is now called northern Ghana left a mark on contemporary translation practices in the region. I make that argument in chapter 2, when I discuss colonial translations *of* invasion and colonial translation practices *as* invasion. But what were translation practices in northern Ghana before Europeans invaded? The pervasive and invasive influence of European translation as invasion on the interpretation of the past make it difficult to discuss precolonial practices without anachronistically relying upon European understandings of the concept of translation.[1]

Many indigenous words can be translated into English as "translate." Those indigenous words refer to cultural practices that are not necessarily the same as English practices of translating and translation.[2] Northern Ghanaian languages describe translating as a process of turning language, emphasizing the process over the finished product of translation.[3] In this chapter I attempt to write about translation in indigenous precolonial Africa by employing a particular set of theoretical tools that limit the ability to impose English colonial narratives and conceptions

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[1] Maria Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007), 83–85.

[2] Drawing on the Greek and Latin roots of the English word "translation," Piotr Blumczynski undertakes a semasiological study of the word, arguing that in English translation initially referred to "someone carrying something—prototypcially using their hands…from one place to another." Eventually translation was used as a metaphor for linguistic transformation. Piotr Blumczynski, *Experiencing Translationality: Material and Metaphorical Journeys* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023), 11.

[3] The English word *translation*, when it is used to refer to linguistic translation, can be translated into the language of Likɔɔnl as "ileen a labirim" or "turning over speech." Whereas the English emphasis appears to be on the translation product, the emphasis in Likɔɔnl appears to be on the process of turning speech or changing language for communication.

on earlier times. As I write, I seek to be accountable to the communities who are the contemporary inheritors of those precolonial translation practices.[4]

This chapter has six sections. Section 1 introduces the theoretical tools I will be employing in this and subsequent chapters. Section 2 introduces the geographical and social context of northern Ghana. Section 3 describes kinship as the foundational social pattern on the African frontier. Four interrelated translation practices emerged from kinship practices. Section 4 describes divination as a contextually grounded and flexible spiritual-social translation practice. Section 5 describes oral tradition as a dialogical process of collective translation. Section 6 focuses on women's roles in indigenous/precolonial translation practices.

1.1. Disentangling Lifeworlds and Translating Practices

I have carefully selected theoretical tools that I think are appropriate for the northern Ghanaian geographical, political, and economic context. I argue these tools will help disentangle and elucidate precolonial practices in the northern Ghanaian context in ways that are appropriate to the African present and responsible with the African past. Some of these tools may be useful for readers from other African contexts who also wish to disentangle precolonial practices from the pervasive influence of colonial-era concepts.

The tools I have selected can also be compared to a set of lenses, a pair of glasses, or spectacles. Whether or not people are aware of it, all people view the past through a set of lenses. Colonization has given Europeans and Africans a set of lenses that many people use to look at the past. Colonization translates precolonial history in a way that attempts to justify or explain colonial invasion and ongoing postcolonial/neocolonial relations. In other words, many of us who have gone to school have come to view precolonial history through processes influenced by colonial translation. Colonial (mis)translations offer history to us in a way that is already theorized. Colonial mistranslations of the past offer Africans "whose eyes have been opened" a set of spectacles without telling them they are wearing spectacles with colonial-strength prescription lenses. Even those who have not gone to school have been influenced by colonial translations of law, chieftaincy, and more.

To be accountable to African communities, I explain what lenses I use to view and describe the past. People can try on these lenses and look through them to compare them to the lenses they are already wearing. I believe the lenses I am employing have the potential to offer glimpses of the precolonial world before it was made to be a logical prelude to the colonial era. I hope to offer glimpses of

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[4] "The key question is: To whom are African Bible scholars accountable, and what is their locus operandi?" Alpheus Masoga, "Redefining Power: Reading the Bible in Africa from the Peripheral and Central Positions," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town*, GPBS 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 108.

what the precolonial world might have looked like when trajectories other than colonization, but also including colonization, were still open possibilities. However, if communities observe that what I am describing is not helpful, they can more easily adjust the lenses inside their spectacles because I have been explicit about the lenses I am using to view and describe past practices. In the process, I hope to clarify how the colonial lenses make the world look. That way, Africans influenced by colonialism can make more informed choices about the lenses they prefer to view and describe the past. Being explicit about how one views the past is an important part of building a more life-giving present and future.

The precolonial era was far from static.[5] Many changes occurred, and many creative responses to those changes have resulted in a remarkably life-affirming culture in northern Ghana. The way social groups translated in a contextually grounded manner contributed to their successful method of living in a marginally fertile environment and negotiating the internal violence of the slave trade. In what follows, I reinterpret the data regarding indigenous precolonial translating practices by using theories that better account for the diversity of practices on the ground in that era. In the first section of this chapter, I present eight theoretical lenses that I have selected to describe the precolonial lifeworld and its translation practices in northern Ghana.[6]

1.1.1. The 3T Paradigm of Cultural Analysis

History is often narrated in a way that reflects contemporary geopolitical relations. For example, world history is taught in a way that suggests that ancient Greek culture was the product of Indo-European or Indo-Hittite invasion, downplaying Semitic and Afro-Asiatic influences on Greek culture.[7] How does one prevent such geopolitical bias in the narration of historical events? Michael Cronin argues that a balanced analysis must account for the interrelated dynamics of the "3T paradigm": trade, technology, and translation.[8] A proper reading of these three interrelated factors offers a more balanced analysis of culture—hopefully making Eurocentric overreach in the narration of history more difficult to substantiate.[9]

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

[6] For a full description see Nathan A. Esala, "Translation as Invasion in Post-colonial Northern Ghana" (PhD Thesis, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2021), 1–44.

[7] Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

[8] Michael Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, New Perspectives in Translation Studies (Milton Park: Routledge, 2013), 3.

[9] Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 19–21.

In this chapter, I will employ the 3T lens to elucidate how the related practices of trade, technology, and translation contributed to social expansion in northern Ghana in the precolonial period.

1.1.2. Entanglement of Time

Achille Mbembe offers some analytical language that I find useful in describing the challenge of discussing material practices across different eras of time. Mbembe argues that conventional views of time are insufficient to describe the "multiplicity of times, trajectories, and rationalities"[10] that African societies use to relate to themselves. Conventional views of time are insufficient because they perceive of time in a linear fashion as a current that carries individuals from a background to a foreground, with the future emerging necessarily from the past. By contrast,

> This time of African existence is neither a linear time nor a simple sequence in which each moment effaces, annuls, and replaces those that preceded it, to the point where a single age exists within society. This time is not a series, but an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones.[11]

Mbembe speaks of each age as having a distinctive set of material practices that form the "languages of life" or "life world" of that age.[12] The material realities of the lifeworld and the assumptions of the age constrain the practices of translation in each era. That said, each age contains more than one trajectory. According to Mbembe's notion of African time, the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial ages are embedded in one another; they "interpenetrate one another"; they are "entangled."[13]

Gerald West identifies four periods of African time: indigenous time, indigenous/precolonial time, colonial/neoindigenous time, and postcolonial/neocolonial time.[14] Indigenous time is African time untouched by colonial influence. Everything after indigenous time is entangled, and thus, more than one trajectory happens simultaneously. Indigenous/precolonial time is that time when European interests were encroaching in the colony along the coasts of Africa, but

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[10] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 9.
[11] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 16 (emphasis original.)
[12] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15.
[13] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 14, 16–17.
[14] Gerald O. West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-colonial, Tri-polar, and a Site-of-Struggle," in *Present and Future of Biblical Studies: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Brill's Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Tat-siong Benny Liew (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 243.

Africans were in control in the interior.[15] Postcolonial scholars are committed to a critical recovery of precolonial/indigenous practices and resources, recognizing them as "hybrid," in projects of decolonization.[16]

Colonial/neoindigenous time refers to the times when Europe invaded Africa, through hundreds of conquests in what has been called "the mad scramble for Africa."[17] In colonial/neoindigenous time, colonial representatives and African counterparts translated their concepts into one another. For example, colonial translations of what constituted an African tribe transformed indigenous categories into colonial and neoindigenous categories. These translations were negotiated by colonial representatives and African agents and were "marked by moments of unexpected and often also undiscerned moments of mutual instrumentalisation."[18] Colonial administrators and African agents did not always understand the same thing in their negotiated translations and transactions. Intentional and unintentional misunderstanding characterized their negotiations.[19]

The last category West describes is postcolonial/neocolonial time. The combination of the prefixes *post-* and *neo-* to the noun *colonial* indicates that colonial influence and the struggle against it are entangled in the present era.[20]

1.1.3. Internal African Frontiers

A third conceptual tool I find useful in reconstructing indigenous precolonial practices is Igor Kopytoff's description of internal African frontiers. I find this tool useful in describing the geography of northern Ghana and the ways that geography has influenced the societies one encounters in northern Ghana. Frontiers are characterized by open resources in geographical spaces and a sparse population. Kopytoff recognizes that geographical frontiers "on the fringes of the numerous

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[15] Gerald O. West, *The Stolen Bible: From Tool of Imperialism to African Icon*, BibInt 144 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 85.

[16] West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial," 253.

[17] Sundkler and Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, 97.

[18] Carola Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, International African Library 33 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 2006), 72.

[19] Jean and John Comaroff provide a cogent analysis of the first interactions between the Tswana in southern Africa and the Nonconformist white missionaries from England as a two-sided narrative that laid the groundwork in nuce of future acts of colonization and local ripostes. See Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 171.

[20] I would prefer to hyphenate these words to mark the shift from exploration and hospitality to exploitation and resistance (Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 34, n. 42).

established African societies" have long been part of the process of forming and reforming African society.[21]

Kopytoff's analysis is opposed to the tribal model of social construction.[22] The concept of tribe is hyper-focused on common descent, common blood, and common historical experience. A tribe shares common customs, polity, language, character, and group identity. As I describe in the next chapter, colonial administrators found the concept of the tribe useful, even though it has never described African ethnic realities very well.[23] Instead, Kopytoff offers a qualified diffusionist model of cultural development.[24]

To describe the diffusionist paradigm, Kopytoff begins with what he calls "ethnically ambiguous marginal societies."[25] These are societies that do not fit the colonial tribal model well, and thus they frustrate the categorizing proclivities of administrators and are difficult cases for anthropologists. The ethnically ambiguous society describes Konkomba kinship groups or clans that live in northern Ghana. A metaphor that describes the diffusionist model is a magnet that attracts "the ethnic and cultural detritus produced by the routine workings of other societies."[26]

Kinship groups on the frontier needed to attract people and were motivated to fuse groups together using an expansive notion of kinship. The fusion process might result in an established society absorbing new bands of strangers into the already established relations of the first settlers.[27]

While the official history of an ethnically ambiguous group may appear to conform to the tribal model, further research often reveals that people within the same kinship group came from several different areas. Their founders were refugees of war or famine, disgruntled segments of a different kinship group, losers in succession struggles, or migrants because of sorcery accusations. An ethnically ambiguous group's spoken language is often the same on the surface, but in private, groups maintain a diversity of dialects and accents. African society has regularly produced these ethnically ambiguous groups, and over time, they may organize themselves in a manner that more closely resembles the tribal model, while the memory of their earlier more ambiguous ethnic existence is retained in the origin stories of mature African societies.[28]

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[21] Igor Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," in *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, ed. Igor Kopytoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3.

[22] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 4.

[23] Tonah, "Introduction: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives," 17–18.

[24] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 33–35.

[25] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 5.

[26] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 7.

[27] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 31.

[28] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 5, 25.

When kinship groups succeed in an area through technology, trade, and translation, they sometimes develop into a metropole. To extend the reach of the metropole further into the frontier, a kinship group might undergo a process of fission. A group might divide itself and move from its metropole into the periphery of the frontier. An ethnically ambiguous fused kinship group might eventually develop into a ritual kingdom.[29]

The African frontier thesis describes the ethnogenesis of the different ethnic societies that inhabit and influence the area around the Gambaga escarpment, which is the area that I am primarily focusing on in this study. These societies, sometimes described as state and stateless societies in the anthropological literature, may have chosen different social configurations stemming from the same social processes in the precolonial era.[30]

The lens that the African frontier thesis provides is crucial for the description of precolonial translation that will follow in this chapter. It will be used again in chapter 6.

1.1.4. Principles of Belonging

Carola Lentz has described how notions of social identity shifted from the precolonial to the colonial periods in northwestern Ghana. Lentz points to two models that often dominate contemporary perceptions of ethnicity. The British model is that of a family tree. The tree model assumes an original ethnic unity followed by increasing differentiation as people migrated over time. The mosaic model is a map of tribal names where each area represents a tribe. Lentz argues that both models "greatly hinder our perceptions of pre-colonial realities."[31] Instead, Lentz argues scholars should think in terms of "networks and clusters, centres and peripheries … mobility, overlapping networks, multiple memberships of groups and the context-dependent drawing of boundaries."[32] Lentz offers two Dagara words, two principles, as two forms of belonging. Lentz claims these principles are still discernible today underneath the colonial and postcolonial transformations in northwestern Ghana. "*Yir* which according to context can be interpreted as house, local kinship group, or patriclan, and *tengan*, earth shrine parish, were the two central building blocks of the local society."[33] The first principle "constitutes a

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[29] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 51–52.

[30] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 7–8.

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

[32] Lentz, "Contested Identities," 138.

[33] Lentz, "Contested Identities," 138.

supralocal community." It encompasses "a European ideology of descent" but re-
mains open to acceptance of "non-kin-related outsiders."[34] (Recall Kopytoff's
concept of kinship fusion.) The second principle marks out an internal geographic
space, "the ritually affirmed neighbourhood."[35] These two forms of belonging de-
fine boundaries between us and others. These two principles have been overlain
and drawn upon by colonial transformations, but they persist on the local level in
the present. Note how Lentz's language fits well into Mbembe's paradigm of en-
tanglement of time, and Lentz's analysis implies an entanglement of space in the
precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras.

Lentz makes an important claim about language and culture in relation to
these two principles of belonging in the precolonial era. "Language and culture
play no central role here. *Yir* and *tengan* can integrate people of different dialects
and languages, and require only a minimum core of cultural commonness (recog-
nition of the earth deity, the rights of the first settlers and so on)."[36]

According to Lentz, in precolonial time and space, the language used for
communication between people in a tengan or "a geographic neighbourhood" was
flexible.[37] Given the common cultural background across much of sub-Saharan
Africa, much can be assumed between people who do not speak the same lan-
guage.[38] Furthermore, since most migrants were from within the same subregion,
they probably spoke variations of languages within the same larger language fam-
ily. While this does not mean languages are mutually intelligible, people can learn
each other's speech varieties relatively easily.

1.1.5. Oral Tradition

African frontiers were spaces of internal contestation and multiple groups settling
and integrating with one another in a variety of ways. What processes did those
groups develop to dialogue internally and externally? Societies developed com-
plex forms of social discourse in what scholars call oral tradition. I adopt John
Miles Foley's description of oral tradition as a diverse ecology of oral poetic
forms that interact and depend upon each other much like life forms in an ecosys-
tem.[39] Oral poetries[40] are performed on various occasions by a variety of social

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[34] Lentz, "Contested Identities," 138. Kopytoff also discusses kin terms used for political
relations and for corporate ownership (Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 37–41).
[35] Lentz, "Contested Identities," 138.
[36] Lentz, "Contested Identities," 138.
[37] Lentz, "Contested Identities," 138.
[38] Kopytoff offers a theory explaining why distant African societies share so much political
and cultural similarity (Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 8, 10, 15, 76).
[39] John Miles Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,
2002), 215.
[40] Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 22–57.

groups. Paying attention to the interactive performance of different genres of oral poetries by different sectors of society reveals a variety of multipersepectival indigenous conversations.

Oral poetry is distinguished from other forms of speech by having a discernible speech register.[41] A study of oral poetry references material practices, performance environments, situations, and genre. The performance of oral poetry assumes an audience that is familiar with its tradition.

I should note that describing oral tradition includes religious practice. There is no hard line between culture and religion. They are intertwined as will become apparent in the sixth lens I employ to describe indigenous/precolonial translation practices, divination.

1.1.6. Divination as Spiritual-Social Translation

African frontiers were spaces inhabited by spiritual agents. Migrants settling into the frontiers had to engage those spiritual agents. Jon Kirby describes the spiritual forces active in northern Ghanaian contexts as spiritual agents active in people's social lives. Spiritual agents are the source of people's social problems.[42] Divination is a religious practice of spiritual-social translation that helps people solve the problems they experience in a harsh environment and a diverse and sometimes violent social context. A variety of divination practices served to help people negotiate between their value systems.

1.1.7. Reinterpreting Precolonial Kinship through the Lens of Gender

The seventh lens I employ is a more diverse view of gendered practices in precolonial culture. Ifi Amadiume argues that in precolonial Africa two systems operated at the same time, one patriarchal and other matriarchal. Matriarchy operated as a separate autonomous system alongside patriarchy. This fundamental insight has often been missed by anthropologists, many of whom are male and European or who are influenced by European patriarchal ideologies.

Amadiume argues that African societies have "matriarchal roots."[43] These matriarchal roots are connected to precolonial goddesses, religious shrines, and

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[41] "Oral poets compose in a specialized register, a rule-governed and resonant language, under the assumption that the original and primary audience will understand the poem on its own terms.… Nonetheless, the event of performance and the context of tradition provide a significant and empowering frame of reference" (Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 138–39).

[42] Jon P. Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufɔ of Northern Ghana*, Collectanea Instituti Anthropos 34 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1986), 53–65.

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

ancestor worship. Amadiume recognizes that matrifocal practices have eroded over the past five hundred years, beginning with the patriarchal influence of Islam and then magnified by European imperialism.[44] But Amadiume claims matrifocal practices still persist in most cultures, and the fundamental priority of the mother and the child are manifest in African culture.[45] This relationship is the foundation of kinship, the most basic economic unit, the foundation of morality, a divine feminine power that structured society and necessitated certain administrative functions in society for women.[46] The mother-child relationship, which Amadiume describes as matriarchy, was a different ideological construct in tension with patriarchy.[47] The tension between matriarchy and patriarchy was further balanced by a third non-gendered classification of all of humanity.[48] Matriarchy spurred anti-colonial acts of resistance.[49]

Contemporary northern Ghanaian cultures have been labeled patriarchal in their practices of kinship and inheritance, and this patriarchal bias is read into the past (and present) more thoroughly than the data warrants.[50]

My own embodied "lens" for viewing the world has a Eurocentric and masculine bias. Therefore, it is crucial to my rereading of precolonial African time to employ a gender-critical frame to the analysis. A gender-critical frame looks out for tendencies that perceive patricentric practices but are blind to matricentric practices in religion and translation and misinterpret them as part of a patriarchal

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[44] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 104.

[45] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 37.

[46] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 75, 18, 102, 84–85. See also Laura Grillo's discussion of matrifocal morality. Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 128.

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

[48] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 85.

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

[50] "The ordinary Dagbani family is not really patrilineal; instead, it is a bilateral kindred with a patrifilial bias, descending from a distinguished great-grandfather or other ascendant" (MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 95).

frame. In section 6 of this chapter, I use a gender-critical lens to describe translation practices in indigenous/precolonial time. A balanced description of indigenous/precolonial gender practices will also be important for chapters 5 and 6 as I discuss gendered retranslations of biblical texts in postcolonial/neocolonial time.

1.1.8. Disentangling Precolonial Translation Practices by Writing

So how do I describe translation practices in Africa in a manner that reflects the lifeworld of the precolonial era? I must partially disentangle the precolonial strand of time so that we can scrutinize it and understand some of the practices that form its "languages of life" or its "life world."[51] Then when the times are entwined again we may understand better how the precolonial, the colonial, and the postcolonial ages are embedded in one another.[52] There is a danger, as Eric Hobsbawm has warned, that in the attempt to unravel the separate threads of the web of history we may end up destroying it.[53] So rather than writing a history, this approach of describing translation practices is something akin to writing a social archaeology.[54] I am attempting to describe some of the material practices of translation as part of the lifeworld of the entangled indigenous/precolonial era.

1.1.9. Summary

The theories elucidated above are tools that help to discern some of the planes and contours of the past age. Mbembe's notion of the time of entanglement best describes the past age. I have applied certain theories to Mbembe's notion of entanglement, such as Cronin's 3T paradigm of social expansion, Kopytoff's notion of Africa's internal frontiers, and Lentz's precolonial principles of belonging. From this combination, a precolonial lifeworld begins to emerge that is discontinuous with the present. In other words, our present entanglement with the past makes us think we know the precolonial era already. But the theoretical tools employed here, tools that have been honed to work with the uniqueness of the precolonial lifeworld, reveal an entanglement with the precolonial past that may appear unfamiliar. That is what Mbembe's notion of time leads us to expect. The African time of existence is not a linear flow of time, such that one age emerges logically from the preceding age in a manner that reveals a logic of social progress. The dominant theories EuroAmericans have received from the Enlightenment, and which many Africans have also received from colonial translation practices, interpret the precolonial world in terms of social progress. The

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[51] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15.
[52] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:39.
[53] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789–1848* (New York: New American Library [Mentor Book], 1962), xvi.
[54] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:55.

tribal model of ethnogenesis and the precolonial invasion myth, which I discuss in detail in chapter 2, describe the precolonial world in a way that naturally leads into the colonial world. The colonial narrative has depicted precolonial times in terms of invasion and conquest.

The theories this chapter employs describe material practices in the precolonial world that expand the possibilities beyond colonially influenced historiography. These theories elucidate the data from the precolonial era with multiple indigenous/precolonial trajectories in dialogue with one another. The glimpses of the precolonial world these theories offer disrupt the story of social progress which the Enlightenment wants to tell by expanding the possibilities. Some important trajectories of the precolonial lifeworld diverged from trajectories forged in colonial translation. On the other hand, there were trajectories in the precolonial world that colonial translation picked up. Colonial translation chose lenses to view the past that emphasized certain trajectories to the exclusion of other potential trajectories to tell its story of social progress. What sets of lenses to view the past do scholars and practitioners find most useful for building a life-giving present and future?

1.2. The Context of Precolonial Northern Ghana

The set of analytical tools I have just outlined were specifically selected because each one helps me understand the precolonial lifeworld of translation in northern Ghana. In this brief section I describe the context south of the Gambaga escarpment and the settlement and translation practices that shaped the peoples who moved into that context from the larger ecumene[55] or subregion.[56] I introduce this context so the reader can understand how the theories I have chosen in section 1 of this chapter both emerge from the context and shape my description of the context. As I transition to section three, I want readers to understand how the lenses introduced in section one can be used to renarrate precolonial history and to explore precolonial translation practices.

The terrain of the Gambaga escarpment is characterized by a series of steep rocky cliffs and sheer drop-offs of several hundred meters facing to the north. The

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[55] An ecumene is defined as "a large region that represents a sphere of persistent and effective interaction among a group of societies that have been influencing one another and have been shaped to some significant degree by a shared history." See Igor Kopytoff, "Ecumene," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. James D. Wright (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), 4168–70. See also Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 10–12.

[56] Ghana currently has sixteen political regions including the Northern Region, the Upper East Region, the Upper West Region and the North East Region. The term ecumene, like the term subregion, is not limited by political borders. I will use the term subregion in what follows.

escarpment cliffs can be found east of the town of Gambaga, prominently near the town of Nakpanduri. The series of cliffs extend further east into the neighboring country of Togo. From north to south, the elevation of the escarpment gradually descends through a series of peaks and valleys over a 50-kilometer range. The soil found in the 50-kilometer descent range is sandy, affecting which crops one plants, and when one plants and harvests.

The Gambaga escarpment was far to the north of the Asante empire, and marginal from the perspective of the northern Sahelian societies in what is now known as Niger. At least four hundred years ago, bands of settlers came to this area from every direction. This convergence made the area an internally contested frontier.[57]

The escarpment provides a convenient geographical boundary, marking an internal frontier. Kopytoff argues that the notion of frontier is a political fact, "a political definition of geographical space."[58]

While the frontier is politically defined space, it is also mystical-spiritual space. From indigenous perspectives, geographical space is also spiritual space, where the land formations, rivers, and valleys are understood to be noncorporeal beings that interact with human community.[59] Their more-than-human presence is a matter of fact that settlers integrated into their sociopolitical realities on the African frontier.[60]

1.3. Kinship on the African Frontier

Upon arrival in the frontier, a settler group had to determine what agents, human and more-than-human were already present in the land. Unsettled areas are inhabited by noncorporeal beings as the "spirits of the wild."[61] Once an area is farmed successfully, the spirits of the wild come into a relationship with the burgeoning human community being established.[62] I discuss how a human community comes to relate to the mystical powers in a particular vicinity at a neighborhood shrine in section 1.4 below.

As stated, the escarpment was a frontier area. In the oral tradition of some of the kinship groups who live around the escarpment today, there are stories of individuals and small groups migrating to the escarpment to minimize the effects of raiding. This could indicate a date after 1750, when the international

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[57] More research is needed to determine the relationship between preagrarian hunter-gatherer societies and the settler groups in the escarpment area.

[58] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 11.

[59] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 54.

[60] Tony O Balcomb, "The War of the Trees: Analysing the Rise and Fall of an Indigenous Mass Greening Movement amongst the Shona in Southern Zimbabwe Using Actor Network Theory (ANT)," *JTSA* 154 (2016): 36.

[61] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 57.

[62] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 58.

slave trade drastically increased. The rocky areas and hills provided some secu-
rity from raiders who had mastered the use of horses. The advantage of horses
was minimized in these conditions, and the elevated rocky areas provided good
hiding places or elevated places to spot raiders from a distance. Some oral tra-
ditions indicate the escarpment area was good for farming.[63] Settlers could eat
fruits, leaves, hunt, and fish.

During the time of migration, communities underwent processes of fission,
leaving home groups and migrating into territories on the frontier. Migrants mov-
ing into frontier areas often met other groups already living there or migrating
around the same time. Frequently, groups of migrant settlers fused together with
other groups, forming one kinship group while retaining memories within the kin-
ship group of their historical fusion.[64]

Agricultural production was the primary activity of kinship societies. An in-
dividual farmer could produce food for sustenance plus a little excess. Kinship
societies sought to attract people to increase the excess produce of their group to
help make them less vulnerable and more sustainable by integrating distinct
groups through kinship relations and through practices of procreation. Every new-
born child was claimed by a kinship group. Rules for marriage were established
to help kinship groups cooperate and grow.

The frontier thesis suggests that in indigenous/precolonial time, settlers came
and successfully established numerous kinship groups in the escarpment area.
And this is precisely what we find today, not only in the escarpment area, but
across the region. While colonial translation has helped strengthen notions of eth-
nic identity, in precolonial time, prior to ethnicity, kinship grouping was primary.
Among groups whom colonial anthropologists referred to as "acephalous," kin-
ship identity is still primary, though for many groups that is changing as well. (For
a discussion of postcolonial ethnic organizing and translation across kinship alli-
ances, see chapter 6.)

What translation practices did these migrants use inside their kinship groups?
The frontier thesis suggests that cultural and linguistic differences did not prevent

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

[64] Benjamin Talton offers two examples of internal fusion in outsider-insider relations. The
first example is among the Kpalba and the second among the Bichabob, both Konkomba
speaking kinship groups living in communities near Saboba. "In both cases, preexisting
groups allowed outsiders to settle within or near them. The apical subclan initially recog-
nized the outsiders as strangers, but within a relatively short period accepted them as
'insiders.'" Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Polit-
ical Equality* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 28–29.

migrating groups from integrating with each other.[65] Wherever settlers came from, their culture and languages were similar enough to each other so that in a brief time, settlers were able to understand each other. This means that within a kinship group's locality, whose territory was governed by a neighborhood shrine, translation practices were not used to mediate and sustain differences between separate groups but were used as a means of communication and language learning.[66] In fact, Lentz argues the neighborhood shrine helped regularize differences between firstcomers and latecomers within a locality.[67]

Social belonging was based on prioritizing relationships with the groups living within the same area, with the greatest rights belonging to the firstcomers. The hierarchical logic of the firstcomer was embedded across the regional value system. In addition to belonging to a local territorial or neighborhood shrine, belonging also included remembering one's prior home locations and ancestors from other territories.

What do language learning and multilingualism suggest for the practice of translation in societies organized by proximity in a shared geographical space with real and fictive kinship relations inside that space?[68] Naoki Sakai describes the way one speaks in such a heterolingual context with the term *heterolingual address*.[69] When addressing others in a heterolingual manner one cannot assume linguistic understanding. Heterolingual address translates as a part of speaking, not as an ancillary step to addressing someone.[70] By addressing others in a heterolingual manner, groups have processes that aid in understanding each other

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[65] "However, neither non-kinship nor cultural or linguistic differences represented a fundamental barrier to the integration of new settlers. Accounts of migration are full of episodes which report the adoption of a new language and new customs in the course of adjusting to a new habitat" (Lentz, "Contested Identities," 151).

[66] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 57–58, 74; Lentz, "Contested Identities, 138.

[67] Lentz, "Contested Identities," 151.

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

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

[70] "As the practice of translation remains radically heterogeneous to the representation of translation, translation need not be represented as a communication between two clearly delineated linguistic communities" (Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, 15).

amidst linguistic and cultural diversity. The cultural and linguistic assumptions of heterolingual address provide an alternative way of thinking about how speakers and hearers are mutually and collectively responsible for constantly calibrating differences in culture and language.

Within a fused kinship group in the same shrine neighborhood, translation was achieved through social incorporation. Sociocultural translation involves a tension between collective processes of incorporation and resisting incorporation. Incorporation meant joining a fused kinship group usually dominated by the firstcomer group or a more powerful latecomer group. Resisting incorporation into the dominant kinship structure meant that subordinate groups could join the fused group, but they could also bide their time until they could assert themselves more independently. Greater passage of time, more integration, and equal access to power can make the memory of internal distinctions less relevant or necessary.

Internally, kinship groups used translation to create a common language internal to the kinship group. But what characterized the relationship of one kinship group and another?

Kinship groups established various ritual alliances with other kinship groups, including cooperation in the performance of funeral rites.[71] They communicated using heterolingual address, utilizing relationships and linguistic knowledge across kinship groups. It may be that when slave raiding and migration increased, the speech patterns of kinship groups coalesced through increased contact with each other. Three to five major language varieties emerged in the area, with a significant amount of multilingualism.[72] Kinship alliances were and are flexible. It may be that some groups that consider themselves different today were more aligned in the past. Groups and subgroups characterized as being different ethnic groups today may have shared closer kinship relations in the past. In many cases, those memories are still resources that groups remember and draw upon today to strengthen social bonds.

The African frontier thesis is useful in describing how settlers divided themselves from their home kinship group, migrated into a frontier area, formed offshoot kinship groups, or fused kinship groups. The African frontier thesis explains why multiple kinship groups are spread across the entire subregion. Extrapolating language and translation practices from the African frontier thesis suggest that language and ethnicity were not primary identity markers in indigenous/precolonial time. That said, increased contact between kinship groups through shared rituals and defensive alliances due to the slave trade contributed to increased comprehension between speech varieties and established certain speech varieties as more common.

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[71] Tait, *Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 127–32.

[72] At minimum there were varieties of Dagbamba - Kusaal, Komba - Bimoba, Hausa, and Anufɔ.

1.3.1. Ritual Kingdoms and Translation Practices on the African Frontier

The African frontier thesis is useful not only in describing the early history of disparate kinship groups but also in describing how some kinship groups were successful enough to expand further into the African frontier. We know that some kinship groups in the Gambaga escarpment established ritual kingdoms. Chapter 2 discusses how colonizers made ritual kingdoms fit into schemes of colonial rule and how they used translation to establish a version of precolonial history that served colonial political and economic interests. In this section, I draw upon the lenses of the African frontier thesis and the 3T paradigm (technologies, trade, and translation) to describe precolonial translation practices in ritual kingdoms.

Around four hundred years ago, groups of settlers migrated into the area around Gambaga, coming from north and east of the escarpment. Some of these settlers coalesced into the Dagbamba people.[73] They established kinship societies as described above. At least one group of settlers gained technological, military, and trade advantages over the others through their use of horses, firearms, and warring strategies.[74] At least one set of settler kinship groups established themselves as royals above the commoners. While the technological advantages were important, the focus of this section will be on the effects of the religio- and sociopolitical innovation for translation.

Dagbamba oral tradition indicates Dagbamba royals were not the firstcomers into the area, but eventually became the dominant group into which other kinship groups assimilated. They became fused kinship groups who respected the technological and ritual power of the royals, privileging the latecomers over the firstcomers. The royals underwent processes of fission, eventually establishing the cult of "nam" as a network of loyalty across different shrine neighborhoods. Nam is a system of skins, or to use European language, a system of thrones. When one becomes a chief, one is said to ritually eat nam, and is given the title "Na"

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[73] Local traditions trace the ancestry of the Mossi-Dagomba dynasties to Toha Zie, Kpogonumbo, and Na Gbewa (Na Bawa). The Dagbamba peoples split after Na Gbewa due to conflict. The Mamprusi, Dagomba, Nanumba, and Mossi traditions differ slightly. See A. A. Iliasu, "The Origins of the Mossi-Dagomba States," *Research Review* 7 (1971): 99–101.

[74] Robin Law indicates the importation of horses into West Africa occurred in the first millennia BCE, and their use in warfare occurred in the thirteenth or fourteenth century CE. Law, *The Horse in West African History: The Role of the Horse in the Societies of Pre-Colonial West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 9. Law further argues that the sound of firearms was their biggest advantage because of their lack of accuracy (Law, *Horse in West African History*, 141–43). For a description of precolonial raiding tactics, see Susan Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, African Social Research Documents 8 (Leiden: Afrike-Studiecentrum, 1975), 67–71.

inside the skin of a territory or neighborhood.[75] See the discussion of tengan as the shrine neighborhood in section 1.1.4 above.

This sociopolitical innovation changed the power dynamics across the whole area. The ritual power of nam became more powerful than the rights of the firstcomer in some communities. In the community of Nalerigu,[76] the office of Na or chief was placed in relationship to the office of tindana.[77] Subjugated kinship groups from the area were incorporated as elders into the high court of Nayiri, the chief of Nalerigu. The office of tindana, held by the descendants of the firstcomers, was not removed but came into a subordinate relationship with Nayiri.[78]

The office of nam was extended into many shrine neighborhood to the east and west of Nalerigu forging a new network of alliances across shrine neighborhoods. To use Kopytoff's language, nam is a ritual kingdom that connects the skin or throne in the metropole of Nalerigu to skins that have been established in other communities deeper into the frontier.

The introduction of the ritual politics of nam altered social relations in the escarpment area, but not in a way primarily focused on ethnicity. Even today, within the town of Nalerigu, social status is organized primarily based on one's relationship to the system of chiefs and one's length of residence inside Nalerigu's skin rather than on one's ethnic designation.[79] Ethnicity and language are less important than one's relationship to the system of nam, and one's residence inside the community's skin. In Nalerigu, subordinate groups, some of whom were firstcomers were translated and incorporated into the hierarchy of nam. They were fused into the dominant system. Subordinate groups who were fused into the ritual politics of nam were given special roles that helped keep the Na accountable.[80]

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[75] Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 31.

[76] The Nayiri appears to have moved from Gambaga to Nalerigu in 1741/1742. Nehemia Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-colonial Period*, Oxford Studies in African Affairs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 129.

[77] Drucker-Brown includes a narrative from the Gambarana about the meaning of Damba festival. The Gambarana was a tindana, and may have been an earlier Dagbamba settler than Na Bewaa who is said to be the first Nayiri (Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 94–95).

[78] The more fused groups are, the more formalized is the relationship between these offices. On the frontiers, fusion was not very thorough, and at times, firstcomers and chiefs became more adversarial. Other times, subordinate groups of commoners retained language and culture practices from home and related to Mamprusi royals like allied kinship groups.

[79] Michael Schlottner, "'We Stay, Others Come and Go': Identity among the Mamprusi in Northern Ghana," in *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention*, ed. Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 62.

[80] Elders include special titles from those who migrated to Nalerigu from early communities conquered by Dagbamba royals. The tindamba of "conquered' kinship groups retain

They did assimilate to the dominant Dabganli language and culture. Distinctions between royals and subordinate commoners were internally enforced through historical memory, ritualized practices, and power relations.

Expanding the relationship of loyalty across a larger area required translation across shrine neighborhoods. When groups from different neighborhoods or shrine skins communicated, they would have employed the tools of heterolingual speech, practiced language learning, and employed multilingualism. Perhaps this is where the role of chief linguist started coming into existence. A linguist is a communicative mediator. The chief appoints a linguist to tell the chief and the elders what another person or group of people is saying, and especially to speak on behalf of the chief to other groups. This step of mediation is a key component of precolonial translation. It can be used no matter what speech varieties are being employed.

1.3.2. Islamic Trading and Translation Practices

A third innovation in indigenous/precolonial translation, evidenced in the Gambaga escarpment and in many other places across Africa, is related to the expansion of trade, the use of novel technologies, and the practice of Islam. This innovation had a much further reach than ritual kingdoms, connecting several different ritual kingdoms together. Trade routes along the Oti River connected the Hausa states in middle Niger in the north with Kumasi, the center of the Asante kingdom in the south. From the south, trade goods included cloth, gold, kola nut, and European goods such as guns and gunpowder. From the north, goods included iron, talismans, horses, luxury goods from the Mediterranean, and slaves.[81]

Unlike localized kinship groups or ritual kingdoms, Islamic traders did not control territories, small or large. They settled in established communities with markets.[82] The Muslim trade groups depended upon powerful rulers like Nayiri from Dagbamba societies for protection as they established trade outposts along trade routes that crossed long distances. Muslims established mosques so Muslim traders could live in market communities such as Gambaga.[83] Islam provided a common writing system, a common worship system, a common greeting system, a common eating system, and a common legal system that helped standardize

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ritual practices in the enthronement of a new chief (Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 93; see also Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 47–57).

[81] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 13.

[82] Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 58–60.

[83] Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 124–26.

expectations for traders along the trade route.[84] Those standards were adaptable to contextual realities.[85] Muslim traders made a series of linguistic, religious, and cultural negotiations that contributed to their success. Each of these negotiations had translational dimensions.

In Gambaga, Muslims provided language services connecting Gurma-speaking trade posts to the east with Hausa-speaking trade posts further to the north and east. Hausa became the dominant trade language extending from present-day northern Nigeria to Ghana. The use of the Hausa language did not depend on being ethnically Hausa. The cultural spread of Hausa-style Islamic religious and cultural practices across the trade network is sometimes referred to as "Hausaization."

Literate Muslims provided commercial services (credit, accounting, information, and Islamic law). These were essential technological and translational supports for expanding trade in those communities.[86] Writing was not only a technology of trade; it was also a technology of spiritual power.

Muslim traders and scholars were part of a mid-level precolonial social class below rulers and above commoners and slaves.[87] Their spoken and written language services were useful in trade and accounting. Their books and amulets were part of their spiritual and cultural power. In chapter 2, I describe how the imam at Gambaga was an important translator for British officials after the British invasion of the Volta Basin.

1.3.3. Raiding, Trading, and Defensive Translation Practices on the Frontier

The fourth social innovation that influenced precolonial practices of translation is characterized by what I am calling the social practice of raiding and trading. In the Western Dagbon kingdom, also known as Mamprugu. technological advantages facilitated the establishment of the royal hierarchy. It was the Eastern Dagbon kingdom centered in Yendi, south of Nalerigu, and the Anufɔ kingdom centered in Sansanne Mango on the far eastern side of the escarpment in present-day Togo who pressed the technological advantages of horses and guns to set up

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[84] Among the Anufɔ communities, Islam was practiced by nkaramɔm, "book-men." Among the Anufɔ nkaramɔm refers to Muslim scholars, and nyɛmɛferefɔm refers to Muslim worshippers.

[85] Levtzion notes that minority Muslim communities who wanted to maintain relations in their communities had to intermarry with "pagans" in a manner that was forbidden, at least according to a strict interpretation of Islamic law (Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 137).

[86] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 9. See also Phyllis Ferguson, "Islamization in Dagbon: A Study of the Alfanema of Yendi" (Diss., Cambridge, Newnham College, University of Cambridge, 1972), 97.

[87] Kirby discusses the mid-level Muslim "book" class and the slave class in Anufɔ society (Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 23–24, n. 15, 17, and 18; see also Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 129).

large raiding, trading, and tributary systems in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[88] This innovation was sped up as the world economy increased its demand for slaves.

The raiding, tributary, and trading systems involved translation practices that attracted nearby cultural groups on the frontier into their orbit. For example, Anufɔ culture attracted many of the kinship groups they subdued. Client peoples tried as much as possible to learn the language and culture of the Anufɔ as a way of coping with Anufɔ raiding.[89] People would give their children Anufɔ names and try to make alliances involving tribute to Anufɔ houses to reduce the chances of themselves becoming targets of raiding. Some household slaves from Mango were placed into villages to intermarry with local populations to extend the process of "Anufɔization." Over time, translation in the Anufɔ metropoles was more of an integration of the trade and raid practices into the already established kinship-based value system. Different shrines and diviners managed the integration. I return to divination as a translation practice in section 1.4 below.

The trade and raid economy could only support a certain number of royals in a particular area. Given the growing demand for slaves in the world economy from 1750 to 1810, ritual kingdoms had an opportunity for rapid expansion into frontier areas.[90] The expansion of a ritual kingdom involved an iterative process. A metropole expanded by making an outpost in an inhabited but open frontier. The developing frontier outpost imitated the metropole, intending to become an independent extension of the original metropole, expanding further and further into the frontier.[91]

An indirect result of the Anufɔ and Dagomba (also known as the eastern Dagbamba) raiding and tributary practices was that some kinship-based societies that inhabited the open frontiers were drawn together in a defensive posture. Diverse kinship groups lived in the frontier near the raiding and tributary systems of the Anufɔ and the eastern Dagbamba. The family tree theory assumes these

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[88] Ferguson argues that Dagbon was refounded in the seventeenth century by Na Zanjina, a wealthy trader and convert to Islam who made extensive use of Muslim experts to organize Yendi as a trading state (Ferguson, "Islamization in Dagbon;" see also MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 32). Kirby discusses the Anufɔ history (Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 33–44; see also Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 56–58).

[89] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 39–40.

[90] Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, "The Three Stages of African Involvement in the World-Economy," in *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa*, ed. Peter Claus Wolfgang Gutkind and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, Sage Series on African Modernization and Development 1 (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976), 32. The Anufɔ were dominant for around one hundred and twenty years, prior to colonial occupation in 1896. They controlled a large territory collecting tribute from roughly 200,000 people (Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 37, n. 58.)

[91] I discuss how translation, technology, gender, and the limitations within patriarchal descent fueled expansion into the frontier in section 1.6.3 below.

kinship groups are genealogically and linguistically related. However, the frontier thesis would suggest these groups began forming alliances and counter-identities on the African frontier in response to being raided. Perhaps they began speaking more like each other due to the pressure of the raiding systems. Certain indigenous speech varieties may have coalesced during this time. For instance, one of the common speech varieties south of the Gambaga escarpment is Likɔɔnl, anglicized as Komba. It may be that Likɔɔnl became a unifying speech variety for defensive purposes during this era. The process of extending the linguistic reach of a common dialect for the purpose of defensive social organization makes an important contribution to the practices of precolonial translation.

1.3.4. Precolonial Race/Ethnicity and Social Class

I have two further critical observations about indigenous/precolonial social organization that emerge from our discussion of kinship and the African frontier thesis. First, I discuss how colonial anthropology theorized the existence of two distinct races in the northern subregion of the Gold Coast. The description offered here suggests differences in social organization are not based on ethnicity or race but emerged from the same social base. Second, I describe the development of social class in precolonial time in the subregion in relation to the social rupture caused by the invasive reach of the slave trade into the African interior.

1.3.4.1. Precolonial Race/Ethnicity

The lenses I am employing offer an alternative picture of the ethnogenesis of precolonial society in the northern subregion. Colonial anthropologists argued that the data revealed that ritual kingdoms were of a different ethnic/racial origin and composition and, thus, fundamentally superior to loosely affiliated kinship groups. Anthropologists constructed narratives about the different origins of state and stateless societies that have become today's accepted history.[92]

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

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[92] "Though the received history, generally accepted by scholars, speaks of two civilizations of different origin and composition, close ethnographic attention dissolves the supposed contrasts between religion and politics, kinship and kingship, matrilineal and patrilineal descent, tindana and chief, states and stateless, invader and aborigine" (MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 8).

The present societies had been formed when bands of patrilineal conquerors, "better armed, better clothed, familiar with the idea of kingship or chieftainship in our modern sense" overcame indigenous matrilineal peoples with Earth priests and introduced the "new and unheard of" idea of territorial and secular leadership in place of the immemorial institution of a ruler who was the high priest of a totemic clan and dealt only in "spiritual sanctions."[93]

MacGaffey's postcolonial descriptive work rereads the anthropological data. While MacGaffey recognizes there are differences between so-called state and stateless societies, he argues these are not essential differences. What appear to be binary differences in Rattray's analysis are not ethnic or racial differences, but tensions inherent in the subregion. MacGaffey argues that these tensions did not emerge when two societies collided, evolving into an eventual unity. Instead, these tensions emerged from an original cultural unity.[94]

MacGaffey's analysis of the northern subregion fits well with Kopytoff's notion that ritual kingships emerged from kinship systems. The seed of one is inherent in the other.[95] The kinship society works well for the initial stages of growth on the frontier, but if the settlement continues to grow with an emerging dominant group that is not the founding group, the kinship model places authority with the founding rather than the emerging dominant group.[96] The dominant and founding groups must decide how they will negotiate the changes. In some cases, societies resolve the tension through fission, preserving the kinship model. In other cases, the dominant group founded another model of social organization, the ritual kingdom, discussed above. Kinship and ritual kingships developed from the same social base in the African frontier.

1.3.4.2. Precolonial Social Class Development

The lenses employed here suggest that the precolonial lifeworld did not construct ethnicity by employing a racial logic, as colonial anthropologists imagined in their colonial translations of the precolonial lifeworld. The received history, popular

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[93] MacGaffey *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 25. MacGaffey cites R. S. Rattray and Diedrich Westermann, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932), xii.

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

[95] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 15–16, 30, 51.

[96] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 48.

today, tells a skewed story that has become hegemonic in contemporary Ghanaian society. But what do the lenses I am employing highlight about the development of social class as indigenous/precolonial time evolved?

The development of the system of nam and the corresponding development of a royal class within the subregion of the Gambaga escarpment, likely began its complex evolution before the advent of an invasive European presence on the coast of Africa.[97] The first stage of class development involved the development of a ritual kingdom in Nalerigu in a symbiotic relationship with Muslim traders, who used translation to trade across much greater distances. Dagbamba royals in Nalerigu were the top class in their respective areas. Subchiefs were below the top royals.[98] Muslim traders and imams filled a middle role and cooperated with Dagbamba royals. The bottom rung of precolonial social formation were commoners from kinship-based societies, including those who became Dagbamba commoner groups.

The first stage of social class development in the Gambaga frontier relied upon the land tenure system. This system established a vital source of material sustenance for commoner kinship-based groups. The royals and traders knew that their survival also depended on the vitality of the agrarian system. The agrarian system depended on the successful farming of commoners and disparate kinship groups. There was an internal motivation for cooperation. This summarizes one form of indigenous precolonial social class development.[99]

The slave trade intensified the development of social class. European trade posts were founded on the peripheries of Africa in the late fifteenth century. Edward Alpers suggests that for the first century or more, trade occurred more or less normally, where each side of trade saw themselves as profiting. Wallerstein identifies a break in trade relations around 1750. The slave trade ceased to be trade in luxury items; slaves became a crucial part of the production of every commodity in the world economic system.[100] The number of slaves imported into the world economy yearly rose significantly until 1750. From 1750 onwards, the yearly imports stayed consistently high until 1810.[101] Imagine what that meant for the rural

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

[98] Esala discusses the early Dagbamba development (Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 52–56).

[99] More research into oral tradition and anthropological social theory is required to document the ways that a preagrarian hunter-gatherer system worked and how that system may have morphed into the agrarian social system I describe.

[100] Wallerstein, "Three Stages of African Involvement in the World-Economy," 50, n. 3.

[101] Wallerstein, "Three Stages of African Involvement in the World-Economy," 32–33.

northern context and what that did to the internal class relations that had already developed.

Bernard Magubane describes how the invasive world economy transformed African interiors. "The violent penetration and rupture of traditional precapitalist societies and the subjugation of their economic life to the profit impulse of the Western bourgeoisie constitute the fundamental class reality of modern Africa."[102]

The raiding system practiced by Dagbamba and Anufɔ societies is a good example of how the world economic system penetrated, raided, and transformed precolonial kinship societies and kingdoms. At the root of that transformation was the European hunger for profit.

The invasive penetration of the world economic system into the northern ecumene or subregion significantly ruptured social relations, increasing the use of brute force and domination and creating the possibility of maintaining ongoing exploitative economic relationships locally. Additionally, no "secondary multiplier effects" from capitalist growth were invested back into the local economy.[103] None of those profits trickled down. The natural resources that the northern subregion provided the world economic system in the form of human slaves translated into significant wealth accumulation in the West.[104] But in the northern ecumene, the translation of bodies from Africa to the West resulted in ruptured social relations and left little economic profit behind.

1.3.5. Summary

This section introduces kinship as the foundation for four interrelated translation practices that emerged in the Gambaga escrapment area in indigenous/precolonial time: translation in and between smaller kinship groups, translation within ritual kingdoms, Islamic trade and translation, and offensive and defensive translation practices in the era of raiding. The African frontier thesis shows that these four social practices are related. Each practice is built upon the kinship group and adapts to the realities of the African frontier and the changing world economy. The 3T paradigm, translation, technology, and trade, further explains how these four translation practices evolved to maintain and expand social links across the geography of the African frontier.

The African frontier thesis and its understanding of the relationship between kinship and ritual kingship reconfigures colonial anthropology's notions of race and ethnicity in precolonial time. The frontier thesis also provides the starting

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[102] Magubane, "Evolution of Class Structure in Africa," 179.
[103] Magubane, "Evolution of Class Structure in Africa," 184–85.
[104] Magubane estimates that Africa grew economically only 20 percent between 1650 and 1900 while Europe grew 600 percent and Asia over 300 percent ("Evolution of Class Structure in Africa," 177).

point for the analysis of social class in indignous/precolonial time. The invasive European slave trade significantly ruptured social class relations in the subregion around the Gambaga escarpment.

In section four, I describe how precolonial shrine-based translation practices adapted to some of the changing dynamics caused by the social rupture.

1.4. Precolonial African Religious Translation

Section 4 explores how African religious translation used divination as a flexible tool for spiritual-social translation in indigenous/precolonial time in the northern context. Section 4 describes the practices and processes of divination as spiritual-social translation. Then, it describes how divination addresses the dynamics of social rupture caused by the invasive world economy and especially the impact of the slave trade on local social relations.[105]

To describe precolonial religious practice, I engage Jon Kirby's analysis of the Anufɔ of northern Ghana.[106] Kirby's research took place in the 1970s and 1980s, providing a snapshot of indigenous African religious practices in postcolonial/neocolonial time. Based on Mbembe's notion of entanglement, Kirby's analysis of shrine-based problem-solving explores interlocking practices in precolonial time. In other words, Mbembe's notion of entanglement helps illustrate how some Anufɔ and Komba communities operate in the present, using embedded indigenous/precolonial practices to address, cope with, and partly heal the social rupture being caused by the historic (and ongoing) invasion of African society by the world economic system. This discussion of entangled precolonial African religious translation also sets the stage for my discussion of entangled African Christianities and their associated translation practices in chapter 3.

1.4.1. Mystical Spirits and Shrines

African religious practice in the subregion or ecumene of northern Ghana, northern Togo, and southern Burkina Faso has always been integrated into ecology. From indigenous perspectives, the land formations, the rivers, the hills, and the

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[105] Describing divination as a contextually grounded precolonial hermeneutical approach to problem-solving connects to the discussion in chapter 4, where I introduce the contextual Bible study method as a contextually grounded postcolonial hermeneutical approach to retranslating a religious text for action and reflection. Postcolonial retranslation for social change has an analogical relationship to precolonial spiritual-social translation as problem-solving.

[106] Kirby, a Canadian Catholic priest, and anthropologist was initiated into the practice of divination by a Bikɔɔm or Komba diviner named Bongo. Kirby also worked extensively with two other diviners, each of whom represented a different sector of society in the Nalori vicinity of Ghana, one a Muslim Anufɔ diviner, and the other an Anufɔ African religious diviner.

valleys are independent noncorporeal beings with mystical power.[107] In unsettled areas, Kirby refers to these noncorporeal beings as the "spirits of the wild."[108] Once an area is farmed successfully, the spirits of the wild come into a relationship with the burgeoning human community.[109] A human community relates to the mystical powers in a particular vicinity at a neighborhood shrine. In the language of Likɔɔnl or Komba, the word litingbandir refers to a neighborhood shrine. A neighborhood shrine is a place or a structure where one interacts with the mystical powers of that area. A neighborhood shrine is only effective inside its litingbɔŋ, a neighborhood shrine's skin.[110] A tiŋ is terrain occupied by a human community. Tiŋ also refers to the source of life and livelihood inside its ritually defined area. The flexible boundary of a tiŋ is called kitingbɔŋ, "skin of a neighborhood." The person who maintains a neighborhood shrine is called an utindaan, the steward of the human community inside the community's ritually defined area.[111] An utindaan, also referred to as tindana in related Mole-Dagbanli languages, is responsible for keeping the neighborhood shrine in harmony with the human community in it so that life can be fruitful and productive. Lentz indicates that maintaining a relationship with the neighborhood shrine helped firstcomers and latecomers become an integrated community.[112] An utindaan works in concert with a diviner, one who is chosen by mystical medicine to maintain a shrine. I will speak more on the role of diviners below.

Kirby places spiritual agents into categories: the high God, territorial spirits, kin-related spirits, personal spirits, spirits of the wild, and medicine spirits.[113] Shrines can be classified similarly. There is no shrine for the High God, but there are territorial shrines, kin-related shrines, personal shrines, shrines of the spirits of the wild, and medicine shrines.[114] Each shrine is oriented to help human

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[107] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 54.

[108] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 57.

[109] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 58.

[110] Édouard Glissant argues the term *territory* is entangled with colonial notions of conquest and expansion. See Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 151. According to MacGaffey, the terms *land shrine* and *earth shrine* are not preferable from a technical anthropological perspective (*Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 78). I prefer *neighborhood shrine* following Lentz. See section 1.1.4 above.

[111] A shrine does not have a fully formed personality, a god independent of place. A fixed shrine within a local community oversees a tindana (the Dagbanli word for utindaan). A tindana is the owner of a tiŋa. A tiŋa is the terrain occupied by a human community as its place of residence and source of livelihood. A tindana is to perform sacrifices at shrines located within his domain which will have a principal shrine with a number of subsidiaries (MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 79–80).

[112] Lentz, "Contested Identities," 151.

[113] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 55–65.

[114] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 66–74.

communities and individuals solve problems and avoid social misfortune that life in the world presents to them. Each spirit and shrine deals with problems appropriate to its level. Neighborhood shrines, or what Kirby calls territorial shrines, deal with local-level issues. Kin-related shrines deal with household and interhousehold relations across different shrine neighborhoods. Kirby explains that kin-related spirits are derived from neighborhood spirits. Kin-related spirits come from houses located inside a different shrine neighborhood. "The 'house god' is associated with that (female) ancestor through whom the link was first established."[115] This is related to Lentz's dual principles of belonging: the house is founded across neighborhoods and is a supralocal principle, whereas the neighborhood shrine is the most local principle. There are matrifocal elements present in bilateral shrine maintenance. See section 1.6 below.

1.4.2. Religion as Problem-Solving

African contexts are spiritual contexts that affect human social life. Spiritual agents can offer guidance, and they can also bring misfortune into human life. Kirby argues that for the Anufɔ and the Komba in the Nalori area of northern Ghana, life is conceived to be "a problematic state, a series of misfortunes which are defined and interpreted in terms of the favour, the wrath, the neglect, or bribe-induced hostility of some mystical agent or another."[116] Human relationships with other humans and with things in the world are paralleled and grounded by relations between human beings and spiritual agents. To successfully navigate life and avoid misfortunes, humans must manage their relations with spiritual agents, individually and collectively. The way to discern which mystical agents are causing individual and collective misfortune is to consult shrines through divination.

    The mystical agent that animates a shrine needs to be addressed to remedy the cause of the problem that an individual or group is facing. "Each shrine offers a standard solution to specific problems." If the remedy does not work, then the definition of the problem must be rearranged. As the process progresses, failure to solve a problem "leads to problem redefinition, new solutions will be sought in different and usually less specific, broader-based shrines."[117]

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[115] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 59.

[116] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 50. The Anufɔ in the Nalori area were local populations who Anufɔized. The Anufɔ in Nalori are descendants of Anufɔ slaves from Mango and the local populations of their current locale. The Nalori Anufɔ were cut off from their cultural metropole in Mango after the partitioning of German Togoland in 1922. "No longer Komba and not Anufɔ in the Mango sense, they are the severed limb that is growing a body, they are creating a new identity" (Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 49).

[117] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 51.

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

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

1.4.3. Divination Practices

To understand how the process of diagnosing and identifying a solution works, it is important to know a bit more about the divination process, the role of diviner, and the different practices of divination that have developed.

Consulting shrines through divination requires a human agent to mediate the process. The work of divination requires gifts that not every person has. The diviner is a specific office that requires special spiritual insight.[118] Divination uses a physical method to interpret spiritual causation. Diviners may use mbolbil "a divination stick" or ibɔɔlig "cowrie shells" to help them divine the spiritual agents that cause individual and social problems.

Kirby studied several types of the divination practices among the Nalori Anufɔ.[119] The types can be laid out along a spectrum with a pole on either end. The first pole is the rural kinship-based practice of divination using cowrie shells among the Komba. The second pole is the Islamic practice of sand divination. The Anufɔ practices of cowrie-shell divination mediate between those two poles.

Kirby evaluates these poles on a scale of pessimism to optimism, objectivity to subjectivity, and particularity to generality. Kirby characterizes Komba diviners as pessimistic, because they anticipate their clients experiencing "misfortune or disrupted familial or social relations (including relations with the ancestors)."[120] Komba diviners look retrospectively into the past for unbalanced relationships with ancestors and spiritual agents that require redress and renewal to avoid misfortune. The future is viewed as unknown, whereas the past is known. Kirby characterizes Komba diviners as more objective in the way they interpret the cowrie shells because they articulate standard sacrifices to specific shrines in a consistent manner based on the objective way they read the cowrie shells that they toss onto the ground.

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[118] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 105.
[119] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 127, n. 45.
[120] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 115.

Muslim sand divination and Muslim cowrie shell divination are on the other end of Kirby's spectrum. They represent Kirby's second set of descriptors: optimistic, subjective, and general. Kirby characterizes Muslim divination as optimistic because the diviners use general, broad-based statements that orient the client more toward the future than the past.[121] Muslim diviners operate in a framework that "values predictability and planning."[122] Kirby characterizes Muslim diviners as more subjective because the way they read their symbols leaves more room for the client to make interpretations. The offerings or sacrifices they suggest are more general, meaning a Muslim diviner is less likely to name specific shrines and specific sacrifices as necessary actions to avoid misfortune. Even the actual cowrie shells used by Muslim diviners had more positive and neutral symbols in their set compared to the Komba cowrie shells.[123]

For indigenous/precolonial translation, divination as translation of spiritual-social causation is not a singular practice. Divination as translation is a pluralistic practice that adapts to society's outlook. Divination adapted its practice to suit Islam and the requirements of urban societies engaging in trade over long distances. As social practices changed, divination adapted, becoming more optimistic, leaving more room for clients to interpret the specific causes and specific remedies appropriate to their situation. I suspect the divination practices in agrarian communities were also evolving, making calibrations depending on changing social contexts. Divination is a pluralist practice that translates the spiritual causes of social problems for clients to interpret. There are urban and rural variations of divination, as well as African-Muslim variations. Kirby's research indicates that all these factors influence how divination as translation is employed. Accordingly, Kirby argues that divination is a process that "mirrors society back to itself. If the society is pluralistic the mirrors are many and varied."[124]

1.4.4. Divination as a Mediated Translational Process

Now that I have described some of the diversity of divination practices in a limited area, I will describe specific processes used in divination, including the translation processes divination uses to help people solve problems. People consult diviners

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[121] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 117.

[122] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 114.

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

[124] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 152.

to find out what actions are required of them to rectify any "underlying disorder" caused by "disharmonious relations with offended mystical agents" to avoid misfortune.[125] The divination process usually involves a client consulting more than one diviner and visiting more than one shrine as they try to solve their problem.

Kirby outlines the process of divination in three stages. The first step is to determine the source of the problem.[126] The diviner assumes that the problem is a result of broken relations between the visible and invisible worlds. In cowrie shell divination, the diviner throws cowrie shells to help determine the source of the problem.[127] The second step is to determine the offering or sacrifice necessary to alleviate the spiritual agent causing the problem. The third step is for the diviner to conclude the session with an optimistic note of confidence.[128]

Kirby describes the interpretative process as depending on three factors. The first factor is the diviner's viewpoint, acquired by the "successive accumulation of information and its integration." The second factor is the symbolic information obtained from throwing the cowrie shells. The third factor is the "model of the ideal Anufɔ society," against which everything else is measured. [129] In a divining session, throwing cowries is an iterative process. These three factors are used to interpret what a client should do to realign one's relation to spiritual agents. The decision about what to do, what sacrifice or offering to make, is left to the client. Only the client knows what has already been done, what other diviners have said, and what resources are available.[130]

Kirby describes the process of divination as a process of phrasing and re-phrasing the problem facing a person. "Unsolved problems are those which have not yet been phrased properly." The longer the problem-solving process goes, the deeper the person must dig into the established traditional system sanctioned by the ancestors. If the ancestors cannot address the problem, "the Anufɔ turn to the more expansive concept of God for meaning."[131]

The divination processes Kirby describes elucidate our growing description of indigenous precolonial translation practices. Neither a diviner nor a client has immediate access to the spiritual causation of social problems. Divination involves a process, a mediated translational and interpretative process. The three factors involved in divination: a diviner, cowrie shells, and a client in a social context are analogous to the three poles involved in hermeneutics: text, context,

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[125] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 113.
[126] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 136–39.
[127] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 128–32.
[128] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 138–41.
[129] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 141.
[130] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 143.
[131] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 153.

and reader. Hermeneutics is the process involved in interpreting any text.[132] The hermeneutical spiritual-social translation process of divination described above results in potential interpretations that the diviner offers the client. What I mean by interpretation is that the diviner offers a diagnosis of the spiritual cause of the problem and a suggested solution, an appropriate offering, or sacrifice. A client can try the translation process again with a different diviner on a different day and see whether the interpretation offered confirms for the client what needs to be done, or if the next diviner expands or limits what needs to be done. The client as a member of the community is seeking actions that make life better, by redressing or renewing spiritual relations that are connected to social life.

I have touched on how divination reaffirms social practice and how divination can also slowly recalibrate social practice. How does divination help society deal with the social contradictions in their evolving social context? How do divination processes address the social rupture described in section 1.3.4.2 above?

1.4.5. Problem-Solving amid Social Contradictions

Having described the spiritual agents active in northern contexts and the practice and process of avoiding, interpreting, and solving misfortune through divination, I describe some of the difficult social problems that recurred for communities in the northern subregion in precolonial time.

Kirby indicates that most of the difficult social problems people face in the Nalori Anufɔ area stem from inherent contradictions within their social organization.[133] Writing in the late twentieth century, Kirby argued that life in northern Ghana was in transition. While that was true then and remains true today, it was also true in the precolonial era. What were some of those transitions and tensions in indigenous/precolonial time?

1.4.5.1. Two Contradictory Principles in Kinship Groups

Kopytoff argues that tensions in African kinship groups stem from the "co-existence of two potentially contradictory principles."[134] One is the principle of hierarchy, a part of all African relations.[135] Authority lies with the one that came first, the elder. The older kinship group members assert this principle to their

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[132] See West's description of the African tri-polar model of biblical hermeneutics ("African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial."). See also Jonathan A. Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Readings, and Their Options between Text and Context," *Religion and Theology* 22.1–2 (2015): 3–22.

[133] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 85–87.

[134] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 18.

[135] "A hierarchical ethic means that one finds it normal to be at either side of a culturally sanctioned hierarchical relationship" (Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 36).

advantage. For example, older men acquire more wives, leaving younger men out. The second principle is the principle of equal potentiality. The corporate interests transcend the individual's interests. The kinship group owns all its members, and each male member has the potential to become an elder or a chief if he lives long enough. Women were only occasionally privileged based on this principle of equal potentiality, another contradiction. These two principles of hierarchy and equal potentiality created dissonance. The contradictions could foster resentment for younger male kinship group members, who, not inconsequentially, produced the most food for the group.[136] The contradictions have gotten worse for women over the last five hundred years. See chapter 5, section 5.3.

1.4.5.2. Two Value Systems and the Contradictions in Each System

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

Kirby describes these as two different value systems that can inhere within a single individual.[137] What Kirby calls the estate-based value system appeared in the early precolonial period, increased rapidly after 1750, and continued to increase and evolve in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Across the northern subregion, beginning in the precolonial era, the estate-based system was being integrated across kinship groups. Not all kinship groups inculcated these values in the same way at the same time, but increasingly, this second set of values has joined the first set. In the postcolonial era, these two systems, operating alongside each other, have become part of everyone's experience to a greater or lesser degree.[138]

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

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

[138] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 81–93.

The kinship system was the fundamental pattern of social organization in the precolonial period.[139] The kinship-based value system emphasizes ascribed status.[140] Ascribed status is rooted in birth order and the rule of firstcomer. The kinship-based value system emphasizes sameness, economic equality, and "a hierarchical distribution of access to political and religious power by age." The value system emphasizes harmonious relations among kinship members and directs people to avoid bad fate, bad death, ancestor sanctions, and elder sanctions, also known as oaths. Attitudes to avoid include brashness, individualism, conceit, an entrepreneurial spirit, and independence because these threaten the gerontocratic order of elders and ancestors.[141]

The estate-based value system governs relations between people who are not kinship members. Kirby notes the early Anufɔ marauders epitomized these relations. They were a collaboration of horsemen, tradesmen, foot soldiers, and clerics who worked together for raiding. This value system is based on achievement and is maintained through networks of political, economic, and religious interdependencies. Achieved status can be acquired by force, exceptional ability, technological knowledge, political skill, or economic entrepreneurship. One can achieve social positions through this value system, including becoming a chief, craftsman, trader, or malam. Today they include positions of teacher, clerk, politician, soldier, and police officer. The moral authority for this value system is based on the possession of power. One justifies one's use of power by accruing greater power. "The rich and powerful are thus 'moral' and poor are 'immoral' by this internal criterion." The entrepreneurial and competitive spirit "eschewed by the kinship-based value system are thus a prerequisite for the estate-based system." A competitive use of economics, politics, and religion is assumed in this value system. One cannot achieve economic and political success without powerful shrines and ritual power.[142]

The estate-based value system, like the kinship-based value system, has internal contradictions. The estate-based system exposes society to the dangers of too much competition and insecurity. "To completely equate morality with the

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[139] Kirby argues that among the Anufɔ, many people in the same kinship group are not actually descended from the same ancestor. Nevertheless, they may claim affiliation with the same ancestor and address each other by kinship terms. I have argued, following Kopytoff, that this kind of fusion is the rule, not the exception, for all kin groups, especially in their initial stages of development (*Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 83).

[140] Kirby observes that the poor must default to the system of ascribed status in the kinship-based value system rather than acquired status in the estate-based value system. Kirby notes that not enough power makes an individual talaka, a Hausa word used among the Anufɔ, which can be translated as "poor man" or "despised slave" (*Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 87 n. 7).

[141] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 83.

[142] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 84.

use of power is to invite chaos and anarchy in the this-worldly sphere as well as absolute insecurity about the other-worldly sphere."[143]

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

Kirby argues, "Each value system when pushed to the extreme creates a problematic situation."[144] Kirby argues that the two value systems and the associated shrines balance extremes experienced by the limitations of the alternative system. Kirby's analysis would be strengthened by a greater gender-critical focus within each value system as a further strategy to balance internal contradictions. See section 1.6 below.

1.4.5.3. Balancing Contradictions through Divination

Divination helps people translate and interpret the contradictions they experience within their internal value systems. A diviner works to help society balance the tensions within the value system he or she is working with.[145] On the other hand, the value systems are not independent of each other. People intermarry; they experience similar social problems, and over time, their value systems and their method of spiritual-social problem-solving influence each other. Kirby documents how divination practices are diverse and calibrated to different value systems. Given the cross-over between systems, we can say that divination practices not only helped people negotiate the contradictions within a single value system but also divination practices helped people translate between the value systems influencing their lives. That is a positive evaluation of divination as translating between value systems. The negative evaluation of divination as translating between value systems is the gradual attenuation of matricentric practices that happened over indigenous/precolonial time, which I will discuss in section 6 below.

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[143] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 85.

[144] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 86–87.

[145] Kirby indicates only men can be diviners and that husbands perform divination on behalf of their wives (*Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 115–16). While Kirby's data indicates there are no female diviners among the Anufɔ, following Amadiume 's theory, I suggest that female diviners may have been more common among the diverse kinship-based shrines before the proliferation of the slave trade. The lack of female diviners is symptomatic of the problem of hyper-masculinization. MacGaffey's research among the Dagbamba did identify female tindamba (*Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 96–97).

1.4.6. Divination as Spiritual-Social Translation Problem-Solving

I am describing precolonial translation practices as problem-solving focusing on the spiritual-social plane. Divination is a mediated translation process used to help people solve the spiritual-social causes of their misfortunes. Divination is a spiritual-social translation process that reinforces the social order by trying a series of prescribed solutions to problems that individuals are experiencing in the community. At the same time, divination is an open and repeatable spiritual translation process that helps society confront contradictions that it may not otherwise be able to solve. All the options are explored until none is left. If a problem cannot be solved by known means, the person is released to God as a legitimized member of society.

A key question raised in this chapter is how precolonial religious translation was useful in dealing with the tremendous economic and social changes that occurred during the precolonial era. I wondered whether spiritual-social religious translation as problem-solving might address the disintegrating forces propelled by the world economic slave, raid, and trade system.

Moral accountability between people outside one's in-group may not have been a strong concern in precolonial African contexts.[146] However, all social groups present inside the same neighborhood shrine had to relate to the spiritual agents in that place, such as the ancestors or the spirits of the wild, who were connected to the fertility of the earth, the trees, the waters, and other features of the area. Diviners were sensitive to the shifting problems of their clients and their clients' shifting value systems. This approach to solving problems through spiritual-social translation helped societies survive violence in the precolonial era. However, in section six of this chapter, I will argue that the attenuation of valuable matricentric practices in divination is one negative result of those violent times. Nevertheless, divination was a flexible spiritual-social translation practice that helped communities as they struggled in a harsh environment, navigating complicated social relations and surviving the damaging effects of the slave trade.

1.5. Oral Tradition as a Window to Translation Practices

Section 5 explores language use in oral tradition as frontier societies developed relationships and alliances. I introduced oral tradition as a useful lens for exploring entangled precolonial translation practices in section 1.1.5 above. I have two goals in this section related to subsequent chapters in this book. First, this section describes how oral tradition worked in performance on particular social occasions

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[146] "Rather than existing as an entity in itself morality is a function of social relationships. Thus, as the relationship nexus changes between Muslims and non-Muslims or one kinship group and another, so also do their moral obligations change to one another" (Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 135).

in precolonial time. This description of precolonial oral tradition provides an important baseline for the discussion in chapter 2 when I discuss how certain genres of oral tradition were translated to support colonial rule. Second, this section emphasizes the way different genres of oral tradition are part of a larger whole, an overall ecology. During the social performance of a funeral in precolonial time, many genres of oral poetries contributed to an ongoing social dialogue. The practice of multisectoral social dialogue will be important in chapter 4 as I discuss postcolonial practices of retranslation.

1.5.1. Oral Poetry Used in Burial and Funerals

The performance of oral poetry during particular social occasions was a major way indigenous societies developed social links across homes, territories, and kinship groups.[147] Many genres of oral poetry are performed over several days at a particular social occasion, such as a burial or a funeral. Certain sectors of society perform these genres at specific times. All the oral poetries during burials and funerals contribute to the overall ecology of oral tradition in a culture or set of cultures.[148] Each genre of oral poetry exists in relation to the entire ecology. Each genre of oral poetry is part of a social performance and participates in an ongoing social dialogue between different sectors of society across multiple socially linked communities.

Those who perform oral poetry at a burial or funeral can be virtuoso performers or emerging performers of a particular formal register of poetic genre. Different sectors of society have opportunities to perform for one another their laments, grievances, insults, praises, and jokes. These performances are often sung. Taken together, the performances constitute an indigenous social dialogue. They are part of an even larger ecology of poetic forms that depend upon each other and interact with one another.

During the liminal phase after the death of a person in leadership, an old man, a chief, an utindaan "neighborhood area head," or an elderly mother or grandmother of the kinship group, there is a period where particular social relationships are empowered to speak more critically than under normal circumstances. At the time of Nayiri's funeral, Drucker-Brown argues that the uterine grandchildren, who are Nayiri's daughters' children, are in a particularly unique position. During the reign of Nayiri these uterine grandchildren have access to the court because Nayiri recognizes they are not a threat to his rule. They learn many of the court's

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

[148] For a table summarizing the genres performed in burials and funerals by different social sectors in one town in northern Ghana, see Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 97–98.

secrets. But once a new Nayiri is enskinned, the late Nayiri's grandchildren will be dispossessed of their access to the court. Nayiri's uterine grandchildren are Mamprusi or Konkomba commoners who, but for an accident of birth, having been born to women children of Nayiri rather than male children of Nayiri, would be able to contest for chieftaincy. So, during the funeral performances, these privileged but soon-to-be dispossessed grandchildren have the opportunity to joke, share secrets, and critique the royals.[149] Something similar takes place among communities at the kinship group level.[150]

1.5.2. Translating the Performances of Oral Tradition

In entangled precolonial time, different kinship groups come together to ritually maintain their social link after the death of one of their interrelated members. Recalling Lentz's principles of belonging from section 1.1.4 above, on the occasion of burial and funerals, different yir or extended houses travel to other tengan or shrine neighborhoods to help perform the necessary rites to maintain the social link between and within communities. Houses across shrine neighborhoods share similar cultural scripts regarding what was expected to happen during funerals. Multiple dialects and languages are present during a funeral. Performers use poetic speech registers with an expectation of multidialectical reception. Performers of oral tradition build upon shared cultural expectations and speak with a heterolingual understanding of communication to recall Sakai's term introduced in section 1.3 above. In this way oral performances during funerals invite performers and audiences from different houses and shrine neighborhoods to develop shared language within their shared cultural script around funeral rites.

An extensive social dialogue takes place, using many poetic genres and involving many sectors of related and allied kinship groups and societies. There is a motivation for people to want to understand the social dialogue, laugh at the jokes, hear the secrets, hear the social criticism, and glory in the praises. Because funerals involve kinship groups who speak different dialects and languages, and because the linguistic capacity and the knowledge of the formal speech registers of oral tradition are always growing among kinship members, people communicate in a manner that assumes the need for multidirectional translation. The performance of a funeral also fuels the desire for understanding, explanation, and linguistic and cultural translation. The performance of a funeral activates a significant social motivation to learn formal speech registers to engage in a dialogue across homes and shrine neighborhoods. People ask each other what is being

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[149] Susan Drucker-Brown, "The Grandchildren's Play at the Mamprusi King's Funeral: Ritual Rebellion Revisited in Northern Ghana," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5.2 (1999): 181–92.

[150] Drucker-Brown documents some of the matricentric bilateral practices that constitute part of the ritual and moral basis of precolonial African societies. See section 1.6 below.

communicated and provide their own collective multidirectional multilayered translations along the way. Attending funerals and being exposed to formal language across shrine neighborhoods offer opportunities to expand communal linguistic capacities and cultural knowledge and to participate in social dialogue.

1.5.3. Summary

Section 5 of this chapter builds upon our understanding of translation in a multilingual precolonial context, employing what Sakai describes as heterolingual address and what I call collective, multiperspectival translation for social dialogue. This section lays a foundation for analyzing colonial translation in chapter 2's discussion of the colonial translation of a particular genre of oral poetry and chapter 4's discussion of multisectoral dialogue in postcolonial translation. The sixth section of this chapter will lay the foundation for chapter 5, where I will discuss women's agency in postcolonial retranslation.

1.6. Women's Roles Related to Translation in the Precolonial Era

In the precolonial lifeworld, during the performance of a funeral, sectors of women and men have significant opportunities to use their voices for social commentary in the performance of poetic genres. In this section, I further explore women's roles as translators between homes from different kinship groups located in different shrine neighborhoods. In addition to women translating, women were translated between homes.[151] The practice of exchanging women emerged in the precolonial era and continues as a social practice in northern contexts. When I speak about women being translated, I am using an older definition of translation from the Latin: "to carry across from one place to another."

Discussing women's agency in the precolonial lifeworld will provide an important foundation for chapter 5 of this book when I discuss women's agency in postcolonial retranslation for liberation in the context of neoliberal economies and theologies.

1.6.1. Women as Transactions between Kinship Groups

There are different historical and anthropological accounts about the ways men and women were translated across territories in indigenous/precolonial time.

David Tait argues that marriage between Konkomba kinship groups involved an "exchange of goods against the rights *over* women."[152] If women are

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[151] One does not need to "borne across the world" to be "translated." Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981–1991* (London: Granta Books; New York: Viking, 1991), 117.

[152] Tait, *Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 105, 113 (emphasis added).

understood to be the mobile members of society, then it would follow that kinship groups would exchange goods for the rights over women to produce more people. To make such an arrangement work, complex rules are needed to make sure the trades are equal and to prevent genetic inbreeding.[153]

Ifi Amadiume offers a gender-critical lens to analyze indigenous/precolonial practices. (See section 1.1.7 above.) Amadiume argues that men, not women, were the mobile element in early indigenous/precolonial societies. Husbands came to wives. Men provided agricultural labor for access to women's daughters.[154] Amadiume points out that Lévi-Strauss's alliance theory underlies many of the arguments that see women as objects to be exchanged by men.[155] Amadiume argues that rather than focusing on movement and ownership, scholars should focus on the African notion of collectivism, usufruct access to the land, and the fundamental tri-partite relationship between mother, daughter, and son.[156]

While the current perception in northern Ghana is that men stay in the shrine neighborhood of their father's kinship group, Amadiume questions whether this has always been the case. Amadiume estimates that indigenous practices began to change five hundred years ago and were sped up by the slave trade, arguing that precolonial society has been evolving toward stronger patricentric practices. In northern Ghana, it is possible that in precolonial times, there were forms of marriage where the man was the mobile element of society. One of the marriage practices Tait describes involves a man working for several years for another man to marry a young woman. This practice seems to lend itself to man as the mobile element. Even in current marital practices, some wives reside in their natal community rather than in the home of their husband. The rereading of the data in this discussion suggests that in early indigenous precolonial time, society may have been structured such that women stayed in the location of their parents and men were the mobile element of society.

Nevertheless, in northern Ghana and its subregion, the dominant memory of the precolonial era that persists is that women are the mobile element of society,

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[153] Tait describes four marriage patterns among ethnically ambiguous kinship groups who spoke similar dialects of Konkomba (*Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 113).

[154] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 74–77.

[155] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969). See Chamberlain's critique as mentioned above of Steiner's reliance on Lévi-Strauss ("Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," 320–21). For a similar critique in biblical studies, see Peter J. Sabo, "Women on the Market in the Book of Judges" (The Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, (Virtual) San Antonio, TX, 2021).

[156] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 75. See my discussion on usufruct access to land surplus in relation to a biblical text in chapter 5, section 5.3.3.

translated across kinship groups and shrine neighborhoods.[157] This memory is complicated by data that suggests bilateral arrangements among the early indigenous/precolonial people have become attenuated today. For example, Amadiume has criticized Meyer's Fortes patriarchal interpretation of bilateral practices among the Tallensi of northern Ghana as a "masculinization of the data."[158] Chapter 6 picks up this discussion, exploring Laura Grillo's thesis of female genital power as a lasting vestige of matrifocal morality in present-day social practice.

1.6.2. Changing Economy and Gender

As difficult as it is to remember the complex evolution of the deep past, it is also difficult to perceive how culture continues to change in the present. Vestiges of past cultural arrangements can manifest themselves as present-day problems.

For example, in the precolonial era, kinship groups recognized that women were structurally disadvantaged as compared to men. Unlike men, women could not inherit animals or receive farmland despite being kinship group members. A structural accommodation was made to compensate materially for a woman's loss. Rose Mary Amenga-Etego writes,

> Properties which consisted of small portions of diverse foodstuffs and other items were properly preserved and kept for emergencies in women's storage pots in their *detinma* (round huts), traditionally known as *toollumm* (warmth or heat). Men were barred by taboo to search or take anything from these.… Women's *toollumm* items, although often used for the family's welfare, were privately owned.[159]

This precolonial structural accommodation has become a source of conflict in transitioning from a subsistence economy to a cash economy. Many men feel disadvantaged by the cash economy and blame women for being selfish.[160]

Amenga-Etego indicates that this analysis misses the larger point. Many women in northern Ghana feel that precolonial cultural traditions served to maintain practices that were intrinsically unfair to women. Many women are breaking with tradition in the present. They are not content to perpetuate precolonial

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[157] Tait describes the principle of women as "extended home." Tait, *Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 101. The extended home is analogous to Lentz's principle of yir described in section 1.1.4 above.

[158] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 85. See Meyer Fortes and Jack Goody, *Religion, Morality and the Person: Essays on Tallensi Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 32–35.

[159] Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces: Indigenous Religion and Sustainable Rural Development in Northern Ghana*, Religion in Contemporary Africa Series (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011), 279–80.

[160] Esala, "Translation as Invasion, 104–6.

practices that maintain patriarchal domination.[161] Mercy Amba Oduyoye's social and theological work among the Circle of Concerned Women makes similar claims. While some scholars argue the oppression of women in the precolonial era can be overemphasized, Oduyoye warns against the danger of what she calls "basking in the glory of 'old shells' retained to govern social relationships, when the material causes that gave rise to those structures are no more, or are fast fading away."[162]

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

1.6.3. Women as Cultural Translators

Amenga-Etego describes a woman's role in society as follows. First, she argues, "Hers is to expand the family networks, through in-law relationships and later through her offspring."[163] Second, her role is to help the men in her life with their tasks. For example, a woman is expected to help men in agricultural labor.

Keeping Amenga-Etego's analysis of a woman's role in mind, I recall Cronin's claim that translation helps maintain the social link between societies crossing greater distances due to technological advances, such as using horses, guns, and books.

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[161] Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 189.

[162] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*, Theology in Africa Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 75. In her biographical portrait of Yaa Akyawaa Yikwan, Ivor Wilks argues that among elite Akan women, when they became postmenopausal, women were eligible to become elders. They no longer posed a danger and were considered ritual men. See Ivor Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), 335. The impact of the colonial era on the Akan courts increased patriarchal power and decreased the influence of older women and women in general. See Takyiwaa Manuh, "The Asantehemaa's Court and Its Jurisdiction over Women: A Study in Legal Pluralism," *Institute of African Studies Research Review* 4.2 (1988): 55. See also Stephan Miescher, "Becoming an Ɔpanyin: Elders, Gender, and Masculinities in Ghana since the Nineteenth Century," in *Africa after Gender?*, ed. Catherine M. Cole, Takyiwaa Manuh, and Stephan Miescher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 264–65.

[163] Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, "Marriage without Sex? Same-Sex Marriages and Female Identity among the Nankani of Northern Ghana," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 4 (2012): 20.

In the precolonial northern ecumene that included present-day northern Ghana, some groups established themselves by migrating into frontier areas with the technological advantage of horses, guns, and writing. Sometimes, the groups that had control of technology established themselves as royal. Other groups around them were fused into that society at a lower level, as household slaves or commoners or with special offices for their headmen as elders. [164] Men of the royal group would marry daughters of leading men in the subordinate group. In a kinship group with a patrilineal kinship pattern, their children would retain royal status, but only the male children could pass on that status to their grandchildren. The daughters of royal men would usually marry men from the subordinate groups, classified as household slaves or commoners. Eventually, their children and grandchildren might become commoner men who are different from royals but not wholly different. Part of the reason for this is that royal women teach their children the language, culture, and (technological) secrets of their natal home. Women are the linguistic and cultural translators for their commoner children. Furthermore, in the region's culture, a mother's brother has a cultural obligation to share materially with his nephews. If this rule is taken seriously, over time, the technological advantage of the royals will be minimized vis a vis the commoner children of women royals. What is now left is the preservation of tradition regarding their superiority, but its technological advantage has been reduced.[165]

If this technological advantage is reduced, but royal status is not conferred, the children or grandchildren of royal daughters married to commoner men or household slaves might leave their metropoles and move towards a perceived frontier. They might also be ejected to the frontier with a demand for tribute to the metropole. However it occurred, whether by ejection or choice, the commoner children or grandchildren went to the frontier like their royal maternal uncles and maternal grandfathers came to their paternal grandparents with their horses, guns, sacred books, and the culture of the dominant metropole. In the new location on the frontier, they replicate the structure of the metropole. Commoners from the metropole could effectively mimic and replace the royals on the frontier.[166] Whenever a group moved from a metropole to a frontier, they needed to incorporate women from the firstcomer societies. At a certain point in the future, the process

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[164] The term "household slave" indicates that an entire group of people are subordinate to another group of people, sometimes within the same kinship group. In that case, one might be the major lineage, and the other the minor lineage. Alternatively, one kinship group is historically established as subservient to another with respect to first rights and inheritance. In particularly violent renditions of history the tindamba were said to have been killed off after the marriage of their daughters to the dominant group.

[165] There were ways to maintain distinctions. Kirby indicates that "slave children of royals were called *kponggɔfɔm* (horse attendants), a term of abuse tantamount to slave" (Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 46).

[166] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 44–49.

could replicate again. Expansion of the metropole appears to be built into the royal patrilineal system.

1.6.4. Summary

Section 5's discussion of oral traditions as indigenous dialogue notes that women have platforms to express their social voice in the community using oral poetic forms. Section 6 further argues that women help teach language and culture, including technology, from their natal home and community to their married home and community. Women were the matricentric glue connecting homes across patricentrically organized space in shrine neighborhoods. Women taught language, culture, and technological knowledge and contributed to expanding trade zones. However, women were not accorded as significant a place as men in the hierarchy of the kinship group.

   Amadiume argues that the precolonial era was more diverse than scholars have realized. There are matrifocal resources buried in cultural memory that suggest women used to have a stronger position in society than they do currently. That said, Amenga-Etego's description of women's experience in the entangled present highlights the lack of agency and lack of individual personhood that many women feel. In the postcolonial-era, some people look nostalgically at the precolonial era "basking in the glory of 'old shells,'"[167] but they often misread it through colonial lenses. As Oduyoye argued, the material basis that undergirded the precolonial lifeworld has significantly shifted. This recognition demands scholars improve the lenses they offer to African communities. Communities must evaluate scholarly lenses to see if this or that lens helps them interpret their entangled experience of the precolonial era more authentically. Once society's experiences of the precolonial world are reinterpreted more authentically, they can remember together more fully, affirming and critiquing the complex precolonial practices they have inherited. This is important because the present is still under construction. Society can remember more fully, and then affirm life-giving practices within their precolonial memory, so society can build upon them in a life-giving way over and against neocolonial practices that are also struggling to bring back the precolonial era as viewed through colonial-era lenses.

1.7. Conclusion

Northern Ghanaian languages describe linguistic translation as a process of speech turning. How did concrete practices fill out that suggestive concept of translation in precolonial time? To answer this question, I introduced a set of theoretical lenses to help identify and clarify indigenous translation practices in the precolonial era. Mbembe's notion of entanglement led me to expect a diversity of precolonial

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[167] Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 75.

practices from which several future worlds were possible. Presenting alternative precolonial practices alongside each other may give communities a better sense of the ways precolonial time interlocks with colonial and postcolonial time.

In the second section, I introduced the geographic and social context of the Gambaga escarpment as the contextual locus for this book. I described the escarpment area as a precolonial African frontier.

In the third section, I introduced kinship as the foundation for four innovations in social practice and their corresponding translation practices. Kinship groups settled into the frontier, engaging in processes of fusion and fission. Settlers relied on heterolingual speech practices, language learning, and collective translation to communicate in multilingual contexts. The introduction of the politics of nam developed kinship relations into a ritual kingdom that not only changed social hierarchy within a shrine neighborhood, but also across shrine neighborhoods. An interrelated social innovation occurred as Muslim traders allied with ritual kingdoms to protect and promote long-distance trade. Muslims provided crucial writing technologies and religiocultural translation practices. The world economic demand for slaves took off around 1750. The world economy penetrated the northern ecumene, rupturing the social relations within and between kinship groups and ritual kingdoms. Some groups became suppliers of human slaves by combining the technologies of horses, guns, and military strategy, raiding vulnerable kinship groups. Successful metropole societies, like the Eastern Dagbamba and the Anufɔ, developed and expanded their raid and trade practices by settling further into the frontier areas where other disparate kinship groups were living and migrating. Many kinship groups were drawn into the lower levels of Dagbamba and Anufɔ kingdoms as either commoners or slaves. Many diffuse kinship groups formed alliances of opposition and protection with one another, using the rocky environment of the escarpment for survival. Language practices changed. Standard dialects emerged, and there was greater comprehension across dialect chains.

In the fourth section, I described African religious practices of divination as contextually grounded practices of translation that helped communities survive the environment and the violence of the slave trade in the precolonial era. I described divination as mediated translation and interpretation of the social-spiritual causes of people's problems. The many spiritual agents active in local contexts are perceived to be the cause of individual and social problems. The office of diviner engages in a hermeneutical translation process using three poles: the diviner, the data from the diviner's symbols, and the client's social context to interpret the spiritual cause of the problem. The spiritual-social translation process arrives at an interpretation: a diagnosis of the problem and a prescription for its solution. A client may engage with several diviners to solve the problem he or she is facing. If the prescribed solutions do not work, the client pursues answers from broader-based shrines that address broader-based problems: from personal shrines to kinship shrines to territorial shrines. The emergence of Islam and changes in

trade, technology, and translation brought a second value system into society, and divination adapted itself to the changes society was experiencing. Thus, divination is a pluralist religious tool that has significant intracultural and intercultural potential for helping people address and cope with the contradictions in their social value systems. Divination as a patient spiritual-social translation tool helped societies survive materially, spiritually, and socially. Divination helped them overcome the harshness of their environment, the complexity of community relations, and the violence of the slave trade. The description of divination as a contextually grounded spiritual-social translation and interpretative praxis lays the groundwork for developing a postcolonial mode of retranslating for social change in chapter 4.

In the fifth section, I focused on social practices of communication and translation through the study of oral tradition. I described the occasional nature of performances and the concept of an ecology of oral poetic genres. Poetic genres depend upon one another and interact with one another as part of social performance and social dialogue. This section lays the foundation for understanding how oral poetries work in indigenous/precolonial time as a backdrop to understanding how oral poetries were appropriated and transformed during the colonial era, a major concern of chapter 2. Furthermore, the sectoral and dialogical nature of oral tradition provides a foundation for reworking postcolonial practices of sectoral retranslation, as discussed in chapters 4–6.

The sixth section builds on the dialogical practice of oral tradition by focusing on the role of women in precolonial translation. I use a gender-critical lens to show how indigenous/precolonial time included matricentric and patricentric practices alongside each other. As the precolonial era evolved in the northern context, patricentric habitation practices became the norm. Women became the mobile component of social life. Women were translated across homes and territories. Their primary natal kinship group was transferred to their husband's lineal kinship group at marriage. In the process, they became language and cultural translators across homes and territories. The material results of this arrangement disadvantaged women from land ownership, some forms of animal ownership, and from inheritance practices. I discussed an issue of entanglement related to women's private property that was a structural compensation for their disadvantaged position related to their dual identity. I discussed the ways men and women view precolonial practices in the entangled present time. The colonial era has colored the way precolonial practices are viewed in the present. This section provides a baseline for chapter 5 where I discuss the agency of women and men as translators in the paradigm of postcolonial retranslation for liberation.

Chapter 2 builds on the discussion of indigenous/precolonial translation practices. I argue that colonial translation constructed precolonial practices to serve the interests of colonial political and economic control. Colonial translation depicted its era as a more developed and improved version of the precolonial era.

The results of colonial translation persist in how the precolonial world is popularly viewed in the entangled present of postcolonial/neocolonial time.

2.
Colonial Translation of/as Invasion

Chapter 1 describes the lifeworld of the indigenous/precolonial era and the practices of speech-turning or linguistic translation within that lifeworld. The theoretical lenses I selected were intended to highlight the multiple trajectories of language practice in that era. I chose lenses that helped me describe that era in a diverse manner, attempting to avoid describing the precolonial era as a convenient prelude or a contrast to the so-called progress of the colonial era.

Chapter 2 transitions to the period of direct colonization, recounting the economic and political strategies behind the invasion of the Volta Basin. After the invasion, translation became an administrative necessity. Colonial translation had two phases. I characterize the first phase as "translational interaction" between colonial administrators and local chiefs and leaders governed by the direct political rule of a colonial power.[1] Colonizers sought to administer the new territory as cheaply as possible, increasing trade and using as little colonial force and manpower as they could manage without risking rebellion. Local agents sought to engage with these colonizers for their own interest-led profit and power. This phase of translation was confusing and messy as colonial administrators and local leaders engaged in mediated cross-cultural interaction characterized by interest-led mutual manipulation, as they (mis)translated their concepts into one another. A second phase of colonial translation was layered upon the first phase when colonial administrators sponsored written translations of oral tradition as the basis for establishing a series of quasi-independent local kingdoms. The second phase of translation accompanied and supported a shift in colonial policy to what is known as indirect rule. To support indirect rule, colonial administrators sponsored translations that translated precolonial realities, transforming them into something *new* (*neo*indigenous) and more useful for colonial rule. The second phase of translation aimed to achieve what are called "customary" authority structures that were

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[1] Drawing on Action Theory, translation functionalists argue translators facilitate acts that seek to bring about or prevent change in the world. Functionalists distinguish between translational action and textual translation. See Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997), 16–17.

able to cheaply govern themselves while still being subservient to the colonial overlords. Indirect rule, aided by translation, created a barrier between the colonial government and the masses of people, limiting the responsibilities of the government to the governed while making administration affordable and supportive of colonial policy.

In my analysis of the second phase of colonial translation, I focus on the shift to written translation. Colonial administrators sponsored translators to translate instances of an oral genre called "lunsi" into the genre of written historiography. These new translations were characterized as precolonial invasion narratives. Specific occasional oral performances of lunsi that recalled the successful raids of a Dagbamba ancestor became the written history of invasion by Dagbamba chiefs of the lands in the Northern Territories. These written translations of invasion were attached to customary constitutions for northern kingdoms. They were useful in supporting the rational substructure of colonial invasion and indirect rule by rights of conquest. Similar colonial acts of translating oral tradition resulted in both oral and written customary law, which provided chiefs with a useful tool to extract resources from the peasantry to support themselves and the colonial overlords. Taken together, these acts of translation supported a system of ranked ethnicity, which is a kind of ethnic caste system.

Drawing on the work of other scholars, I evaluate the ideology of the precolonial invasion narrative. I describe the translation *of* invasion *as* a form of cultural invasion. Colonial translation was invasive because it transformed precolonial practice from diverse dialogical perspectives, using diverse genres, into a singular authoritative customary perspective. Colonial translations were translational reductions of precolonial genres and sectoral perspectives. These translational reductions were repeated as historical facts in government policies, courts, and schools. These translational reductions facilitated the creation of laws useful in extracting resources from local contexts backed up with colonial force by chief's police and colonial soldiers. From this descriptive data about colonial translation practices, I develop a theory of translation as invasion, which I describe as acts of cultural translation in service to the colonial capitalist system. The colonial translation-as-invasion model transformed the process of translation itself. The focus of translation shifted from the diversity of speech-turning practices described in chapter 1 to producing a useful translated artifact that establishes hierarchy.

The last section of the chapter discusses a range of indigenous and neoindigenous responses to colonial acts of translation. I chart those responses in terms of their level of ideological awareness of what colonial translation and colonization were doing to (neo)indigenous bodies and the worlds they inhabited.

2.1. Colonial Invasion

There was a significant passage of time between the end of the legal slave trade in the British Empire (1807) and the colonial invasion of the Volta Basin (1896). During this time, missionary-colonial Christianity emerged in southern Ghana, as did the corresponding practice of missionary-colonial Bible translation. I discuss these developments in chapter 3.

The slave trade did not end in 1807 because not all nations outlawed it. Eventually, the economic transformation of trade from a slave-based economy to a consumer goods-based economy would be more profitable for Europeans. The gradual reduction of the slave trade meant that the northern ecumene or subregion was slowly disconnecting from the world economy.[2] Eventually, the northern ecumene would no longer supply the key resources to the world economy.[3] Still, the British needed a portion of the northern ecumene to be a buffer so that France, to the north, and Germany, to the east, could not access the profitable agricultural and raw material markets in the forest regions of the British Gold Coast.

Before actual contact with the area north of the forest regions and north of Asante kingdom, the British, German, and French colonizers had heard reports based on European interviews of Muslim traders and imams living in the Asante kingdom's leading city, Kumasi, of a large and powerful Muslim kingdom north of the Asante kingdom, ruled by a Muslim king.[4] Colonial governments hoped to form an alliance with these Muslim kingdoms and traders to weaken the power of the Asante in central and southern Gold Coast.[5] A French expedition explored some of the areas of Dagbon in 1888.[6] The research of the Fanti official George Ekem Ferguson, who traveled extensively in the north in 1892 and 1895, disabused the British of ideas that powerful Muslim kingdoms were operating in the north.[7] Several military German expeditions later confirmed the basic content of

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[2] For a definition of ecumene, see section 1.2 above.

[3] "The first step in this process of dehumanization is the metamorphosis of human into an inhuman thing." Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, Forerunners 53 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 67.

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

[5] Holger Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900–1930," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 25.1 (2005): 76; Weiss, "European Images of Islam," 101–2.

[6] Weiss, "European Images of Islam," 97.

[7] Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam," 76–77. Ferguson recognized the intermediary role of the Muslim imams. An analogous situation existed among the Akan. However, early colonial administrators thought the Imams were more powerful than the Dagbamba chiefs. See Allan Edward Garrad Watherston, "The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 7.28 (1908): 349.

Ferguson's survey.[8] Nevertheless, the kingdoms that were there could still be useful allies for governing purposes.

Beginning in 1895, the French invaded the Volta Basin from the north. In 1896, the British invaded Kumasi, ending the Asante hegemony in the south.[9] They proceeded north from Kumasi, invading the Volta Basin that same year. Germany invaded the eastern portion of the Volta Basin in 1896.

The economic factors that influenced why France, Great Britain, and Germany chose to invade and control parts of the Volta Basin have been succinctly described by Wallerstein. As long as the British enjoyed hegemony over the world economy, as they did from 1815–1873, they were content to leave remote areas of Africa outside their governance, slowly bringing them into a peripheral but dependent and intertwined relationship with the world capitalist economy. However, the economic crisis of 1873 changed the rules of the game. France, Germany, and the United States began openly challenging Britain's hegemony. France and Germany sought to "seal off" markets from Great Britain through colonization, and Britain joined in what has been called "the scramble for Africa."[10]

From the perspective of African communities in the Volta Basin, foreign administration began in 1896 in the final rush in the scramble for Africa. The Volta Basin was surrounded by Europeans, the heart of the Basin was controlled by the British, who hoisted their flag in Gambaga, while the Germans encamped in Sansanne-Mango, controlling the eastern portion of the basin, with translators going between them.[11] Germany invaded Yendi twice in 1896 and again in 1900, after which they raised their flag in Yendi.[12] French soldiers made their base in Ouagadougou and controlled the northern portion of the basin where water sources flowed to the south. Just like the ritual kingship societies in the precolonial era, Great Britain, Germany, and France ran into the problem of maintaining administrative material oversight over so many groups of people over such large tracts of land, land with poor infrastructure and internal instability.[13]

From the British perspective, they had gained control of their portion of the Volta Basin, what they called the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, as a defensive move to prevent their European rivals from gaining access to the trade routes from Kumasi to the north. With no plans for British immigrants to come

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[8] Weiss, "European Images of Islam," 97–103.

[9] A. Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change*, 76–77.

[10] Wallerstein, "Three Stages of African Involvement in the World-Economy," 38–39.

[11] For reasons of trade aided by the presence of a Muslim community Gambaga was regarded as the capital of Mamprugu by outsiders even though in the late seventeenth century Na Atabia moved his chieftaincy five miles to the east to Nalerigu (Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 131; Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 99).

[12] Weiss, "European Images of Islam," 97.

[13] A.A. Iliasu, "The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898–1937," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 16.1 (1975): 1.

and settle the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast and with a limitation in how much they could invest in the area, colonial administrators were not clear what to do with the Northern Territories, except that the area must be administered with as little cost as possible. The stated colonial administrative goal in the Northern Territories was to open the country for commercial trade. [14] To do that, they had to pacify the area, mobilize labor to carry goods, and build roads.[15] The key institution to implement those policies for Great Britain was the chief.[16] But they also needed the help of translating intermediaries. In the initial stages of colonization, Hausa-speaking Muslim imams and traders filled this role.

2.1.1. Direct Rule

In the initial stages of occupation and administration of the Northern Territories, colonial officials were ignorant of the dynamics of the north. Officials desired to communicate their policies to one head whom they hoped would have the authority to implement that policy over large numbers of people and over large swaths of land. Early on, officials discovered there were no "really big chiefs."[17] Chief Commissioner Armitage notes in 1911 that the notion that northern kingdoms were centralized governments was imagined. Furthermore, the issue of taxation as a form of extraction was not present. "We are dealing with a number of tribes that, however powerful they might have been in the past, never possessed that ancient civilization or an organized system of direct taxation as based on the Koranic law."[18]

    This was a disappointment to the British who had hoped that there were powerful Muslim kingdoms in the north that they could exploit. Just as Ferguson's

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[14] Lieutenant-Colonel H. P. Northcott was concerned that competing colonial powers occupying various parts of trade routes would hamper the trade route between Hausaland, Mossi land, and the Northern Territories (Iliasu, "Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu," 1).

[15] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 33. The colonial building of roads in the 1920s is a significant factor that transformed access to markets, economic power, and ethnicity in northern Ghana into the latter part of the twentieth century, a topic I will discuss in chapter 6.

[16] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 35; Iliasu, "Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu," 2.

[17] "Colonial Reports-Annual, No. 586, 'Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast' by Col. Watherston, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories Accounts and Papers lxviii, (1908)," 72 quoted in Iliasu, "Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu," 2.

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

analysis of the limited influence of Muslim kingdoms had proven correct so also was his analysis of the practice of Islam. Muslim imams were close to the chiefs and served as "intermediaries" between rulers and visiting strangers.[19]

Subsequently, British officials relied on Muslim imams as translating intermediaries between them and the chiefs they sought to work with.[20] The chief most available to the British was Nayiri Na Barega, the king of Mamprugu.[21] Officials communicated with Muslim translators in Hausa.[22] The British officials concluded that although the authority of Nayiri was undeniably limited to small portions of land in the present; however, in the past, they believed, or were led to believe, that Nayiri had ruled over a much larger kingdom. The officials (mis)understood that the areas Nayiri and his warriors had raided were areas that Nayiri had conquered. British officials, like Armitage, were committed to "rebuilding" Nayiri Na Barega's kingdom.[23] This was part of the European and African (mis)translation and transformation of African reality.

The strategy of direct rule was employed by European minorities to maintain control over much larger indigenous populations. Direct rule imposed European social order as the standard to divide populations between those who were civilized and those deemed to be uncivilized. Direct rule had a strong interest in keeping the civilized separate from the uncivilized and primarily did so through the imposition of European law, custom, culture, and language. Direct rule had implementation problems because systems and values clashed. British officials sought to overcome the clash of value systems by translating the logic of the

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[19] George Ekem Ferguson, *The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson: A Fanti Official of the Government of the Gold Coast, 1890–1897*, ed. Kwame Arhin. (Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1974), 110, 112 (cited in Weiss, "European Images of Islam," 96).

[20] Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam," 77; Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa*, 124–26.

[21] The British were aware of chiefs in the Volta Basin. Nayiri, king of Mamprugu, the senior of the chiefs by tradition, was the most influential chief in British territory. The king of Gonja, Yabonwira, was in Salaga, an area under British control. Ya Na, king of Dagbon was in Yendi, which was in German territory. The king of Anufɔ, located in Sansanne Mango, was also in German territory. Some subordinate Anufɔ and Dagbamba vassal groups were in British territory, separated from their king by colonial lines. The king of the Mossi tribes was in Ouagadougou under French control.

[22] The Germans also relied on Hausa-speaking translators to engage with Anufɔ royals in Sansanne-Mango, and with Dagbamba chiefs in Yendi and Bimbilla.

[23] Iliasu, "Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu," 3. The British engaged in what they imagined to be a reconstruction of Nayiri's kingdom, which they claimed had been weakened by raids in the late nineteenth century, when in fact, it was the European invasion which weakened raiding. But it is not likely Nayiri ever controlled land in the way European officials imagined. See also the comments of C. H. Armitage who sought to "bolster" and "rehabilitate" Nayiri's authority (Iliasu, "Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu," 6).

colonial system to their African counterparts through colonial education. See section 2.5.3, below.

There were many clashes around taxation. British administrators had difficulty raising tax revenue to offset the expense of administration for the Northern Territories.[24] "The British had imposed an order which removed the old sources of income that sustained local rulers, particularly warfare, cattle raiding, slave raiding, and the ivory trade."[25]

Even though the British invaded the Volta Basin to protect their profitable markets in the south, the colonial government did not want to take any of those profits to fund the administrative costs for other unprofitable corners of their empire. The British had to provide a rationale for taxation beyond force. A small group of European rulers could not control the majority native populations using brute force. This conundrum is called the native question.[26]

2.1.2. Indirect Rule

To address the native question the British borrowed and further developed an ancient strategy called indirect rule.[27] While direct rule imagined a future for African institutions that were quite similar in identity to European institutions, indirect rule sought a future for African institutions different from European institutions with traditional and diverse African characteristics.[28] Direct rule pursued a civilizing mission; indirect rule was a way to maintain power through law and order.[29]

In 1922, the concept of indirect rule was articulated in a book titled *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*.[30] By 1930, indirect rule had become the

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

[25] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 89.

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

[27] Mamdani identifies three historical developments in the practice of indirect rule beginning with the Roman imperial form of individual indirect rule, where the Romans took tribute from individual potentates such as Herod of Judea. The second iteration is called institutional indirect rule. The British developed this form by working with religious institutions and developing customary law. The third form of indirect was innovated on the American Indian reservation. It is called territorial indirect rule; it binds customary authority and law to a territory, to tribal homelands (Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*, 13).

[28] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 7. Attributed to Lord Hailey, these are distinguished as the doctrine of similarity and the doctrine of difference.

[29] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 50.

[30] F. D Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa.* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1922).

official strategy of colonial rule in the Northern Territories.[31] Eventually, indirect rule was implemented across the British Empire in Africa and adopted by other European colonizers.[32]

Mamdani describes direct and indirect rule as two different approaches to despotism. Direct rule was an unmediated centralized despotism over the "uncivilized" peasant. Colonial law replaced local structures. Indirect rule preserved both colonial law and local rule, embedding one within the other. Local rule had to be transformed and strengthened so a local chief could serve as a powerful proxy authority for the colonial master.[33] Under indirect rule, the chief is "shorn" of local accountabilities.[34] All forms of power are concentrated in the chief: judicial, legislative, executive, and administrative.[35] Lentz's careful study of the record left by colonial officials in the Northern Territories supports Mamdani's claims.[36]

The strategy of indirect rule more effectively solved the implementation problems the British experienced under direct rule. The shift from direct to indirect rule was paralleled by a shift in colonial translation, which adapted its strategy from focusing exclusively on administrative translation to translating texts that would help support the underlying logic of British rule.

2.2. After Invasion: Using Translation to Secure the Ends of Invasion

Just before the turn of the twentieth century, European colonizers competed to secure access to African markets, resulting in the scramble for Africa. Great Britain invaded the southern Volta Basin in 1896 without any real plan for how to administer the vast swath of land and peoples. Without an intention to significantly settle the land as a traditional colony, they faced the familiar native question of how to rule an indigenous majority with a small European minority. Yet now they faced the question on starker terms. How would they rule territory they acquired for defensive purposes without a sizable number of European settlers and with minimal investment in a European center of civilization? They would work through translators and chiefs to pacify the area, mobilize labor to carry goods, build roads, and acquire local revenue to offset costs. The daily activities of colonial administration were to work towards these ends locally by engaging in translational interaction with chiefs and communities. The larger purpose was to

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[31] For the historical details about implementing indirect rule in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, see Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 120–24.

[32] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 82; Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 104.

[33] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 17.

[34] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 43.

[35] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 23.

[36] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 63–64, 289.

secure ongoing access to the more lucrative cash crop economy they had been developing in the South. Eventually, they hoped to educate a cadre of local officials who could take over most of the administration of the Northern Territories.

2.2.1. The First Phase of Colonial Translation

As I mentioned in section 2.1 above, colonial officials' daily interaction with local African agents can be described as "translational interaction," as translators sought to bring about or prevent change.[37] The term translation interaction encompasses all aspects of language translation that help make communication work.[38] Colonial representatives initiated actions to effect trade to accomplish their larger purposes. They needed intermediaries to help them implement judgments, negotiate boundary lines, and implement taxation. I characterize the first phase of colonial-era translation as administrative translational interaction.

2.2.1.1. Muslim Translators

In the initial stages of colonial translational interaction in the Northern Territories, British administrators established a "pragmatic alliance" with the Muslim community.[39] The Hausa language, which Muslim traders and imams spoke, was spoken all the way from Northern Nigeria along precolonial trade routes in various communities across the subregion.[40] British administrators learned to speak Hausa because of its reach across geographical and linguistic borders.[41]

In addition to their communication skills, British administrators appreciated the patriarchal outlook of Muslim translators, their submission to power, and their scribal skills. [42] The early translators helped the British work with local chains of command. They were important in the collection of a tribute tax.[43] However, as

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[37] Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 16.

[38] Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 17.

[39] Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam," 77.

[40] For a discussion of the precolonial development of Hausa as a language of trade and translation see section 1.3.2 above.

[41] Watherston, "Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," 351.

[42] The patriarchal and universal assumptions of Islam are similar to the patriarchal and universal assumptions that Pietist Christianity brought into Ghana through the Basel mission's practice of missionary-colonial Bible translation. See chapter 3, section 3.2.2, n. 14 below.

[43] In the 1930s, the use of local languages was not practical for in-depth exercises like collecting tribute taxes. Hausa-speaking malams were chosen to help with collecting tribute taxes because of their ability to write and communicate. Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam," 81.

the shift to indirect rule continued, and as more young people could write in English, the reliance on Hausa speakers and Muslim scribes waned in the 1930s.[44]

Eventually, British officials shifted toward using languages other than Hausa, like Dagbanli and Dagara.[45] Culturally, the British, like the German and the French, were cautious of allowing the unifying power of language and religion to gain traction against colonial forces. They were cautious of the Hausa language and Islamic religion for the same reasons they appreciated them. Colonial powers used force to quell opposition to make sure they retained control over those who were helping them sustain colonial overrule.

2.2.1.2. Religion Must Translate the Rationale for Colonial Over-Rule

Like the British, German administrators established a strategic German-Muslim alliance for colonial overrule.[46] For the Germans, Islam brought a written language, a written law, and a code of ethics that colonizers felt could unify northern peoples in an organized manner under colonial rule.[47] Initially, Christian missionary work was banned from the north by both Germans and British, because it was felt Islam was more suitable for Africans. Experience had taught them that Christian missionaries and Christian converts were difficult to govern.[48]

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[44] Weiss argues that contrary to early Christian missionary criticisms, there was no British policy regarding Muslims. The perception of a pro-Muslim disposition was contextually applied and pragmatic. The early pragmatic alliance in the Northern Territories eventually shifted to indifference. The implementation of indirect rule contributed to a weakening of the relationship between British administrators and Muslim malams. The lack of a clear policy towards Muslims resulted in Muslims not attending colonial schools, which kept Muslims out of colonial administrative positions. Nevertheless, Islamicization continued and the British failed to deal with it effectively ("Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam," 74, 82–85, 87–88).

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

[46] Weiss, "European Images of Islam," 101.

[47] Colonial powers hoped to establish what Mamdani calls "institutional indirect rule" (*Neither Settler nor Native*, 2020, 13). The competition for power between the German, British, and French made this strategy unlikely to succeed.

[48] Holger Weiss, "Islam, Missionaries and Residents. The Attempt of the Basel Missionary Society to Establish a Mission in Yendi (German Togo) before WWI," *Mission Und Macht Im Wandel Politischer Orientierungen*, 2005, 173. See also Andrew E. Barnes, "'Evangelization Where It Is Not Wanted': Colonial Administrators and Missionaries in Northern Nigeria during the First Third of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25.4 (1995): 412–41. Barnes argues that British administrators had much antipathy for southern Nigerian converts to Christianity and the Southern Nigerian missionaries.

In 1904 and 1905 Muslim itinerant preachers contributed to uprisings in northern Nigeria and northern Cameroon. Colonial governments became concerned that "Islam could emerge as an 'anti-colonial force' if not checked."[49] Colonial governments viewed these itinerant preachers as "alien" Muslims who came from outside the colonial area.[50] The itinerant preachers were jailed, executed, or expelled by 1906.[51]

After the potential of anticolonial uprisings had been averted, colonial governments continued to work with Muslim translators as intermediaries. Nevertheless, colonial powers began to hedge their bets, inviting Christian missionaries into the northern areas including: the French Catholic White Fathers (1906),[52] the Basel mission (1909),[53] the Wesleyan mission (1913), and the Assemblies of God (1931).[54] Christianity would be allowed as long as it would not mobilize alliances and resistance across the subregion.

What about Africanist religious practice? In most cases, African religion was simply viewed as backward and treated as inconsequential. However, when British authorities perceived the power of local shrines as a threat, the shrines were attacked.[55]

Africanist religious practice was tolerated as long as it did not foment resistance. Islamic and Christian religious practice was tolerated if it translated the rationale for the people to submit and serve the colonial governing interests.

2.2.1.3. Creating Mental Maps, (Mis)translating Concepts

Once colonial authority was secured, colonial officials, with the help of translators, could go about trying to figure out how to govern. Compared to the small cultural differences between groups of African settlers in the precolonial era, as discussed in chapter 1, the cultural distance between colonial officials and the northern Ghanaian culture was immense. The conceptual basis of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century British modernism was vastly different from the precolonial lifeworld of the African region. Colonial officials used translation to

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[49] Weiss, "Islam, Missionaries and Residents," 178.

[50] Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam," 80.

[51] Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam," 79, 93, n. 92.

[52] Benedict Der, "Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana, 1906–1940," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 15.1 (1974): 41–46; Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam," 95.

[53] Weiss, "Islam, Missionaries and Residents," 179–80.

[54] Paul Frimpong Manso, "Theological Education of Assemblies of God Ghana," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 33.2 (2015): 162–75.

[55] Public Record Office, London 96/523, Armitage to Ag. Col. Sec. 4 Dec. 1912; National Archives of Ghana, ADM 61/5/12, Lawra-Tumu District Diary, entries for 6 February and 6 April 1937 (Cited in Der, "Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana," 56, 61).

comprehend and control African realities. Africans used translation to cope with, manage, deflect, and exploit the realities of colonial rule for their own interests.

As part of their effort to comprehend the area, colonial authorities made maps of the area which delineated the boundaries of the Northern Territories.[56] As part of that process, authorities created mental maps of the social area based on their perceptions of local boundaries.[57] Space was delineated as belonging to certain tribes. A mental map of space indicates which land belongs to which ethnic group.[58] According to Lentz, the mental maps British officials created were built upon the translational interactions that George Ekem Ferguson had with Muslim scholars. Ferguson wrote down his descriptions of the northern territories, which helped create mental maps for the British. Ferguson made an analytical distinction between two kinds of indigenous societies he encountered. Ferguson discerned and described a difference between "countries with organised government," and wild tribes, "naked living in independent family communities." Fergusons's distinction between "barbarous tribes" and "organised governments" would later be referred to as "stateless" and "state" societies.[59] This distinction continued to be applied throughout the colonial era.[60]

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

Some precolonial societies embedded networks of hierarchy into their more basic kinship system, such as the Dagbamba ritual kingdom, characterized by the

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[56] Watherston, "Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," 344–47.

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

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

[59] Ferguson, *Papers of George Ekem Ferguson*, 99, 109, 117. Lentz argued that Ferguson described links between "tribes" and "states." British officials collapsed these links and perceived "tribes" and "states" as distinct (Lentz, "Ethnicity in Ghana," 9).

[60] Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam," 77.

politics of nam. Colonial administrators delineated Ferguson's heuristic distinction, characterizing these societies as state societies or chiefly societies.[61]

Colonial administrators described the decentralized kinship groups not incorporated into the politics of nam as *stateless*, *acephalous*, *headless*, or *chiefless*. These are functional terms to an extent, but they are also inaccurate at best and pejorative at worst. Amadiume has suggested using the term "anti-state" societies to indicate that they intentionally organized in a more egalitarian fashion.[62] Laura Grillo suggests "dual-sexed collectively governed societies."[63]

The African frontier thesis, described in section 1.1.3, offers an alternative analysis. It considers agricultural kinship-based groups to be the most common on the African frontier. All societies on the frontier developed from this common basis.

Some kinship group societies expanded into the frontier using a metropole-settlement pattern. Using processes of fission, they replicated their metropole deeper into the frontier. Some of those societies found it advantageous to retain formal and hierarchical alliances. Normally this involved trade alliances and control of technologies such as the horse and the gun. Some of these allied groups developed into ritual kingdoms or state societies. They were kinship-based societies who used the politics of nam to embed allied kinship groups into a system of hierarchy based on loyalty to the paramount Na or king.

So-called state societies were closer to the European ideal. However, in the precolonial era MacGaffey claims that states such as Gonja, Dagbon, and Mamprugu were not very state-like. They conquered people rather than lands and did not have the technological capacity or desire to institute administration practices over the lands they conquered.[64] While the state societies sort of fit the European model, the decentralized societies such as Lobi, Grunshi, Isale, Dagarti, Kusasi, Konkomba, and Bimoba did not fit the European model at all. Kopytoff refers to these societies as "ethnically ambiguous marginal societies."[65] Such societies are "apt to annoy the administration for whom the tribal model—with its essential unity, clear body of customary law, and unambiguous legitimacies—is better suited to the task of maintaining public tranquility."[66]

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[61] Examples include the ritual kingdoms of Dagomba, Gonja, Mamprusi, Nanumba, and Wa.

[62] Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 24–26.

[63] Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke*, 64.

[64] "These kingdoms came into existence (probably) as the leaders of multiple raiding parties, attracted by mineral deposits and the vulnerability of trade networks, formed alliances among themselves … to protect themselves and their territories from one another" (MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 22).

[65] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 5.

[66] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 5. Section 2.3.2 indicates customary law was constructed to appear to be clear and unambiguous, even though it is contested.

Kopytoff has described an alternative ethnographic map that may fit the pre-colonial data better. Kopytoff writes, "instead of being a patchwork of classic tribes, it was through the centuries more like a shimmering beadwork of repetitive patterns—hamlets, little and large chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires—each of which was in constant structural motion as it changed its shape from one pattern to another."[67]

In the creation of mental maps, African translation participants engaged in translational interaction with colonial officials. African translation participants engaged in (mis)translation with colonial authorities motivated by their own local interests.[68] Both sides were generally content, wittingly, or unwittingly, with their mutual misunderstandings. Lentz writes, "So, while African informants translated the British concept of 'tribe' into kinship terms, conversely the British extrapolated tribal histories from local patriclan narratives. In doing so, British colonial officers and the new chiefs were working hand-in-hand."[69] The mutual misrepresentations occurring in colonial encounters of translation could benefit the local interests of an African communicator by extending a kinship group's, a lineage's, or a particular house's influence and power within the colonial system. In other words, translators could help facilitate understanding, but they could also facilitate a measure of mutual misunderstanding as each side communicated something with enough ambiguity for its own interests to remain in play.

2.2.1.4. Developing the Colonial Public Transcript

The tacit and mutual misrepresentation that characterizes colonial translational interaction can be understood better by applying James C. Scott's taxonomy of political language between dominant and subordinate social groups.[70] Scott

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[67] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 77.

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

[69] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 90.

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

writes, "It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation."[71] The mutual misrepresentation is what Scott calls "the public transcript." The public transcript is normal (mis)communication between elites and subordinates that assumes and reinforces elite dominance.

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

This is not to suggest that translation participants were consciously aware of the mistranslations they were negotiating between them. John and Jean Comaroff theorize that there is a continuum between ideological awareness and unawareness. In between these two is the crucial space of "partial recognition" and "inchoate awareness."[72] From that inchoate awareness emerges forms of "experimental practice."[73] I will discuss (neo)indigenous levels of awareness of what was happening in colonial translation below in section 2.5.

The mutual misrepresentations that translation participants arrived at would be asserted repeatedly, and eventually, the participants settled into an uneasy understanding. Over time, these mutual mistranslations and transformations of African realities became legitimized hegemony, a part of the assumption of the public transcript, "deeply inscribed in everyday routine, custom, and convention."[74]

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

> Hegemony, we suggest, exists in reciprocal interdependence with ideology; it is
> that part of a dominant worldview which has been naturalized and, having hidden
> itself in orthodoxy, no more appears as ideology at all. Inversely, the ideologies

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

[71] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2.

[72] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:29.

[73] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:31.

[74] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:25.

of the subordinate may give expression to discordant but hitherto voiceless experience of contradictions that a prevailing hegemony can no longer conceal. [75]

Hegemony is never total. The traces of underlying African realities remain and threaten to unmake hegemony.[76] Occasionally, Africans would contradict the colonial hegemony, questioning colonial mistranslations of African realities, sometimes in violent ways, sometimes in ways that annoyed or frustrated European intentions.[77]

2.2.1.5. Characterizing Translational Interaction

In general, Europeans would engage in translational interaction to attempt to comprehend and control African realities on their terms. British officials appreciated those translators who understood European and local outlooks on issues and could mediate between them.[78] African interlocutors engaged in translational interaction, trying to understand, deflect, and resist the new realities the Europeans were asserting on their context. Most African translation participants were seeking to extend the interests of the African chiefs, headmen, or shrine owners to whom they were loyal. However, the situation was fraught with ambiguity, and frustration could occur because mutual understanding was really a set of mutual manipulations containing contradictions. In the colonial era administrative translational interaction could range from achieving some level of understanding, engaging in genuine miscommunication, intentional manipulation of miscommunication, to communicating with tacit resistance.[79]

Each side was hoping to construct a relationship that would be profitable moving forward, given their situation. But where would this profit come from?

2.2.1.6. Problems in the Implementation of Direct Rule

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

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[75] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:25.

[76] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:25, 27.

[77] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 92–96; 57–62.

[78] In the colonial North-West province of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast J.A. Karbo was a translator who worked with many colonial officials, even officials who were working against each other. Karbo eventually became the Lawra-Naa. British officials appreciated him for his "progressive" ideas and for his "authority." He could carry out proposals because he mediated between the British and local sides of things (Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 128). Karbo's success suggests to me that he was a master at navigating tacit misrepresentation.

[79] Tacit resistance includes "gestures that silently and sullenly contest the form of existing hegemony" (Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:31).

African leaders could frustrate British intentions through their own misunder-standings, mistranslations, and misrepresentations.[80]

Translational interaction under what Scott calls the public transcript involved tacit misrepresentation of colonial officials and translators working with local chiefs, each trying to find a profitable arrangement in an emerging and fraught situation. For both sides to profit, expenses would have to be borne by some other group. Under direct rule, during the performance or application of power, without a savvy set of translators, it often became too clear that an African chief and a colonial official were not in agreement. This potentially weakened both the offi-cial's and the chief's positions over would-be subordinates. In the North-West province of the Gold Coast, critically minded colonial officials like Eyre-Smith were tempted to try and solve chieftaincy disputes, only to discover a bottomless set of interest-led manipulations.[81] Commenting on the situation in Yendi and Dagbon, which was then the Southern province of the Northern Territories, Com-missioner A. W. Cardinall wrote in 1928, "In reality; the administration is a direct one; the chiefs are practically powerless; they have neither revenue nor authority; they have tended to become more sergeant-majors, through whom the administra-tion can address the rank and file."[82] It is clear that Cardinall wants to empower local chiefs to collect revenue and favors indirect rule.

It is important to recall that the sources of revenue for precolonial kingdoms had been taken away by British law: "particularly warfare, cattle raiding, slave raiding, and the ivory trade."[83] What indirect rule added to policy implementation was a layer of government between the colonial government and the masses of Africans. In between were the chiefs. Indirect rule created a limited number of chiefs for colonial authorities to interact with, who were given powers to produce their own revenue, a portion of which would go to colonial administration. Indi-rect rule was conceived as a better way to maintain a united front between colonial officials and chiefs in front of the general populace to extract resources from the general populace and make the administration cost less acute for the British and more profitable for the chiefs. Under indirect rule, colonial officials had to

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[80] "These patterns disguising ideological insubordination are somewhat analogous to the patterns by which, in my experience, peasants and slaves have disguised their efforts to thwart material appropriation of their labor, their production and their property; for exam-ple poaching, foot-dragging, pilfering, dissimulation, flight" (Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, xiii).

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

[82] Ferguson and Wilks, "Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana," 332.

[83] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 89.

maintain the public appearance of supporting a chief.[84] To make this effective, indirect rule was constructed as a reinstatement of precolonial authorities, but now they were incorporated as instruments of the European state with extractive powers.[85] A chief was understood to be the royal inheritor of a precolonial kingdom. To help construct this scenario, acts of translation/transformation, especially written translation, would prove useful.

2.2.2. The Second Phase of Colonial Era Translation

I characterized the first phase of translation in the colonial era as administrative translational interaction, including all aspects of translational communication facilitating colonial governance. This section focuses on the second phase of translation in the colonial era—written translations of oral tradition. Written translation is conceptualized as a specific aspect of translational interaction that became an especially useful strategy in support of indirect rule. It should be noted that the first phase of translation, translational interaction, continued alongside the second phase.

Key actors facilitated colonial acts of written translation. From the colonial side, the key actor was district commissioner H. A. Blair, who became known as daɣbonbia, "a son of Dagbon," for his knowledge of the Dagbanli language and culture. From the African side, the chiefs of so-called state societies had the most to gain, Ya Na of Dagbon, Yabonwira of Gonja, Nayiri of Mamprugu, and Bimbilla Na of Nanuŋ, respectively. A key translator who helped Blair was Malam Halidu, "a very cultured Hausa."[86] Blair intended to establish customary states as instruments of the colonial government. Blair used translation to communicate his intention and to justify it as a logical continuation of past practices.

Blair convened a meeting of Gonja chiefs in May 1930 and a second meeting with Dagomba chiefs in November of the same year.[87] Through these meetings,

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

[85] Ferguson and Wilks, "Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana," 337.

[86] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 25.

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

Blair, chiefs, and translators began the process of translating and codifying in writing in English "the traditional constitutional forms and procedures of the two states," gaining a "consensus on the nature of the chiefly hierarchies," which, under indirect rule, would provide the link between the commoners and the British administration.[88] The official report produced by the British Administration called the meeting held with Dagomba chiefs, "the Constitutional Congress of Dagomba chiefs."

Blair also wrote "A History of Dagomba" attaching it to that report. Blair's history is an important translation of Dagbamba drum poetry, a genre known as lunsi. In the process of translating lunsi, the genre of drum poetry was transformed into written historiography. Another translation of a similar drum chant was collected, translated, and published by E.F. Tamakloe, an Ewe from the south who wrote in German.[89] A third translation was collected by colonial official Duncan-Johnstone and appended to Blair's report on the Constitutional Congress of Dagomba chiefs.[90]

Analyzing these translations, using an approach to translation studies called skopos theory, the British colonial government functioned as a "translation commissioner," calling for acts of written translation that were intended to change things in society. [91] The British convened constitutional meetings of chiefs and produced translated products from these meetings. They held constitutional meetings in the North-West province of the Northern Territories as well. It is worth highlighting in the North-West province that tindamba neighborhood shrine owners were not invited or refused to come to the constitutional meetings.[92]

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[88] Ferguson and Wilks, "Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana," 337.

[89] Tamakloe was an Ewe southerner who had learned Dagbanli and wrote in German. He worked with Namo Na, the chief drummer in Yendi in the 1920s. He absorbed European thinking as evident in his translations (MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 25). Is it possible that Tamakloe was trained by the Bremen mission and formerly involved in mission translation?

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

[91] Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 20. There can be a difference between an "initiator" and a "commissioner." The commissioner is the one who formally calls for translation and has the material power to influence the production of translation.

[92] In the North-West province, during meetings of the Lawra confederacy, District Commissioner Amherst indicated that the "earth priests" refused to participate in the "chief's discussions" even though they were offered some money to attend. Amherst believed the earth priests were jealous of the chiefs ("Handing Over Report," Lawra-Tumu District, 7 Nov 1938; "Lawra-Tumu Annual Report," 1941–42; Lawra-Tumu Informal Diary 23 July 1944, cited in Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 130). In Dagbanli the singular is tindana and the plural is tindamba. In Ɔmampulli the singular is tindana and the plural is tindandima.

Further meetings were held to begin the process of establishing and system-atizing what became known as customary law to be used by Native Authorities. These subsequent meetings involved translating certain genres of oral tradition into written form in English for the purpose of making enforceable judgements. Lentz describes how this process of translating and codifying native law took place in the North-West province of the Northern Territories. In the Lawra District divisional chiefs and their advisors were convened regularly to discuss issues of revenue collection, hierarchies of chieftaincy, marriage custom, inheritance, and land rights. "The results of these discussions were recorded in English by the dis-trict commissioner and his native clerk, and then, following oral translation back into Dagara, were signed by the divisional chiefs."[93] There are two acts of trans-lation described by Lentz. First, the source of the written text were the discussions that took place in the presence of the clerk and the district commissioner.[94] These discussions presumably occurred in Dagara and needed to be translated and sum-marized in some way in the clerk's head before being written down in English. Second, there was an act of oral translation from the written English document back into Dagara before the document was signed by the chiefs.[95]

The result of transforming oral tradition into customary law created what Mamdani called a useful "whip" for chiefs over their subjects.[96] Placing customary law in the hands of chiefs shorn of popular and traditional restraints solved a major problem for the British—how to extract taxes.[97] Under direct rule British officials were failing to raise sufficient tax revenue in the Northern Territories.[98]

In the precolonial era some kinship/kingship alliances on the African frontier used horses, guns, and warfare strategies to extract wealth from African homes and communities through raiding and forced tribute. Under indirect rule the

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[93] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 130.

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

[95] Sakai describes the translational shift that takes place here as the "schema of cofigura-tion." This transition moves from heterolingual address to homolingual address in the image of two nation states in dialogue (Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, 15).

[96] "There was nothing voluntary about custom … colonial custom was enforced with a whip, by a constellation of customary authorities—and, if necessary, with the barrel of a gun, by the forces of the centralized state" (Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 50–51). This author has heard anecdotes of how tradition was used in court to extract exorbitant fines.

[97] Since chiefs embodied tradition, tradition was no longer a check on a chief, and since the popular opinion of a community could not remove a chief, and since colonial commis-sioners publicly supported their chiefs, indirect rule liberated chiefs from all institutional constraint (Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 43, 48).

[98] Ferguson and Wilks, "Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana," 332–34.

descendants of some of those collectives were formed into customary states, referred to as Native Authorities. Native Authorities were called upon to raise income for themselves and the British administration. But since warfare, cattle raiding, slave raiding, and the ivory trade had been outlawed and could not be used as a method of coercion, Native Authorities needed an effective and legal tool for extraction. Customary law wielded by Native Authorities proved to be that useful legal tool for the extraction of local resources into government coffers and into the private coffers of chiefs.

The creation of Native Authorities appeared to be a return to precolonial realities, only now incorporated as an organ of the state.[99] In reality, the reconstitution of Native Authorities was uncustomary. All moments of power: judicial, legislative, executive, and administrative, were concentrated in one person, the chief, whose despotic regime of extra-economic coercion "breathed life into a whole range of compulsions: forced labor, forced crops, forced sales, forced contributions, and forced removals."[100] Customary law provided the new source of income that both the British officials and the chiefs wanted. Customary law provided chiefs with access to court fees and the power to engage in "extra-economic and extralegal" extractions.[101]

British officers only occasionally were called upon to enforce customary law. Force was now constantly applied by chiefs, especially through the chief's police, in such a way that the laws of British citizenry did not apply. Peasants who worked the land became increasingly "containerized" as tribal or ethnic groups, in such a way that the rights of individuals were placed in opposition to the so-called custom of higher-ranked tribal groups.[102] This was the "opportunity and genius of British colonialism in Africa."[103] It created a decentralized despotism that divided the world between citizens and subjects, "between those who labor on the land and those who do not."[104] In other words, in most cases, British law did not apply

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[99] The reconstituted traditional authorities, with their tribunals, courts of appeals, and treasuries, were formally established as instruments of local government by a series of enactments of 1932: The Native Authority (Northern Territories) Ordinance, the Native Tribunals ordinance, and the Native treasuries ordinance. The chiefs, divisional chiefs, and councilors became salaried officials of the Native Authorities (Ferguson and Wilks, "Chiefs, Constitutions and The British in Northern Ghana," 339).

[100] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 23. The author has heard testimonies of forced labor on Nayiri's farms as late as the 1970s.

[101] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 122. See also section 6.1.2, below.

[102] Another crucial aspect to the British practice of "territorial indirect rule," inspired by the American Indian reservation, was the binding of customary authority and law to "tribal homelands" (Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*, 13).

[103] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 51.

[104] "What we have before us is a bifurcated world, no longer simply racially organized, but a world in which the dividing line between those human and the rest less human is a

to Africans under Native Authorities. They did not have recourse to the rights of British citizens. Instead, as Mamdani indicates, they were subjects.

Colonial translation of precolonial oral genres into customary constitutions and customary laws was key in establishing the distinction between citizens and subjects, establishing the saliency and justification of territorial indirect rule by colonial governments.

2.2.3. Summary

The second section of this chapter characterizes two phases of colonial translation. The first phase of colonial translation involved communication and translational action as part of the day-to-day work of colonial administration. Translational action was a two-way street as British and African agents (mis)translated their concepts into one another. This reduced conflict on some level while keeping competing intentions in play. I described this theoretically using Scott's notion of the public transcript. The ambiguities involved in (mis)translating concepts made for an unstable public transcript. Eventually, the British transitioned to indirect rule as a way of offering paramount chiefs' much more power inside the newly established boundaries of their defined territorial kingdoms, which were composed of many precolonial shrine neighborhoods. The second phase of colonial translation began when written translation was called upon to establish the constitutions of neoindigenous Native Authorities. Written translation supplemented by oral translation helped establish customary law as a useful tool for extracting resources from the populace in a way that the populace had limited recourse to appeal to human rights enshrined in British law. Customary law applied only inside the established boundaries of neotraditional kingdoms.

In the next section, I explore the heart of this chapter's argument. Written translation of precolonial invasion narratives supported the underlying logic for customary constitutions and customary law justifying the local right of royals to rule over commoners by rights of translated and transformed notions of invasion and conquest. This further supported the underlying logic and goal of colonial invasion.

2.3. Colonial Translation of/as Invasion

In the third section of this chapter, I build on how written translation served the intention of colonization by describing in greater detail how colonial authorities commissioned written translations to establish precolonial traditions that recounted raids as official histories of local invasion and conquest. I evaluate the ideology of the translated invasion narratives. Then, I describe the translation *of*

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line between those who labor on the land and those who do not" (Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 61).

invasion *as* cultural invasion. I conclude the section with a theory of translation as invasion.

Under indirect rule, written translation was used to transform a genre of oral tradition useful on certain occasions into a founding invasion myth applicable to all people subordinate to the Na and the ritual politics of nam. In section 2.2.2 above, I mentioned the three written translations of a genre of drum poetry called lunsi by E. F. Tamakloe, District Commissioner Blair, and Chief Commissioner Duncan-Johnstone. Specific instantiations of lunsi drum chants were translated and written down in English and German through ethnographic encounters.[105] The encounters took place in 1928, just as indirect rule was being implemented more thoroughly in the Northern Territories. The three written texts were amalgamated into one narrative, which has become the received tradition recounted as popular history in Dagbon to this day.[106] It is commonly understood that the invasion narratives recount the time when Na Nyagse, son of Na Sitobu, the founder of Dagbon, conquered the area that became Dagbon by killing the tindamba, the neighborhood shrine owners, and replacing them with his own relatives as chiefs.

2.3.1. Evaluating the Ideology of the Invasion Narrative

MacGaffey evaluates the historical content of the invasion narrative in three parts. First, he analyzes the drum chant texts in terms of the ideological functions of the chants presented as history.[107] Second, he provides the first close reading of the sources of the drum chant texts.[108] Third, he talks to tindamba, who, despite the

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[105] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 49. To supplement his argument, MacGaffey recounts what his ethnographic encounters were like with drummers and other persons who had knowledge of the tradition, including youth and elders. He describes how the tradition is remembered by different members of the group, what happens when there are difficulties in memory, and how the ancestors are consulted. He describes how the tradition is shaped in a way that is comfortable for the here and now.

[106] MacGaffey indicates the sources of the received tradition are the three texts, amalgamated together and supplemented with background information obtained from early twentieth century anthropology (*Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 27).

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

[108] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 37–68.

claims of some of the texts, still exist in Dagbon.[109] My analysis will hone in on the translational aspects of MacGaffey's historical evaluation.

2.3.1.1. Understanding Lunsi as Drum Chant Poetry

To understand MacGaffey's rereading of history, it is important to understand the tradition of drum chanting on its own terms. Lunsi is a genre of drum chant poetry performed by official drummers who chant praise to a benefactor, normally a chief, as they drum. The drummer-poet's job is to praise the benefactor who has commissioned him on that day, recounting the heroic deeds of the benefactor's ancestors in the poetic form of drum chant. The drummers occupy a specialized segment in society.[110] In their repertoire, they chant the story of the feats of Na Gbewa (or Na Bawa) and his sons recounting their military victories in near and far off places and times.[111] A drummer's performance is constrained by the situation, or what scholars of oral tradition and folklore call the performance event.[112]

Speaking theoretically, the concrete circumstances of the performance event in which a particular poetic genre is expressed are linked with the poetic form being circulated in performance. In other words, the event is an integral part of how the cultural form makes meaning. The word *event* indicates that both the time and the space when and where a cultural form is performed are an integral part of meaning making. Subsequent performances of a story or another poetic form refer to past instantiations of the same story. Still, the new performance event always changes, however minutely, how meaning is communicated. Material changes in time and space in the circulation of a cultural form recalibrate the meaning-making process. Larger changes in meaning-making occur when technologies and epistemologies shift.[113] MacGaffey's research is interested in the ideological functions of lunsi as oral performance and the ideological shifts that occurred when lunsi were written down through colonial translation.

Before lunsi was transformed into written media through colonial translation, MacGaffey argues that lunsi had several useful ideological functions. Lunsi were

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[109] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 27, 75.

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

[111] Iliasu, "Origins of the Mossi-Dagomba States," 101.

[112] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 68; Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 79–94, 130–33.

[113] Drawing on the work of Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Starr, Charles L. Briggs describes the way moving a cultural form (like oral poetry or a written text) involves two contradictory processes—linking and delinking to material "stuff" and particular practices in time and space. See Briggs, "Contested Mobilities: On the Politics and Ethnopoetics of Circulation," *Journal of Folklore Research* 50.1 (2013): 287.

used to incite chiefs in battle, by praising a chief's ancestors for their feats of nam, or politics. During funerals or festivals, lunsi functioned to praise the current dynasty and its chiefs. The specific performances of lunsi that describe the Dagbamba foundational myth have the ideological effect of setting the royal family apart and legitimating their right to migrate from one royal title to another in hopes of advancing to that of Ya Na, the highest title in Dagbon. The myth helps explain why chiefs are the mobile element of the population, perpetual strangers in Dagbon. Furthermore, the alleged primordial slaughter of tindamba is effectively an assertion of exclusive political control of the representatives of the authority of Yendi, the capital of Dagbon.[114] It should be noted that one of the three written versions, Blair's version, does not mention the slaughter of tindamba.[115] It is not only the tindamba who are silenced through the translation of the invasion narrative but also all commoners who are portrayed as conquered.[116]

2.3.1.2. Translating Oral Poetry into Written Historiography

I am describing how certain instantiations of lunsi were translated and "literized" in a process that Sheldon Pollock calls "vernacularization."[117] Linguistically, lunsi were translated from Dagbanli into German or English. The discourse was "entextualized."[118] The medium was also translated from oral performance into a written text.[119] The shift of technology and epistemological practice from the oral performance of a cultural form to the written circulation of a cultural form drastically changed the ways lunsi made meaning. Written media stripped away the

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[114] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 23–24. My own research indicates that Konkomba people referred to Yendi as Yaann.

[115] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 25.

[116] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 19, 38.

[117] "In vernacularization local languages are first admitted to literacy (what I sometimes call literization), then accommodated to "literature" as defined by preexisting cosmopolitan models (literarization), and thereby unified and homogenized; eventually they come to be deployed in new projects of territorialization and, in some cases, ethnicization." Sheldon Pollock, "India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000–1500," *Daedalus* 127.3 (1998): 41.

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

[119] "In significant part this is also a task of translation: both intersemiotic translation—that is, rendering oral discourse in written form—and often interlingual translation as well.… It is also a problem of decontextualization and recontextualization: how to lift the oral text from its "traditional" oral context and recontextualize it in a printed work." Richard Bauman and Charles L Briggs, *Voices of Modernity Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16.

performative situation linked to the specifics of time and space and made a particular instantiation of lunga appear more enduring in its details than otherwise would be the case.[120] The written genre transformed lunsi from functioning as praise poetry, understood according to the rules of its genre, into written historiography, understood according to the ideology of written textual history.[121] The texts were framed as foundational myths by virtue of their attachment to the colonial report of "the Constitutional Congress of Dagomba Chiefs." The texts served as reference points for the colonial government, and they were read as history in colonial and postcolonial schools.[122]

Translation scholar André Lefevere shows how the genre of a translated text influences the ideological impact a text can have on its audience. A translator, which Lefevere refers to as a refractor, a rewriter, or an author, may have an ideological position that is embedded in a text. But it is the genre of the text that is likely to allow the ideological concept embedded in the text greater or lesser influence on the popular audience.[123]

By changing the genre from orally performed lunsi to written historiography, the assertions of power implicit in the narrative appear more substantial, less perspectival. For example, the presence and obvious influence of the benefactor who hired the drummer on the content of the narrative is suppressed. Furthermore, the interests of the colonial commissioner who called for "the Dagomba Constitutional Congress" and who published the written translations are suppressed. The translation commissioner may wish to appear to be a neutral party since the events recounted in the written text happened hundreds of years before colonial presence.

The shift of genre from lunsi to written historiography helps explain why the invasion narrative has become so influential, taking hold in the popular northern Ghanaian mindset from the time of colonization through independence to the present.

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[120] Lunga is singular; lunsi is plural.

[121] A popular phrase in Ghana is, "Book don't lie." That statement affirms the ideology of text being asserted in a way that "deflects skepticism." MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singer*, 24. For a summary of the ideology of text see Morgan Gray, "Ideology of the Text in Pathways Project," The Pathways Project, July 13, 2011, http://www.pathwaysproject.org/pathways/show/Ideology_of_the_Text. See also John Miles Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet: Pathways of the Mind* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 117–24.

[122] When texts begin to enter a literary tradition, Pollock refers to it as "literarization" ("India in the Vernacular Millennium," 41).

[123] André Lefevere, "Composing the Other," in *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, Translation Studies (London: Routledge, 1999), 75–94.

2.3.1.3. Translating History from a Chief's Perspective

Translation of an oral genre into a written text helped privilege and strengthen the chiefly perspective on Dagbamba invasion and conquest. In precolonial time, the performance of lunsi drum poetry were employed when chiefs and their armies went into battle. Lunsi were also performed as drum chants for chiefly patrilineal groups during funerals and festivals. In colonial time, through written translation certain instantiations of lunsi were transformed into a more general historical memory, asserted as valid and applicable for all sectors of society to be read in school as history. In effect, written translation promoted one occasional point of view of past events as the standard point of departure for all relevant political memory in northern Ghana. This perspectival act of written translation was an ideological assertion, the results of which were repeated, again and again, as the basis for customary law.

For those who could claim to have a royal perspective, customary law became a locus of conflict. MacGaffey indicates that issues that would have been solved through mortal conflict in the past resorted to a reified oral tradition to engage in conflictual politics in the present. The only way to resolve the conflict was if one group could assert their perspective on custom and enforce it over the other. Among competing gates to chieftaincy, such decisive clarity has proved unobtainable.[124] Thus, as I note in chapter 6, violent flare-ups and armed conflict are a part of the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century experience in northern Ghana.

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

2.3.1.4. Talking to Tindamba

The strongest critique of the invasion model of history in Dagbon is astoundingly simple. Scholars have long recognized that tindamba still exist in Dagbon because they participate in the coronation processes of Ya Na. Nevertheless, their existence has not encouraged scholars to find out their perspectives on the invasion narrative. MacGaffey spoke with tindamba who live in several locations inside Dagbon. According to the tindamba, their offices were never snuffed out. Na

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[124] MacGaffey points to the fact that the dispute between Andanis and Abudus which began in the 1880s and which would have been resolved through violence, remains unresolved. *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 50. The point is not to promote contemporary violent conflict resolution, but to suggest that oral tradition needs critical assessment, not looked at as a panacea which unproblematically connects to pristine precolonial records.

Nyagse never came to many of their communities. How is it that Na Nyagse killed all these tindamba and replaced them with chiefs when so many of their offices are still being perpetuated in the present? Why did scholars not recognize this in Dagbon?[125]

2.3.2. Colonial Translations of Invasion as Invasion

After independence, the same invasion stories translated and promoted by colonizers were taken at face value in the postcolonial era by scholars of history and anthropology. MacGaffey questions the invasion model on historiographic and anthropological grounds. Historically, he argues that while there may have been invaders and aborigines, it is more likely that there were bands of settlers who migrated over time. Furthermore, from an anthropological perspective, it is clearly not the case that tindamba in Dagbon were slaughtered since so many persist in the present. The perspectives of living tindamba do not corroborate lunsi chanted in Yendi.

So why have these invasion narratives been so dominant in scholarship and popular conceptions? MacGaffey suggests that invasion and conquest stories are tantalizing because they give the impression of creating history by inserting a sharp breaking point in time. He comments that invasion stories served three ideological functions, each useful in a different context. Invasion stories serve "as charters for states, as legitimation for colonial rule, and as certification for the indigenous political capacity of independent Ghanaians."[126]

Colonial translation was fundamental to the success of the three ideological reasons MacGaffey articulated. Translation was an important part of the substructure that helped the invasion narrative become part of the accepted hegemony in politics, scholarship, and popular perceptions.

2.3.2.1. Invasion Narratives as Postcolonial/Neocolonial Hegemony

The relationship between hegemony and ideology as described by the Comaroffs helps to make clear the reason for the acceptance of invasion narratives in the postcolonial era. For most Ghanaians invasion narratives have entered the realm of hegemony. Invasion narratives have become accepted history. The Comaroffs,

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

[126] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 19.

drawing on Foucault, suggest that for ideology to enter hegemony, it must be enforced over time, inscribed in daily routine and custom.[127]

How did invasion move from ideological assertion to generally accepted hegemony? Colonial translation strengthened the move from ideology into hegemony in support of the invasion narrative's previously articulated three ideological functions.

The first ideological function of the invasion narrative was that it provided a useful charter for customary African states, such as Dagbon or Mamprugu. The act of translating lunsi into written historiography helped establish the charter for a customary state because written translation suppressed several ideological assertions that would have been apparent in oral performance. (See section 2.3.1.2 above.) The addenda which Commissioner Blair titled "A history of Dagomba," which was attached to "the Customary Constitution of Dagomba Chiefs" in 1930, gives the impression that the British officials and the Dagbamba chiefs were working together to restore precolonial structures. But the acts of translation underlying their action had significantly altered the precolonial structures, not the least of which was strengthening the office of the chief to the point of eliminating the office of tindana from official customary considerations.

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

Translation, and especially written translation, makes it appear that one is perceiving something in an unmediated fashion. The occasional nature of translation as an act is suppressed, hiding important aspects of power. The discipline of translation studies has increasingly brought to scholarly awareness that translation involves ideological activity. Translation is not a neutral act.

MacGaffey claims that the second ideological function of invasion narratives is to justify colonial rule. This is a subtle argument. MacGaffey is asserting that colonial rulers felt that the narratives that described Dagbamba chiefs as invaders and conquerors of other African tribes justified their own invasion, conquest, and administration of the British portion of the Volta Basin.[128] In other words, translation may help accomplish ideologically effective work for positions other than what they are directly describing. The subtlety of MacGaffey's claim corresponds with Lefevere's assertion that the genre of translation is the most significant factor in determining ideological effectiveness. Genre and ideology seem to work on a level below overt consciousness. In other words, by talking about precolonial

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[127] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:25.
[128] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 19; Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 99–100.

invasion rather than colonial invasion and by surreptitiously transforming the lunsi genre into historiography, the translated invasion narrative worked below the level of popular consciousness. That may be why the translation of the invasion narrative has been so ideologically effective.

The third reason scholars did not challenge the invasion narrative was a result of the social location of scholars after independence. Scholars were in urban centers rather than rural locations. In urban centers, Africans were struggling against colonization as direct rule rather than indirect rule, and they often misread the rural dynamics of colonization. Direct rule painted Africans in racial terms in a manner that relegated them as inferior and subordinate, as objects and not actors. For African scholars and European scholars of Africa, located in universities which were situated close to urban areas, the urban face of colonial despotism was the most salient. For Africans in population centers, rural precolonial invasion narratives were ideologically useful. The narratives depicted Africans as powerful agents, conquerors who acted in powerful ways. These resources could be drawn on for inspiration against colonial powers who treated Africans as objects. The decentralized despotic face of colonial rule for the peasantry in rural locations was not in focus. Scholars missed this distinction partly because their social locations prevented them from discerning the rural face of despotism, which implicated rural elites in its processes. Perhaps urban activists downplayed or missed this analysis as well.

To return to Mbembe's language of entanglement, a theme from chapter 1 which has not featured as much in chapter 2, African bodies are entangled. As scholars and as activists, African bodies are entangled with the systems of colonialism, even as they struggle to free themselves from it. I revisit the notion of embodied entanglement and its relation to translation in chapter 4. What is important here is that for several reasons, the infrastructure of indirect rule was left intact, even after independence.

The critique offered here also relates to Amadiume's critique of the Eurocentric scholarship discussed in chapter 1. Amadiume criticized male European scholars of Africa who did so much work analyzing African culture but missed the way patriarchy and masculine imperial invasion inserted themselves into their scholarly descriptions of precolonial history and African ritual practices.[129] Perceiving one's entanglements requires critical dialogue from different sectoral points of view.

2.3.2.2. Invasion Narratives as Support for the Colonial Capitalist Mode of Production

Because of its relation to the theme of colonial invasion, I will focus on MacGaffey's second ideological function of precolonial invasion narratives. Any

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[129] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 29–51.

attempt to justify the colonial invasion of African contexts was questioned during the quest for and achievement of political independence. However, liberation from invasion was only achieved on a political level. The translations of precolonial invasion narratives as historiography remained after independence, and the ideological work they did faded into the realm of hegemony. The invasion narratives were unchallenged among the educated northern populations. The implied link between Western capitalists and African elites, which the invasion narrative helped to justify, remained after independence. Bernard Magubane writes, "…the British and the French were eager to hand their power to elites who would keep the African world safe for capitalism, above all for their own capitalism."[130] Magubane clarifies that the relationship between agents in the postcolony and their former colonial heads was not an equal relationship. "Elites in Africa after colonialism were not owners of the means of production, they were rather class agents or allies of the foreign bourgeoisie."[131]

Colonial capitalism was based on the actual invasion of African (and other world) contexts as a strategic and temporary political move useful for establishing a system that supports the extraction of resources from African contexts to enrich Western bank accounts and economies. Translational and cultural actions were chosen to support the ends of invasion. The ends of invasion were a working system of extraction of resources so that business owners can acquire large profits accumulated from the sale of goods that they produce from the resources they extract from all over the world.

Translation played a significant role in this process. The translation of the narrative of invasion established a justification for colonial rule in the cultural psyche of the population. This was done by making several implicit associations between more recent colonial assertive actions with past actions conducted by African ancestors. The colonial translation of invasion made indigenous invasion and conquest appear to be a historical fact rooted in an objective precolonial narrative.[132] This made the contemporary colonial conquest appear similar to actions taken in the past led by royal chiefs performing "feats of nam." Furthermore, invasion and conquest established the right to rule, tax, and extract natural resources. The translation of invasion implied that European representatives and African chiefs were the rightful inheritors of benefits established through conquests. Accordingly, the invasion narrative implicitly argues that both groups have inherited the right to extract wealth because of the military superiority of their ancestors or their government. The translation of invasion implicitly justified

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[130] Magubane, "Evolution of Class Structure in Africa," 186.
[131] Magubane, "Evolution of Class Structure in Africa," 190.
[132] The translation process described here correlates obvious ideological assertions of power with less overt historical assertions of power. These translated historical assertions are presented as if they are accepted historical facts. Thus, translation can facilitate turning overt ideological assertion into accepted hegemony.

maintaining the current system where ruling classes extract and retain the profits with only minimal investment back into the communities. Communities lost the right to natural resources because they were invaded and conquered. Chiefs and royal classes retain some rights as inheritors of the benefits of so-called precolonial invasions and conquests as allies of the foreign business class.

In the next subsection, I articulate the relationship between culture and economy and between European invaders and African royalty in theoretical terms emerging from the northern Ghanaian context.

2.3.3. Articulating a Theory of Translation as Invasion

So far in this chapter, I have described the practices of colonial translation as they developed in the northern Gold Coast. Below, I summarize three points that describe colonial-era translation in this context emerging from my description. I call this a theory of translation as invasion because these three points summarize a form of translation that persists in the postcolony after political independence. The theory emerges from the context of the northern Gold Coast/Ghana. I think it has relevance as a form of translation practiced analogously in other postcolonial contexts. This theory of translation as invasion can be summarized in three points:

1. Purporting to neutrally translate/transmit the perspective of an elite sector of society as the universally relevant perspective for interpreting what is legal, right, true, and just and presenting that perspective to everyone else in society as the true starting point of history, legality, etc.
2. Translating ancient invasions and conquests as charter texts that establish a psychological and quasi-historical justification for present relations of domination and extraction between foreign business interests and local elites in service to the colonial capitalist mode of production.
3. Failing to translate into written media the plurality of perspectives and counter voices embodied in the many genres of oral tradition.

Point one indicates that textual translation in colonial time privileges the perspective of elite sectors of society over all other sectoral social perspectives. This ideological practice remains intact in contemporary translation practices in religion, development, government, and business.[133] As I will argue under point three, privileging elite perspectives in translation practice continues to be useful in applying customary law without the hassle of the precolonial practice of multisectoral dialogue.

Addressing point two, the translation of the invasion narrative documented in this chapter writes history in a way that implicitly justifies the rights of British invaders and African royals to extract resources from African contexts. In other

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[133] Similarly, in section 2.3.2.1 above, I argued the infrastructure of indirect rule was still intact even after independence from colonial rule.

words, the translation of the invasion myth into historiography provides an appeal to historical precedent. The colonial invasion by the British and the translated precolonial "invasion" myth work together to privilege British and African royal interests. The translated invasion myth assured colonial administrators they had the right to extract money from the populace to offset the costs of administering an economically unprofitable region.[134] The invasion myth also reassured Dagbamba royalty that they deserved the right to extract resources from the descendants of those their ancestors had extracted resources from in precolonial time. The theory of translation as invasion suggests that the goal of invasion and political colonization was to establish the rights of extraction. This right was aided by translating the invasion myth and transforming it into quasilegal historiography. Once extraction was legally initiated and the logic supporting the practices were established in the local consciousness with the help of the translation-as-invasion paradigm, colonial rule was no longer necessary because the ends of invasion had been achieved and secured.

Extending the argument from the colonial past into the entangled present, the translated invasion narrative implicitly justifies the logic that some groups have the right to extract resources from African contexts while other groups or sectors of African society have no claim on those resources.[135] In the postcolonial present, the theory of translation as invasion suggests that foreign business interests and local elites will continue to use translation to extract wealth from African contexts. That was the goal of temporary direct political colonization.

Looking forward into the following chapters, this suggests that invasion narratives in translated Bibles are entangled with colonial invasion narratives. When biblical invasion narratives are read in many African contexts, they are translated and read in a way that is entangled with forms of translation as invasion, contributing to justifying the ongoing logic of neocolonial/postcolonial extraction. Those who invaded and those who claim to have conquered are now perceived to have God on their side. Foreign businesses and political and royal elites perceive themselves to have a right to extract resources from African contexts. In postcolonial/neocolonial time, they often do so in a manner that is sealed off from

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[134] Colonial accounting sought to make each region balance its own books even though the Northern Territories were invaded, not for their economic value, but to protect lucrative southern markets.

[135] Even using the language of natural resources depends upon what Kathryn Yusoff calls an extractionary "geologic." Yusoff challenges the epistemological separation of geology and biology. "In an act of intrusion, I seek to undermine the *givenness* of geology as an innocent and natural description of the world, to see its modes of inscription and circulation as a doubling of the notion of property–property as a description of mineralogy and property as an acquisition (as resource, land, extractive quality of energy or mineral)" (Yusoff, *Billion Black Anthropocenes*, 10).

national economies.[136] However, as chapter 3 argues, the problem goes beyond translating/interpreting biblical invasion narratives, the colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm includes a mindset and a series of entangled translation practices that must be decolonized.

Addressing point three above, translation often involves shifts in medium or mode.[137] In the colonial era, the written translation of oral tradition from the perspective of royals into customary law was a major reduction of oral tradition. Just as only one sectoral perspective was selected as a valid starting point, only one genre of oral tradition was selected for written translation/transformation, a novel genre of codified written documents useful for legal extraction, expressing praise for the feats of the ancestors of chiefly patrilines. The popular perception was that "Book don't lie." If anyone questioned that, the book and its controlling oral interpretation in customary law were backed up with the force of the chief's police and further backed up by colonial military might. As written and oral customary law was repeatedly enforced, it became easier for colonial authorities and their allies to assume these assertions to be valid in relation to their subordinates. Over time, colonizers and their allies had less of a need to offer justification for extraction. The agentive assertion of rights for extraction became a given, hidden in law, custom, and precedent.[138]

2.3.4. Summary

Section 3 continues the argument of the chapter regarding the way colonial translation supported the ends of political invasion. It focuses on how written acts of translation helped the British administrators transition from direct to indirect rule. Written translations transformed a genre of oral tradition called lunsi, constrained by the rules of its genre and the nature of performance events, into written historiography. These written translations appeared timeless and applicable to all sectors of society. The written translations also appeared to be acontextual. They made the influence of space and circumstance less obvious. The written translations raised the perspective of the royal class above all others in the society as the starting point for establishing historical legitimacy. Three written translations of specific instantiations of drum chants performed in Yendi around 1928 were

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[136] Achille Mbembe, "Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism. Introduction," *African Studies Review* 44.2 (2001): 5.

[137] Translation scholars are realizing that translation is usually multimodal. See Gunther R. Kress, *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication* (London: Routledge, 2010), 10. Monica Boria et al., eds., *Translation and Multimodality: Beyond Words* (Routledge, 2019).

[138] Some may protest at this point, arguing I have deemphasized what was offered in return for this transaction. That is because at least at this point in history, from the perspective of the peasants, it was not clear what the British and their Dagbamba overlords were offering in return for their extractive activities.

attached to the colonial report of "the Constitutional Congress of Dagomba Chiefs" published in 1930. These instantiations of lunsi described precolonial raids in the flowery language of praise poetry. As written translations attached to the charter of the emerging Dagbamba customary state, the rhetoric in praise of precolonial raids was reframed as describing precolonial invasions of the Northern Territory and the complete conquest of the many disparate kinship groups that inhabited the land. The written translations of the invasion myth were amalgamated in the popular consciousness and supported the legitimacy of the overrule of Dagbamba chiefs and, by extension, the overrule of the British government. The analysis in section 2.3 bridges into the postcolonial/neocolonial era when it describes why these invasion narratives were perpetuated even after Ghanaian independence. From the colonial practice of translation in the context of northern Ghana, a theory of translation as invasion was articulated as a strategy that supports the establishment and ongoing justification for the colonial capitalist mode of production. The next section of this chapter explores a range of neoindigenous responses to the colonial translation of invasion as cultural invasion.

2.4. (Neo)indigenous Responses to Colonial Translation

The colonial acts of translation that occurred in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast generated a variety of indigenous and neoindigenous responses. African translators, like their colonial counterparts, engaged in (mis)representing, whether consciously or unconsciously, the other's articulations. (See section 2.2.1.5 above.) I will focus on two types of African responses to colonial (mis)translations. The first set of responses rejected colonial starting points. They did not accept the colonial acts of translation as having any merit, offering any compelling justification, or having any legitimacy. Often, ethnically ambiguous groups responded in this manner. The second set of responses involved working within the colonial value system. These responses were articulated in discourse that was intelligible to the dominant system. For example, an ethnically marginal group might adopt chieftaincy. Or a parent might send a child to school to learn skills that translated well into the colonial estate-based value system described in section 1.4.5.2 above. These are examples of accommodation or translating oneself into the dominant value system.

To help us understand the range of indigenous responses to colonial acts of translation, I return to the Comaroffs' analysis of ideology and hegemony as two points on a continuum between an overt assertion of power and a hidden assertion of power. As I briefly alluded to in section 2.2.1.4 above, promising to return to this point in more detail, the Comaroffs theorize a range of indigenous awareness regarding colonial assertions. Between the conscious and the unconscious "is the most critical domain … for the analysis of colonialism and resistance," that is "the realm of partial recognition, inchoate awareness, of ambiguous perception, and

sometimes, of creative tension."[139] Resistance to colonial assertions of power can range from articulate acts of resistance to refusal. In between articulate resistance and refusal lies the area of partial "recognition." "Out of that recognition, and the creative tensions to which it may lead, arises forms of *experimental practice* that are at once techniques of empowerment and the signs of collective representation."[140]

The colonial assertions, which indigenous groups were responding to, were undergirded by acts of translation, which, over time, began to function at the level of the hegemonic. The few historical responses highlighted below are indigenous attempts to get a handle on what was happening to them, which fall variously on the spectrum of awareness as described by the Comaroffs.

Cindi Katz draws on the Comaroffs and James Scott mentioned above and offers some additional language that describes a range of activities within the larger category of resistance. Katz prefers to save the category of resistance for those practices that "draw on and produce a critical consciousness to confront and redress historically and geographically specific conditions of oppression and exploitation."[141] Resistance for Katz works at the conscious level. It is overt, collective, and strategic.[142] A level below resistance is what Katz calls "reworking."[143] Projects of reworking recognize collective problems, but rather than attempting to undo or question hegemonic relations, projects of reworking "attempt to recalibrate power relations and/or redistribute resources." Katz continues,

> This is not to say that those engaged in the politics of reworking accept or support the hegemony of the ruling classes and dominant social groups, but that in undertaking such politics, their interests are not so much in challenging hegemonic power as in attempting to undermine its inequities on the very grounds on which they are cast. There are two interconnected aspects to material social practices of reworking: one is associated with redirecting and in some cases reconstituting

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[139] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:29.

[140] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:31 (emphasis original). "Through such reactions, "native peoples" seek to plumb the depths of the colonizing process. They search for coherence—and, sometimes, the *deus ex machina*—that lies behind its visible face. For the recently colonized, or those who feel the vibrations of the imperial presence just over the horizon, generally believe there is something invisible, something profound happening to them—and that their future may well depend on gaining control over its magic" (Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:31–32).

[141] Cindi Katz, *Growing up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 252.

[142] Katz, *Growing up Global*, 251–57.

[143] Cindi Katz, "On the Grounds of Globalization: A Topography for Feminist Political Engagement," *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 26.4 (2001): 1223–24; Katz, *Growing up Global*, 247–51.

available resources, and the other is associated with people retooling themselves as political subjects and social actors.[144]

At the most basic level communities who are being oppressed must struggle to survive. Survival itself is an achievement and viewed in that light, survival is resistance. Katz prefers to call individual acts that foster collective survival by reinforcing local knowledge and community values practices of "resilience."[145] Resilience includes "everyday acts of neighboring—the mutual relations of care giving, the sights on the future that help both young and old keep hope, stay alive, and even thrive."[146] Acts of resilience are often used against the people that employ them. They are often contradictory and, in some ways, reinforce the oppressive system. Nevertheless, resilience is often a necessary step that can lead to collective reworking and eventually to strategic resistance.

Practices of strategic resistance operate at what the Comaroffs call the conscious level, while reworking and resilience operate from the realm of partial recognition. Katz observes there is a collective nature to reworking that borders on resistance.[147] However, practices of reworking lack the full-out strategy of resistance. Practices of resilience lack the collective and systemic approach of reworking and the strategic character of resistance, still, practices of resilience are important for survival and reinforcing individual and community dignity. Those interested in strategic resistance should pay attention to the language expressed in practice of reworking and resilience because that language emerges from the consciousness of ordinary people, that is, from the community's realm of partial recognition.

2.4.1. Reworking/Resisting Colonial Tribal Translations

On one end of the Comaroffs spectrum is tacit refusal. Ethnically ambiguous societies resisted the imposition of the colonial translation of tribe by refusing to respond on colonial translation's terms.

Colonial authorities did not understand ethnically ambiguous kinship groups. Through policy they sought to translate kinship groups into the colonial tribal model. (See also sections 1.1.3 and 2.2.1.3 above.)

Ethnically ambiguous groups perceived the colonial tribal model to be an assertion of power that lacked legitimacy. They responded by continuing to live out their own value systems regardless of colonial assertions. The responses of kinship groups were not coherent to the colonial mind. For example, kinship groups

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[144] Katz, *Growing up Global*, 247.
[145] Katz, "On the Grounds of Globalization," 1225; Katz, *Growing up Global*, 244–46.
[146] Katz, *Growing up Global*, 246.
[147] Katz, *Growing up Global*, 251.

engaged in *feuds* with other kinship groups.[148] Feuds were long protracted disputes over hunting rights, fishing rights, and marriage arrangements. Rather than ignore such feuding, colonial officials tried to stop feuding, bringing them deeper into the realities of ethnically ambiguous groups.[149] Such colonial interventions were unsuccessful.[150] This further confused and frustrated colonial agents.[151]

From the perspective of kinship groups, feuding was a response to colonial and customary imposition.[152] Other forms of disguised insubordination included non-compliance, foot-dragging, pilfering, dissimulation, feigned ignorance, and fleeing.[153] These forms of misdirection made extraction more difficult without rising to the level of direct conflict.[154] These tacit refusals of colonial imposition were often quite effective at frustrating colonial and customary authorities, who wanted to avoid violent responses directed at customary overlords.[155]

2.4.2. Self-Translation in the Customary System of Chieftaincy

Another response to colonial imposition is to translate oneself linguistically and culturally into a form the dominant system recognizes. Cronin refers to this as "auto-translation" or "self-translation."[156] Auto-translation occurred in the customary system of chieftaincy and the colonial education system.

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[148] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 57–62.

[149] In January 1918 in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Chief Commissioner Armitage pursued three tactics to make feuding more difficult 1. Increasing police presence in Konkomba villages. 2. Banning displays of bows and arrows. 3. Restricting Konkomba mobility on British French border (Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 59).

[150] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 62.

[151] What are the differences between tacit refusal and articulate resistance to colonial imposition?

[152] Two things changed this. First, by 1918 Dagbamba chiefs were given the authority by the British to collect weapons from decentralized groups like the Konkomba. This fundamentally changed power relations (Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 60). Second, the advent of indirect rule and customary law created fines. Fines were issued to many Konkomba households and kinship groups. This contributed to mobilizing resistance to customary authority. Talton writes, "Despite the ineffectiveness of colonial courts for resolving Konkomba conflicts, they produced records that provide a window into Konkomba society during the colonial period" (Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 67).

[153] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, xiii.

[154] It is unclear to me how feuding should be analyzed in Katz's model.

[155] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 92–96; Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 9–10.

[156] "In auto-translation speakers of a language translate themselves into the language of the other." Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), 147.

Some ethnically ambiguous groups changed their resistance to the system of chieftaincy by having one from their own ranks become a divisional chief in the larger system of nam. This required a novel change in the precolonial system of nam, something occasionally encouraged by the colonial government.[157] Since colonial times, occasionally, individuals from ethnically ambiguous kinship groups garner support from their kin members to introduce a chieftaincy skin into their shrine neighborhood. In precolonial time, this chief had to be from the royal lineage. But in colonial time, innovations occurred such that an individual from a commoner kinship group might be able to become a subchief.[158]

This form of auto-translation is an attempt to gain some control over an op-pressive system. In the Comaroffs' language this would qualify as experimental practice. In Katz's language, this may qualify as resilience or reworking, depend-ing on how the innovation redistributed resources to the collective or prevented collective oppression. Individuals and groups used auto-translation to "retool" themselves into "political and social actors"[159] as their economic and political landscape was changing.[160]

2.4.3. Translating the Self through the Educational Value System

Another form of retooling oneself into an actor in the colonial era was achieved as individuals attended colonial, missionary, and Islamic schools.[161] Colonial-era

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[157] See the discussion about innovations in northern Ghana in the communities of Kpaliba and Bimbagu (Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 164–65, 169–70).

[158] See the story of Djar, an early innovator who became a sub-chief in the community of Kpaliba (Tait, *Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 11; Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 98–100; Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 164).

[159] Katz, *Growing up Global*, 247; 250–51.

[160] The question is do chiefs from ethnically ambiguous kinship groups prevent extraction of resources or redistribute extracted resources in a way that is helpful to the populace.

[161] In the North-West province missionary education lifted particular versions of African languages above other varieties. The missionary practice was in essence a miniature ver-sion of the language hierarchies of indirect rule, where one indigenous speech variety is lifted above the others, while English stands at the top of the hierarchy (Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 2; Der, "Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana," 41). Early colonial reports indicate significant local interest in Muslim schools. But as the philosophy of indirect rule became the order of the day, colonial administrations gradually ignored Muslim education. However, this did not stop the process of Islamicization. Some sectors of society saw a need for it. The lack of attention the colonial government gave to it sepa-rated Muslims from the developing colonial system. There was an exception to this separation in the bilingual "modern" Muslim schools of the Ahmadiyya mission, which started on the Ghanaian coasts in the nineteenth century. Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam." See also David E. Skinner, "Conversion to Islam and the

education systems demanded auto-translation or self-translation on linguistic and cultural levels.[162]

Education systems reflect language and cultural hierarchies. In colonial schools, English was dominant, but there was official space to practice African languages on occasion.[163] The language policy of colonial-era education duplicated the tribal hierarchies of indirect rule, where one indigenous language or speech variety is lifted above the others, and it is assumed that English stands at the top of the hierarchy.[164] The postcolonial government implemented a similar language policy, naming twelve languages in Ghana as official languages.[165]

Missionary-colonial education reflected what Donald Horowitz calls a "ranked ethnic system."[166] Ranked systems make one group a higher caste than the others.[167] The British stood at the top of the ranked ethnic hierarchy by rights of conquest. Their language, English, was above all African languages.[168] Certain African tribes and languages were ranked above others.

Resistance to this system of hierarchy involved a certain amount of concession to the logic of the educational system. Educated activists believed that embracing education and integrating the skills and value systems it taught would help their people have more agency in the future. Student activists from ethnically ambiguous kinship groups wanted their disparate kinship groups to organize into a united tribe so they could achieve greater political autonomy equal to those tribes at the top within the ranked ethnic system.[169]

Promotion of 'Modern' Islamic Schools in Ghana," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 43 (2013): 426–50.

[162] Deborah Shadd has discussed the dynamics of linguistic translation for First Nations students in Canadian education. Shadd cites the politically established hierarchy of languages in Canada. Then Shadd claims, "the degree of self-translation required of speakers increases proportionally to the distance in status of their language from English as one descends the hierarchical linguistic ladder." See Deborah Shadd, "On Language, Education and Identity: Minority Language Education Within the Canadian Context" (PhD Thesis, Ottawa, University of Ottawa, 2015), 191. A similar observation would be applicable in the colonial Ghanaian system with its own system of ranked ethnicity.

[163] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 114.

[164] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 2.

[165] Sebastian K. Bemile, "The Promotion of Ghanaian Languages and Its Impact on National Unity: The Dagara Language Case," in *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention*, ed. Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 204–25.

[166] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 22.

[167] Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* , 29.

[168] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 101–2.

[169] "Konkomba ethnicity, therefore, was a product of Ghana's political modernization and development. Yet tradition remained the primary means through which local societies were

From the perspective of the ruling classes, this form of resistance was more articulate than tacit rejections of indirect rule, such as feuding and dissimulation. However, it is unclear whether this form of resistance can transcend the boundaries of indirect rule by moving past the limitations of tribal containerization. Similarly, it is unclear whether those who use auto-translation to "detribalize" themselves in the hopes of becoming citizens rather than subjects are able to transcend the boundaries of European individualism to live in human community in relationship with ancestors, other creatures and the living environment in a way that interrelates with the indigenous/precolonial African lifeworld.

2.4.4. Competing Forms of Auto-Translation under Colonization

Frequently, forms of colonial resistance or reworking generated by auto-translation in the colonial education system did not mesh with the strategies of tacit resistance employed by ethnically ambiguous kinship groups.[170] The kinship groups were resisting the colonial translation of tribe educated activists were trying to reform into tribes to gain a measure of power.

Sometimes different forms of auto-translation competed against each other for power under the overarching colonial system. The British could use those engaging in auto-translation to become subchiefs in the customary system against those engaging in auto-translation in the colonial education system. These forms of auto-translation, each taking a different pathway to acquire some power under colonization, were pitted against one another.

Colonial education offered Africans a new pathway into the estate-based value system, providing new offices of influence that did not depend on the precolonial rule of the firstcomer and traditional social hierarchies. Education provided a pathway to acquiring limited forms of power in the colonial political and economic system, often filled by individuals who had little access to power in the indigenous/precolonial estate-based system.

The British colonial government used indirect rule to limit their responsibilities to the common people. They chose to work with the customary system that colonial translation helped establish. Colonial commissioners continued to modify the customary system to achieve the ruling dynamic they wanted. When it

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pushed to the margins of local politics, and it served as the means through which they challenged their marginalization" (Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 127).

[170] Talton tells the story of the Konkomba Improvement Association in the 1950s. Educated activists sought to convince the elders of their home kinship groups and other related kinship groups to stop feuding, a strategy that had been effective in resisting colonial extraction (Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 121).

suited their agenda, they introduced new skins into the chieftaincy system; they also experimented with implementing a popular voting system for chiefs.[171]

To achieve their political and economic goals, the British commissioners wanted to work with educated people who were amenable to implementing their tax policies. The British were willing to violate the principle of indirect rule if it was to their political or economic advantage. They were willing to introduce contradictions into their ruling system. These contradictions in the system resulted in factions, often resulting in kinship groups or intratribal factions vying for power and exploiting different sides of the system's internal contradiction. The groups vying for pathways to power often lived alongside each other. These contradictions occasionally result in forms of tribal conflict.[172]

I return to the issue of intertribal and intratribal conflict in chapter 6. The point I wish to emphasize here is the way two forms of auto-translation led to an internal struggle for power, neither of which challenged colonial overrule. The auto-translation of kinship groups into tribes with chiefs responds to the logic of indirect rule. The auto-translation of acquiring missionary-colonial education to get a paid position in the colonial system reflects the logic of direct rule. Katz argues that many forms of resilience involve "contradictory outcomes."[173] This dynamic illustrates the need for an oppositional politics that operates beyond the playing field established by colonial categories and rules.

2.4.5. Acts of Conjuring as Experimental Practice

The last category of indigenous response to colonial translation was through acts of *conjuring*, related to the practice of African spiritual-material worldviews. One could argue that acts of conjuring underlie all the responses described above. Africans consult shrines to solve problems.[174] Diviners conjure as a form of spiritual-social translation. (See section 1.4.6 above.) Rather than viewing this as unproductive, the Comaroffs' analysis suggests that consulting shrines and conjuring through divination comes from the liminal space of partial recognition, where people engage in "experimental practice" to try find some "coherence" to their colonial experience, to attempt to gain some control of what is happening to

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[171] MacGaffey reports that even in Dagbon in the 1940s the British introduced novel changes into the selection of the Ya Na. Rather than using divination and elders, the Ya Na was selected by the vote of the Selection Committee (*Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 60–61.)

[172] Drucker-Brown traces the roots of a postcolonial conflict in the escarpment area of northern Ghana to colonial policy. See Susan Drucker-Brown, "Local Wars in Northern Ghana," *Cambridge Anthropology* 13.2 (1988): 97–99. See also Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 169–70.

[173] Katz, *Growing up Global*, 250–51.

[174] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*.

them.[175] To use Katz's language, conjuring fosters resilience. In certain situations, colonial authorities recognized conjuring's potential to serve as an inspirational source for oppositional resistance.[176]

2.4.6. Summary

Section 2.4 describes a variety of indigenous responses to the ideological assertions implicit in cultural invasion. Focusing on the theory of translation as invasion, this section describes (neo)indigenous translational responses to the ideology implicit in colonial translation as invasion. Indigenous responses to translation as invasion were theorized in two ways. First, drawing on the Comaroffs, indigenous responses were placed on a pole from overt resistance to silent refusal. Between the two poles is the realm of partial awareness, where experimental practice occurs. Indigenous groups creatively experiment with how to respond to translation as invasion. Second, drawing on Katz, overt indigenous resistance was distinguished from experimental practices that rework colonial ideologies from inside the assumptions of the colonial system. Katz characterizes a third form of indigenous response as resilience. Indigenous responses manifest resilience when groups respond by managing as best as they can within the rules of the system, albeit in ways that often reinforce the oppressive assumptions of cultural invasion.

Using the Comaroffs language, where do indigenous responses to colonial ideology/hegemony fall on the spectrum of awareness? Which responses are tacit refusals, which are articulate responses that expose and contest the justification of colonial extraction practices, and which hover somewhere between these two as experimental practices?

The colonial translation of invasion resulted in a system that aligned colonial interests with neoindigenous leaders in support of extraction. The colonial government developed two keys to support extraction. The first key to extraction was a system of indirect rule and ranked ethnicity to keep costs down and limit colonial responsibilities to the populace. This key depended upon alliances between neoindigenous African royals and colonial leaders. The second key to extraction was having relations with a few educated elites who could facilitate extraction and minimize resistance. The second key depended upon alliances between educated neoindigenous Africans and colonial leaders.

For those kinship-based groups at the bottom of the ranked tribal hierarchy, one way to respond to the ranked hierarchy was to refuse to play by the colonial rules. Many kinship groups continued to feud with each other and practice infant betrothal based on their precolonial kinship-based value system. (Infant betrothal was one of the causes of feuding). Such activity responds to the logic of invasion

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[175] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:31.
[176] Der, "Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana," 56, 61.

by refusing it, usually in nonviolent ways, but occasionally in violent ways. Both nonviolent strategies of dissimulation and violent responses of feuding make it more difficult for colonizers to extract resources. To the extent colonizers are not desperate for resources in an area, both violent and nonviolent actions may be effective. However, when colonizers decide that an area must be subdued to protect the system of extraction, both nonviolent and violent responses risk brutal colonial enforcement. [177] The more effective resistance in Katz's language clearly communicates broad goals to the people and the colonizers.

Another indigenous response to the assertion of ranked ethnicity justified by colonial translation was to begin auto-translating oneself and one's group into the estate-based value system by practicing chieftaincy according to the terms of indirect rule. This indigenous response attempts to expand who can be a subchief beyond the royal lineages. While this response reworks who is eligible to be a subchief, it does not challenge the premise that chiefly perspectives are the ideal starting point for law and social policy or that chiefs have a right to extract wealth from their base. Clearly, a few acts of inclusion at lower levels cannot challenge the overall logic of the ranked ethnic system, illustrating Katz's observations about the limitations of what she calls resilience and reworking.

A third indigenous response was to embrace Western values learned from the missionary-colonial educational value system and to share them with their kinship groups to get themselves and their communities out of systemic exploitation. The colonial education system functioned like direct rule, teaching a modernist value system. This value system was a partial breath of fresh air to students from subordinate ethnic groups under the policy of indirect rule. Many such students preferred to embrace the values of the English colonial system because they were above the customary system. In so doing, they sought to reduce their exploitation. Student activists engaged in auto-translation to help themselves and their communities gain more control of their economic prospects and political space by appealing to language, cultures, and values that were above the containerized customary system. They were activists working for social change.

Paulo Freire argues that educated revolutionary actors often unreflectively employ the same tools of colonial education as the colonizers.[178] Educated

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[177] There are usually individuals or groups in the society who are willing to play by the colonial rules. Colonizers portray those who cooperate as reasonable, and those who do not as unreasonable dissidents. The reasonable ones may or may not get shares of the profit. Local collaborators get shares of the profit and are empowered to extract more resources from the stubborn groups who refused to play by the legalized rules.

[178] Freire calls this the banking model of education. Education is conceived as an act of depositing. Teachers replace self-expression with a "deposit." Students are the empty vessels which need to be filled. As depositories of knowledge, they are expected to be passive receivers, who capitalize on the deposit they receive by memorizing and repeating.

activists may see themselves as "opening the eyes" of the African masses with the values of Western education, rather than engaging in reciprocal dialogue for social transformation. In relation to the invasion myth this has an obvious weakness. Given that the invasion myth was taught in school as the foundation for northern society, how could educated elites find a way to respond to that myth without engaging the epistemological perspectives of their home kinship groups? Could they challenge the colonial capitalist system of extraction from within Western epistemologies alone?

A fourth indigenous response to invasion was the response of consulting shrines and conjuring through divination. In chapter 1, I argued that in indigenous/precolonial time, divination is a form of spiritual-social translation. By divining the causes of their social problems, both diviners and those who consult diviners are trying to gain control over what is happening to them and their society.

When compared with the theory of translation as invasion being developed in this chapter, precolonial conjuring does not appear to imitate invasive practices.[179] It is not clear how conjuring can link consciousnesses together to help society see beyond the confines of exploitation in their context to the larger vision of colonial extraction across contexts and, beyond that, to see the larger vision of a society built on lives of mutual dignity and inclusion rather than invasion and exploitation.[180] According to Katz's taxonomy, consulting shrines for spiritual-social translation can be understood as communities building internal resilience. One wonders how consulting shrines as spiritual-social translation might also contribute to reworking colonial categorizations from inside colonial logic without giving into the invasive assumptions of colonial categories. If such acts of (re)translation are possible, such reworking could contribute to more overt forms of articulate resistance.[181]

Knowledge is a gift bestowed by the knowledgeable upon those considered to know nothing. See Paulo Freire, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1985), 21, 100. See also Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, A Continuum Book (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 58.

[179] Contemporary African films indicate that some divination practices have evolved to become tools of power for internal and individual competition to accumulate wealth. See Ogbu U. Kalu, "Tangled Roots in the Mangrove Forest: The Cultural Landscape of Political Violence in Africa," *Studies in World Christianity and Interreligious Relations* 48 (2014): 150.

[180] "Decoloniality emerges out of the need to delink from the narratives and promises of modernity—not to resist, but to re-exist." Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, On Decoloniality (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 145–46.

[181] Katz, *Growing up Global*, 243–57.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the colonial invasion of the Volta Basin, including what is now known as northern Ghana. I offered a theoretical description of the two faces of colonial rule: direct rule and indirect rule. Under direct rule, colonial administrators engaged in translational action with Muslim imams as translators and intermediaries as they sought to communicate with Dagbamba nanima or chiefs using the Hausa language. The religion of Islam was useful for colonial officials as long as it helped translate the rationale underpinning colonial rule. Religion—whether Islam, Christianity, or Africanist—had the potential to foment anticolonial resistance, and so colonial officials controlled anticolonial religious tendencies with force. Once the religious tendencies to resist were controlled, translational interaction was necessary to help colonial officials and local chiefs work out their alliance for governing the peasantry. Translational interaction included the process of comprehending space and making maps that clarified boundaries that were inherently ambiguous in the precolonial era. I argued that translation was often mistranslation because the cultural distance between colonizers and Africans was so far and because the mutual manipulations that occurred were better left implicit such that each side negotiated misunderstandings in a way that kept their interests in play. I offered some theoretical language to help analyze how (mis)translation occurred, including Scott's description of the public transcript and the Comaroffs' dialectical poles of hegemony and ideology.

As the colonial era progressed, there was a shift toward the philosophy of indirect rule. This shift also involved the translation of texts to establish customary constitutions and customary law. I focused on the colonial translation of lunsi drum chant poetry. Lunsi was semiotically translated from the sign system of oral performance into the sign system of the written genre of historiography. This translation was a reduction of one genre of oral tradition—extracted from its performative context. Written media appeared to disconnect lunsi from the limitations of temporal and contextual performance. The genre of translated and written lunsi was asserted as normative history for all people inside the colonially defined territory of Dagbon. Moreover, translating this genre alone to the exclusion of other genres privileged the perspective and priority of royal patrilines as the basis for establishing history and law. The privileging of the perspective of chiefly patrilines in the translation of customary law gave colonial authorities and chiefs a means of extracting resources from the peasantry through taxation and legal fines. The transformation of this oral genre into *the* written history was particularly useful in developing an underlying rationale that justified both colonial invasion and the right of chiefs to rule in the minds of citizens.

Over time, the assertion of the invasion narrative in government policies, courts, and schools made the invasion narrative appear to be fact. The invasion narrative convinced people that the rights of conquest and the logical basis for

ranked ethnicity were rooted in historical necessity. Ranked ethnicity meant that Dagbamba communities under paramount kings and divisional chiefs were judged superior to the ethnically marginal communities like the Konkomba, Bimoba, Grunshi, Lobi, Isale, Dagarti, Kusasi, and others kinship groups that did not "eat" the politics of nam—at least until innovations in chieftaincy occurred in colonial era. The colonial translation of the invasion narrative persists in many people's minds in the postcolonial era.

This historical analysis of translation in the colonial era led me to distill it into a theory of translation as invasion, described succinctly in section 2.4.3 above. The theory describes how translation was used to support the ends of invasion. It outlines how forms of translation as invasion continue in the entangled present, including how translation as invasion can be recognized in different contexts. The last section of this chapter describes a range of indigenous and neoindigenous responses to colonial translation as cultural and mental invasion. I charted (neo)indigenous awareness of resistance using the Comaroffs' poles of recognition, partial recognition, and unrecognition. I also used Katz's taxonomy of community responses to oppression: resilience, reworking, and resistance. I applied Katz's taxonomy to the different indigenous responses to colonial translation as invasion in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast.

Chapters 1 and 2 describe indigenous/precolonial and colonial/neoindigenous translation practices. Chapter 1 highlights anthropological and folkloric approaches to translation that describe linguistic translation practices as processes for speech turning. Chapter 2 I highlights the political use of translation as invasion, such that translation became focused on producing a definitive written product useful for establishing political and economic domination. Chapter 3 addresses the central focus of this book, the theological uses of biblical translation as practiced in three phases of Christianity. I explore the missionary-colonial phase of Christianity and its use of biblical translation in a colonial frame, followed by the African independent phase of Christianity and its use of biblical translation in a postcolonial frame, followed by the neo-Pentecostal phase of Christianity and its use of biblical translation in a neocolonial frame. The overall argument is that these eras of time and their associated religious and biblical translational practices are entangled in the African present.

3.

Entangled Ghanaian Christianities and Postcolonial Translation

Chapter 2 offers a theory of translation as invasion developed from the history and practice of colonial translation in northern Ghana. It focuses on the political uses of translation and how it served the shifting strategies of colonial administration from direct to indirect rule. As indirect rule was being formalized, colonial authorities authorized the translation of the invasion myth from the lunsi genre of drum praise poetry into historiography. On the heels of that act of translation, colonizers collaborated with representatives of chiefs to translate their perspective on Dagbamba royal tradition into customary law in a way that made their perspective on tradition an enforceable law useful for legal extraction from the commoners. From the perspective of decentralized kinship societies, customary law was an imposition. I extrapolated a more general theory of translation as invasion from these acts of translation. I also charted a range of (neo)indigenous responses to translation as invasion, including tacitly refusing to respond to colonial translation, translating oneself into discourses recognizable to the colonial system, and experimenting with divination as translation for fostering internal resources for community resilience and possibly resistance.

This chapter moves from the political entanglements of translation to the theological entanglements of translation practice, bringing into focus the central concern of my argument, the theological dimensions of biblical translation as invasion. I explore colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial entanglements in relation to the development of Christianity in Ghana. Each of these three phases of Christianity has a different relationship to the Bible and translation. All three Christian translation practices are entangled in postcolonial/neocolonial time in northern Ghana and influence contemporary Bible translation practices.

The development of Christian practice in Ghana involves at least three phases. I highlight these three phases because they are linked to (Bible) translation. I am particularly interested in how the phases of Christianity use the Bible to affirm life-giving practices in African communities. My focus is Ghana, but occasionally, I borrow useful analysis from other parts of the continent and world.

The first phase of Christian practice focuses on the translation of the Bible in nineteenth-century Africa, especially in the Gold Coast, southern Ghana today. In the nineteenth century, part of the motivation to translate included the desire to subjugate African religions and cultures to biblical teaching. Missionary-colonial Christianity already knew the Bible's theological message. Bible translation was a tool intended to communicate biblical teaching in African languages harmoniously with missionary-colonial Christianity's doctrinal theology. But Bible translation would become a hinge that rotates in two directions, opening to African religiocultural receptions.

The second phase of Christian practice focuses on African responses to Bible translation and missionary-colonial Christianity's hermeneutic of control. Some Africans left missionary-colonial churches due to the hypocritical practices of missionary-cultural Christianity. These Africans walked away from the mammon of missionary churches, taking their Bibles with them. They formed African independent churches (AICs). In AICs, Africans used their Bibles as part of a Christian practice of social healing and dignity. Other Africans stayed in the missionary churches. Some of those who stayed subversively made similar moves toward a more holistic and integrated practice of Christianity in relation to African culture within missionary churches.

Beginning in 1979, the third phase of Christian practice involves the rise of the "new churches" espousing a prosperity gospel in the age of neoliberalism. In the twenty-first century, these new churches continue to outpace Protestant, Catholic, and AICs in growth. They have shifted the religious, cultural, theological, and political ground of African contexts such that the Bible is popularly interpreted as God's promise of miraculous access to prosperity for people who have faith in God's promise and follow God's plan. Wealthy preachers offer themselves as models for emulation and promise to pave the way for others to follow them. People give money to the wealthy preacher so that he will remove obstacles in their lives that prevent God from blessing them with health and wealth.

These three phases of Christianity are entangled in the African present as interpenetrating versions of Christianity. Each of these versions of Christianity continues to negotiate a certain relationship with political and economic forces. Simultaneously, each of these versions circumscribes and controls the meaning of the Bible in a manner that supports its political, economic, and religious vision. Given these complex entanglements of the translated Bible and constraining ideological and theological frameworks, how can biblical translation/interpretation be practiced in a manner that is life-giving for Africans seeking a better life in difficult social, economic, and political circumstances?

3.1. First Phase: Missionary-Colonial Christianity and Bible Translation

In the nineteenth century, as part of the European expansion from trade ports into the African interior, and in response to a European pietist revival, missionaries

began to practice Bible translation in multiple locales across the continent.[1] Aloo Mojola has called this the "second wave" of Bible translation in Africa.[2]

3.1.1. Missionary Bible Translations

In Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, the first translations of biblical texts began when Africans, such as Jacobus Capitein (1717–1747) and Christian Protten (1715–1769), both of whom had been linguistically and theologically trained in Europe, returned to Ghana to work as chaplains and educators in slave forts.[3] These men translated catechetical materials including some Bible texts to the biracial children of African women and European traders and soldiers. They also taught select children of chiefs. A third evangelist, Phillip Quaque (1741–1816), was ordained Anglican in England in 1765. He returned to Ghana as "Missionary Catechist and School Master to the Negroes," at the Cape Coast castle from 1765–1815. Quaque served as chaplain to the soldiers and traders in the castle. He also taught English and Mathematics mainly to the children of soldiers, teaching them the skills necessary to become clerks.[4]

In Ghana, the first African language biblical books, the Gospels of Matthew and John, were translated and published in Gã, by A.W. Hanson in 1843. Hanson was an African Gã speaking clergyman who was trained in the USA and sent back to Ghana by the Church Missionary Society.[5]

Around this time, mission agencies started sending white European missionaries to Ghana. The next period of translating involved European missionaries

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[1] Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "Bible Translation in Africa," in *A History of Bible Translation*, ed. Philip A. Noss, History of Bible Translation 1 (Rome: Edizioni de Storia e Letteratura, 2007), 141, 145–46. For Southern Africa, see West, *Stolen Bible*. For Ghana, as part of West Africa, see John David Kwamena Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana): The Historical, Linguistic, and Theological Settings of the Gã, Twi, Mfantse, and Ewe Bibles*, History of Bible Translation 2 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011).

[2] Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "Bible Translation in Africa: A Brief Historical Overview," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 15.2 (2012): 5. See also Mojola, "Bible Translation in Africa," 143–45. The first phase of translation in Africa includes the ancient translations. The ancient Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek occurred in Alexandria Egypt 200–300 BCE. The Coptic translations began in the late second century CE. Ethiopia and Nubia had relations with Jerusalem before the advent of Christianity. The Ge'ez translation in Ethiopia occurred in the fifth century.

[3] M.A. Kwamena-Poh, "Capitein, J. E. J.," in *Dictionary of African Biography*, ed. L. H. Ofosu-Appiah, Encyclopaedia Africana (New York: Reference Publications, 1977), 224; Noel Smith, "Protten, C.J.," in Ofosu-Appiah, *Dictionary of African Biography*, 34–35. See also Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 7–16, 19.

[4] Grace Bansa, "Quaque, P.," in Ofosu-Appiah, *Dictionary of African Biography*, 305–6. See also Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 22.

[5] Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 25–29.

working closely with indigenous translators. Johannes Zimmermann arrived in 1850. Encouraged by Hanson's work, Zimmermann's translation efforts were aided by a group of translators including Thomas Quartey, and Jakob Nikoi.[6] The New Testament was completed in 1859 and the full Bible in 1866.

The first phase of Christian practice involves the translated Bible with the practice of missionary-colonial Christianity embodying and circumscribing the translated Bible. To illustrate, I will highlight something of the broader missionary program of which translation played a part.

3.1.2. Pietist Missionary Christianity

The Basel mission, founded in 1815, was a fourth wave Pietist movement, quite late in the history of Pietism which began in Europe in the seventeenth century. The Basel mission was initially invited by the Danish government to work in Ghana in 1828. The Basel mission sought to create and sustain a Pietist Christian expression in Africa in response to the ravages of the slave trade.[7] They were also concerned about other forms of economic exploitation that followed the slave trade.[8] The mission sought to reconstruct African society in a three-fold approach. First, they would preach the gospel in the vernacular like Luther and Calvin did. Second, they believed in education, built on biblical education in the vernacular language. Third, they taught modern husbandry and craft skills to create the material basis for organized and self-sufficient Christian villages, or "Salems."[9] These craft skills were still being practiced in the Württemburg area of Germany, but they were dying out across Europe due to the industrial revolution.

Missionary translator Johannes Zimmerman was a German Lutheran Pietist sent by the Basel mission to the Gold Coast as a missionary. Zimmerman idealized rural Africa and the rural ethos of his native region of Württemburg Germany.

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[6] Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 32–40.

[7] The slave trade was outlawed by Great Britain in 1807, however, in an effort to avoid a loss of revenue by Europeans and Africans alike the trade continued through other European forts, taking a long time to stop. See Ofosu-Appiah, *Dictionary of African Biography*, 1:174. See also Sundkler and Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, 97–98. Eighty years later, Gottlob Adolf Krause settled in Salaga, in present-day Northern Ghana. Krause demonstrated that there was a hidden slave trade from Salaga to Togo, encouraged by the German government (Weiss, "European Images of Islam," 98–99).

[8] The European Christian mission thought of itself as protecting European "others" (Africans) from the more brutal aspects of European economic exploitation. Christian trade was a significant part of the Basel mission's expression of Christian community. They founded a trade company in 1859 (Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change*, 83–85).

[9] Jon Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control: Organizational Contradictions in the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, 1828–1917*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 15–16. See also the earlier version of Miller's work, Miller, *Social Control of Religious Zeal.*

Zimmerman sought to share his own German rural Pietist background with Africans, including replicating much of his home village of Gerlingen as he established Christian Salems in Ghana.[10] Zimmerman found that rural Africans in many ways were more "biblical" than most Europeans. Drawing from a letter Zimmerman wrote in 1852 to the central Basel Mission Committee, Jon Miller summarizes Zimmermann's sentiments:

> African communities in their unspoiled forms, by which he meant their pre-slave trade and precolonial state, were superior in many ways to contemporary European culture, he said, because they had not experienced the philosophical corruption of the Enlightenment, the corrosive radical ferment that came out of the French Revolution, or the socially destructive effects of the Industrial Revolution that was eroding the Lutheran agrarian ideal in Europe.… , many families preserved a clear and stable patriarchal [i.e., biblical] form, suggesting the presence of a strong Old Testament influence.[11]

Zimmerman worried that the invasive aspects of the European industrial economy (which the slave trade had been a significant part) would spoil agrarian African cultures just as he perceived it to be spoiling his agrarian ideals at home in Europe. To combat this possibility, the Basel missionaries offered European religious Pietist discipline and community to African individuals who were willing to externally submit to the rigors of Pietistic religious practice, including its strong notions of separation from mainstream culture. The Basel mission sought to combat corrosive European economic influences on African rural communities by offering Pietist religious practice as a cultural stabilizer. For example, Miller indicates that Zimmerman preferred "a clear and stable patriarchal [i.e., biblical] form."[12] The patriarchy that the European Pietists offered was different from African forms of patriarchy. Nevertheless, Zimmerman puts his finger on an important alliance between European and African patriarchal practices, the reverberations of which continue to this day. But the Basel missionaries did not reflect on how Pietist practices imitate invasive and imperialist economic practices in the theological and religious realm.[13]

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[10] Paul Jenkins, "Villagers as Missionaries: Wurtemberg Pietism as a Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement," *Practical Anthropology* 8.4 (1980): 427. See also Sundkler and Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, 209–11.

[11] Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control*, 144. Miller notes that Zimmerman's observation "led him to join in the speculation that West Africans had ties to ancient Christian communities in Ethiopia."

[12] Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control*, 144.

[13] "The story of colonial settlements and imperial control is a story of one basic alliance: the patriarchal one. Disparaged forms of patriarchal cultures find enough elements in common for mutual agreement … women's oppression continues to give focus, a sense of

From the perspective of the Pietist missionaries, biblical teaching was being combined with a partner from the created order—patriarchal and cultural practices in the African context. The missionaries offered the translated Bible encompassed by Pietist biblical teaching articulated in local languages, both Gã and Twi. For the missionaries, the theological superiority of the biblical revelation over African cultural life was taken for granted. However, missionaries discerned real value in African languages and cultures. There was some openness on the part of the Pietist missionaries to learn from African cultures.[14]

The Basel mission missionary activity was based on the linguistic and cultural philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), who developed the notion of Volk.[15] This notion of German romanticism suggests all societies have a unique national identity. Volk is based on a common history, culture, and language. All societies are equal on this basis and should cultivate and preserve their own traditions. The evidence of Herder's influence on Johannes Christaller, David Asante, and others is evident in their published documents in Twi: the translated Bible, a dictionary, a grammar, and a collection of Twi proverbs.[16]

However, there is an important caveat. For the Basel mission, the concept of Volk is subordinated to the Christian gospel. The Basel mission established a missiological practice that treated African culture as a "preparation for the gospel" before it became an articulated hermeneutical approach.[17]

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solidarity and reciprocity between conquerors and conquered." Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 15–16.

[14] Zimmermann wrote to the Basel Mission's Central Committee that he was healed from a serious illness by a native practitioner after European medicine failed to restore his health (Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control*, 144–45).

[15] Heinz Hauser-Renner, "'Obstinate' Pastor and Pioneer Historian: The Impact of Basel Mission Ideology on the Thought of Carl Christian Reindorf," *IBMR* 33.2 (2009): 67.

[16] Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 66–67. These vernacular publications are examples of what Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs call "hybridized" language. Bauman and Briggs argue that the vernacular texts produced by the followers of Herder, including the brothers Grimm, Henry Schoolcraft, and Franz Boas, all attempt to transmit "primordial oral texts." However, in the process oral texts are decontextualized and recontextualized. Decontextualizing and recontextualizing are tied to modernist practices that embed and naturalize social inequality (Bauman and Briggs, *Voices of Modernity*, 312–13). For the problem of textualizing oral events in Bible translation see James A. Maxey, *From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible*, Biblical Performance Criticism 2 (Eugene: Cascade, 2009), 85–103.

[17] John S. Mbiti, "Christianity and Traditional Religions in Africa," *International Review of Mission* 59.236 (1970): 432–34. For a contemporary hermeneutical perspective on the comparative approach to African culture and the Bible, see Eric Anum, "Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 468.

David Bosch points out that as the nineteenth century progressed, the idea of Volk as nationalism became wedded to the Old Testament concept of a chosen people. The nationalism of Volk became linked to Christian mission in a way that is important for translation as invasion. Bosch writes:

> The result was that, at one point or another in recent history, virtually every white nation regarded itself as being chosen for a particular destiny and as having a unique charisma: the Germans, the French, the Russians, the British, the Americans, the Afrikaners, the Dutch. It was only to be expected that nationalistic spirit would, in due time, be absorbed into the missionary ideology, and Christians of a specific nation would develop the conviction that they had a special role to play in the advancement of the kingdom of God through the missionary enterprise.[18]

Pietist missionaries embedded their notions of ethnic nationalism into missionary-colonial translation practice.

3.1.3. African Religiocultural Receptions

It is crucially important to emphasize that African converts were not necessarily drawn to the aspects of Christianity that the Pietist missionaries thought they were emphasizing. What counted as the gospel from the missionary perspective was quite different than what attracted slaves and former slaves to the gospel. What attracted slave converts is quite different than what attracted converts from African merchant and royal families.[19] Concepts like *the gospel* stand as a middle ground, a place of transaction, between European cultural-biblical teachings and

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[18] David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 299.

[19] Two important merchant family converts are Karl Quist and Carl Christian Reindorf (Sundkler and Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, 208–9). Reindorf was a Gã who worked with Johannes Zimmermann and in later years with Johann Christaller. Reindorf's *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* originally published in 1895 extended Christaller's vision of African knowledge built on African language and culture in dialogue with European Christianity. See Thomas Bearth, "J. G. Christaller. A Holistic View of Language and Culture-and C.C. Reindorf's History," in *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century: C. C. Reindorf and Samuel Johnson: Papers from an International Seminar Held in Basel, Switzerland, 25–28th October 1995 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Publication of C.C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, ed. Paul Jenkins (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998), 88. David Asante came from a royal family (Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 56). See also Sonia Abun-Nasr, *Afrikaner Und Missionar: Die Lebensgeschichte von David Asante* (Basel: Schlettwein, 2003).

African cultural-biblical receptions.[20] What counts as the gospel is not understood in the same way. Lamin Sanneh makes this point articulately.

> The gospel is capable of transcending the cultural inhibitions of the translator and taking fresh root in fresh soil, a piece of transplanting that will challenge the presuppositions of the translator. This is a critical position, which Christians reached by being plunged willy-nilly into the world of translation. Any sensitive translator will be awakened to the realization that a certain judgment is being reserved for the originating culture. New paradigms and vastly different presuppositions will rise to replace privileged ideas and the certainties they enshrined. That can be unsettling in the extreme, and only a supremely saintly missionary would not invoke economic or political sanctions where this was possible to try to compensate for the loss of power entailed in this intercultural shift.
>
> Yet, however, strongly one might wish to resist the consequences of translation, little can be done to stop the repercussions from spreading. When one translates, it is like pulling the trigger of a loaded gun: the translator cannot recall the hurtling bullet. Translation thus activates a process that will supersede the original intention of the translator.[21]

Translation can be conceptualized as a middle space that is sometimes transactional and sometimes transformational. Sanneh's quote emphasizes the religiocultural transformational potential of translation.

3.1.4. Sociopolitical and Socioeconomic Dimensions

Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed provide a sociopolitical and socioeconomic analysis of European conquests and African contexts, complementing Sanneh's religiocultural emphasis.[22] Sundkler and Steed observe there were "hundreds of European conquests of Africa, not one."[23] When the British outlawed slavery in 1807, they "rendered illegal as much as nine-tenths of

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[20] Gerald O. West, "On the Eve of an African Biblical Studies: Trajectories and Trends," *JTSA* 99 (1997): 99. West uses transaction to show the mutual impact of the Bible on Africa, and Africa on the Bible, emphasizing the economic and legal connotations of the term.

[21] Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, American Society of Missiology Series 13 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 53.

[22] I believe these complementary analyses could be brought into closer historical dialogue. For example, the relationship of the Basel mission's initial foray into translation corresponds chronologically to the Danish sale of the slave fort at Christiansburg. The history of the poll-tax and the poll-tax rebellion followed. The Basel mission and its translation strategy were certainly embroiled in these political and economic events (Ofosu-Appiah, *Dictionary of African Biography*, 1:176). See also John Parker, "Mankraloi, Merchants and Mulattos-Carl Reindorf and the Politics of 'Race' in Early Colonial Accra," in Jenkins, *Recovery of the West African Past*, 39.

[23] Sundkler and Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, 97.

European trade with the coast of West Africa. A huge economic vacuum was thus created, and the British hoped that it might be filled by the encouragement of the cultivation of exportable commodities such as white rice, indigo, cotton, coffee and palm oil."[24]

The economic transition the British initiated took quite some time to complete. However, the shift to cash crops would be more profitable than the slave trade.[25] The shift to an economy based on producing and exporting agricultural goods provided opportunities for both masters and slaves. In some West African contexts, almost two-thirds of the population were slaves. Some slaves worked for their masters. During the economic transition, many slaves bought freedom and land. It was the slaves in peasant settlements, not the British, who fueled the economic revolution.[26] This became a model across African contexts. The economic revolution led by slaves and former slaves paved the way for the evangelization of the masses. It was the egalitarian message of the gospel that resonated with the African slave experience.[27] The paternalistic attitudes of the missionaries contradicted the egalitarian message which motivated the conversion of the masses.[28]

Scholars of what Tinyiko Maluleke has called "African translation theology" have shown that the Bible in the language of Africans became a resource that strengthened African cultural perceptions of the gospel and awakened Africans to the theological and social discontinuities in the missionary-colonial paradigm.[29]

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[24] Boahen, "Politics in Ghana," 179.

[25] "The slave trade served as the cutting edge of the peripheralization of Africa in the period of 1750–1900, but it was also incompatible with it, because the production of slaves is less profitable than cash-crop production, forcing slaves to be continually drawn from outside the world economy" (Wallerstein, "Three Stages of African Involvement in the World-Economy," 34).

[26] Sundkler and Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, 98.

[27] Sundkler and Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, 98.

[28] One example which illustrates missionary contradictions surfaced during the Basel mission's internal conflict regarding the issue of owning slaves in the 1860s. Peter Haenger explains that the question about slave ownership was posed by missionaries in dialogue with African catechists. The missionary council used a Pentateuchal law arguing that within six years a slave should be set free. The catechists responded they could do this with their personal slaves but not family slaves. The leader of the central Basel mission "mandated that every slave-holder asking for baptism must declare his slaves free and liberate them in fact. Already baptized slave-holder must do the same." Peter Haenger, "Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860s: A Young Man Stands up to Mission Pressure," in Jenkins, *Recovery of the West African Past*, 19–20.

[29] Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century," *JTSA* 99 (1999): 19–20. Ogbu U. Kalu, "Introduction: The Shape and Flow of African Church Historiography," in *African*

Kalu observes that Africans "responded to missionary structures in three ways: some individuals and communities accepted them with *loyalty*, others *voiced* their dissent, and some took measures to *exit* from them."[30] The clearest contrast lies in those Africans who, armed with their Bibles, walked out of missionary-led churches and Salems to found their own African Christian communities.[31] Sanneh argues that by choosing to use African languages as a communicative vehicle, Bible translation essentially affirmed African religion and culture.[32] The translated Bible served as a hinge that the AICs received from missionary-colonial Christianity and which Africans used to swing Christian practice away from operating within a missionary-colonial lifeworld to operating within an African religio-cultural lifeworld.[33] I explore African translation theology as a distinct practice in section 3.6 and in section 4.1.

3.2. Second Phase: African Independent Churches and Their Bibles

The second phase of Christian practice with the translated Bible is best exemplified by the African independent churches (AICs). AICs emerged and developed all over the African continent independently from each other as Africans, inspired by what they perceived in their translated Bibles, felt compelled to walk away from missionary controlled churches. I share examples of AICs from various parts of the continent, focusing on how they appropriated the translated Bible using their own African religiocultural instincts. AICs demonstrate what Bediako calls the African primal imagination, which encompasses how the Bible contributes to meaning-making in African communities.[34]

Christianity: An African Story, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu, Perspectives on Christianity 5/3 (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2005), 7. For a summary of African translation theology see West, *Stolen Bible*, 238–43.

[30] Ogbu U. Kalu, "Ethiopianism in African Christianity," in Kalu, *African Christianity*, 231.

[31] African leaders in the missionary-led churches also challenged missionary hegemony. One such leader in the Basel mission was Carl Christian Reindorf. Reindorf joined the mission not as a slave but as a member of a wealthy trading family (Bearth, "J. G. Christaller"; Haenger, "Reindorf and the Basel Mission"; Parker, "Mankraloi, Merchants and Mulattos").

[32] "I see translation as a fundamental concession to the vernacular, and an inevitable weakening of the forces of uniformity and centralization" (Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 53).

[33] I borrowed the concept of the hinge from Richard Rudowske. See "The Three Plus One Hinges of Bible Translation" (Unpublished document, February 27, 2019).

[34] Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion*, Studies in World Christianity (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 91–108.

3.2.1. Leaving Missionary-Colonial Christianity and Taking Their Bibles

Some Africans, encouraged by the religiocultural valorization that translation affirmed and the dignity they knew to be true in their bodily and communal experience, rejected the discriminatory missionary practices they experienced in the missionary-led churches. In West Africa, the Prophet William Wadé Harris left a position in the Episcopal church when he was called by the angel Gabriel to go on a preaching journey across Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Ghana. Harris did not intend to start churches, but eventually, Harrist churches formed themselves based on Harris's teachings.[35] In Southern Africa, Isaiah Shembe (1867?–1935) formed Ibandla LamaNazaretha, "the Church of Nazaretha," on independently owned land with a structure and practice free from the controls of missionary-colonial Christianity.[36] In Kenya, the Akurinu churches formed in 1927 as a chosen people of God, distinct from the missionary churches.[37] Africans in many parts of the continent left missionary churches and founded their own African Independent Churches (AICs). The Bible played a vital role in inspiring the social and theological practice of these movements.

3.2.2. The Use of the Bible for Political and Social Liberation after Invasion

Nahashon Ndung'u indicates that the Bible played a key role in the founding of the Akurinu churches.[38] Founders of the Akurinu churches, such as Joseph Ng'ang'a and John Mung'ara, spent years studying the Bible before becoming "the first preachers and evangelists among the Akurinu."[39]

Once in their own physical spaces, Africans used the Bible in harmony with broader life-affirming practices that they knew from within their African traditions. Sometimes, this meant reworking or defusing harmful trajectories in the Bible or harmful uses of the Bible as practiced in missionary-colonial Christianity. Sometimes, this meant using the Bible for political liberation.

Ndung'u writes: "The way missionaries had interpreted the Bible to the Africans left a lot to be desired. So the Akurinu were to provide the correct

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[35] The Harris movement strengthened three churches, Wesleyan, Roman Catholic, and Harrist churches. David A. Shank and Jocelyn Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, Studies of Religion in Africa 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 18.

[36] West, *Stolen Bible*, 244–317.

[37] Nahashon W. Ndung'u, "The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 241.

[38] Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 236, 239–40.

[39] Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 240.

version."[40] Important texts for the Akurinu were Joel 1:1–8, Ezek 33 and 37, and Heb 33.[41] "The locust invasion foretold by Joel was compared to the colonial invasion of Gikuyuland, to which Ezekiel and Jeremiah bring a message of hope and restoration."[42] The Akurinu did not engage in armed conflict for independence, but "they believe that is was through their prayers that the country was liberated from the colonialists."[43]

3.2.3. Shembe's Stolen Bible

In Southern Africa, the Bible was a crucial tool which Isaiah Shembe used to build an alternative and independent African community amid the invasive effects caused by industrial capitalism in the early twentieth century.

The Bible was available during Shembe's lifetime in two of Shembe's vernaculars: SeSotho and isiZulu. Shembe probably used the old isiZulu version. Gerald West has explored how Shembe referred to the Bible in the records of his teaching. Shembe often alluded to a text or set of texts rather than citing them.[44] After surveying Shembe's biblical hermeneutics, West comments on Shembe's "detailed and comprehensive knowledge of Scripture."[45] The written records of Shembe's parables, sermons, and teachings that literate members of his community wrote down in family notebooks facilitate exploring the ways in which Shembe referred to and reflected upon the Bible.[46] These notebooks were sources for the official church archivist, Petros Dhlomo.[47] West refers to Shembe's

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[40] Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 241. Other biblical practices included keeping versions of the Levitical laws, wearing white robes and turbans, and raising hands in worship. Sometimes, they emulate biblical experiences, such as receiving of a spirit mediated ten commandments given to their elders on Mount Kenya (Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 241). The material Bible is carried from the elders' shoulders and suspended in bags during baptism, marriage, ordination, and burial. Women prophets can place the Bible on the heads of sick people who need healing. The Bible can scare away evil powers and sicknesses (Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 243–44).

[41] It may be that Hebrews 33 should read Jeremiah 33.

[42] Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 242.

[43] Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 242.

[44] West, *Stolen Bible*, 268–69.

[45] West, *Stolen Bible*, 296.

[46] West, *Stolen Bible*, 267, 269. See also Elizabeth. Gunner, *The Man of Heaven and the Beautiful Ones of God = Umuntu Wasezulwini Nabantu Abahle Bakankulunkulu : Writings from Ibandla lamaNazaretha, a South African Church*, vol. 24, Studies of Religion in Africa (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 15–16, 41.

[47] Dhlomo was the archivist of the Nazaretha church from the 1940s until his death in the 1990s (West, *Stolen Bible*, 250–52, 298–99).

biblical hermeneutics as "the re-written Bible."[48] West also describes Shembe as "reconstituting" the Bible and "re-membering"[49] the Bible.

Joel Cabrita has reflected extensively on the writing practices of Shembe and the church he founded, Ibandla LamaNazaretha. Cabrita argues that the most important aspect of Shembe's churches' writing was not the act of writing itself or the written products but the community of people that the acts of writing generated.[50] Shembe himself taught this in a parable to his congregation. West agrees with Cabrita's assessment but also argues it is important to observe Shembe's acts of rewriting.[51] It is the Bible Shembe chooses to rewrite, which he and his community rewrite in order to generate a dynamic living community of people with a clear counter colonial religiocultural social project.[52] Shembe approached writing in a similar fashion as he approached missionary-colonial Christianity. Shembe understood the potential and the limitations of missionary-colonial Christianity just as he understood the technology of writing's limitations and potential. Shembe was careful to avoid missionary-colonial Christianity and made sure writing was exercised "outside the ambit of the new African elite."[53]

West writes, "Shembe saturated this social project in the Bible, having seized it from the missionary colonial agents who brought it."[54] To illustrate Shembe's method of appropriation, West recounts an illustrative parable that Shembe taught, "The Parable of the Liberating Bible."[55] I recount this parable in full because it illustrates Shembe's hermeneutics in a poignant manner.

Petros Dhlomo wrote Shembe's parable as follows:

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[48] West, *Stolen Bible*, 267–98.

[49] West, *Stolen Bible*, 267, 283, 302.

[50] Joel Cabrita, "Texts, Authority, and Community in the South African 'Ibandla lamaNazaretha' (Church of the Nazaretha), 1910–1976," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40.1 (2010): 60. See also West, *Stolen Bible*, 250.

[51] Rewriting is an entangled, tensive struggle with what has been written before and what will be written after. See chapter 1 n. 19, above and chapter 4 n. 88 below.

[52] "Within an unstable context constituted by sustained transactions between tradition Nguni culture, European colonialism, missionary Christianity, and an emerging industrial capitalism—over whose political and economic dimensions Shembe and his followers exercised little control—Isaiah Shembe constructed and attempted to control the religiocultural dimension and in so doing tried to reassert some sense of religio-cultural and political-economic integrity (and so identity). Put different, he was forced to 'create his own world and inhabit it'" (West, *Stolen Bible*, 249 citing Absolom Vilakazi, Bongani Mthethwa, and Mthembeni Mpanza, *Shembe : The Revitalization of African Society* [Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986], 10; Carol Ann. Muller, *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire: Nazarite Women's Performance in South Africa*, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999], xvii–xix).

[53] Gunner, *Man of Heaven and the Beautiful Ones*, 27.

[54] West, *Stolen Bible*, 252.

[55] West, *Stolen Bible*, 252–60.

1.1. The man of God, Shembe, came to the home of Ndlovu the headman of Zibula at Lenge, in the year 1933, and there he said these words in his sermon in the evensong: [Shembe began, saying] "In olden times there were two mighty nations who were fighting over a certain issue. In their war the one conquered the other one and took all their cattle away. They took even their children captive by putting them in the school of the victorious nation among them also three sons of the same mother. They were given some work to do in the morning before they went to school. They had to sweep the houses of their teachers and the house of the Pope.

1.2. All of the children made good progress in school and passed their examinations well. They were trained as bishops. In the house of the Pope there was a Bible which was kept under lock by him and only read by himself. On a certain day he [the Pope] had to go for a few weeks to another place and he forgot to lock the Bible up at home. When the boys were sweeping his home, they found the Bible unlocked. When they began to read it, they discovered that their nation which had been demolished so badly by the war could never be restored unless they would get a book like this one and they considered what to do.

1.3. When they came back from school they bought a copybook and copied the whole Bible. When they had finished their work, they returned the Bible to its place. Thereafter the Pope came back and saw that he had forgot to lock his Bible in. He called the boys who worked in his house and asked them whether they had opened this book. They denied it and said that they did not see that it had not been locked up. Then he forgot about it. The boys considered how they could bring this book to their parents at home.

1.4. At another day, they went and asked permission to visit their parents at home. They were permitted to go, and they were given a time by which they must be back. When they came home, they did not stay there, rather they went from home to home and preached about this book, until their time of leave was over, and policemen were sent to look for these boys. Then they left this book there and returned to school.

1.5. After their return, they had to answer questions. They were asked, 'Do you believe that Thixo [God] can only be found in the Roman Catholic Church?' It was expected that all of them should say so. But the oldest boy did not. Rather he said: 'I believe Thixo can be found in all beings on earth.' They were greatly startled by these words and they told him to move to the side. Then they called the second boy. He also said the same words: 'Thixo is in all things on earth.' Then they called the third one and he said the same words.

1.6. Then they admonished the boys and said: 'You see, what you have said is deeply contradicting this doctrine, in which you have been instructed; this our teaching in which you have been brought up you should follow together with the others. But should you desert from this doctrine in which you have been educated you will be burned by fire. Now go and sleep and consider this matter well.'

1.7. On the following day they were called again. When they asked the first boy he repeated what he had said on the previous day. They brought him outside and showed him the fire. He sang the hymn: 'Our Father in Heaven look at me with your love and do not look (at my sins) with which I have come, and which

make me ashamed. I was born with them and I do not hide one of them.' So he went into the flames and was burned. When the second one was questioned, he repeated the same words which he had said on the previous day. They showed the fire also to him and said: 'Enter there where your brother went in and follow him.' The second boy shouted: 'Holy, holy, holy!' And he ran quickly into the flames and was burned.

1.8. When the third one came in to be questioned his mother appeared and said: 'Oh my child what is wrong that all of you should die on the same day? Would it be so very wrong to say that Thixo belongs to the Roman Catholics, so that your life may be spared and that I may retain you on earth?' The youngest son saw the point and followed the advice of his mother. He said, 'I believe that Thixo is found in the Roman Catholic Church only.'

1.9. Then the Pope said that they should bring a book where he should write these words down and make an affidavit. This he did. When he slept in the night his spirit was taken up and brought to the joyful place of the selected ones. He heard wonderful singing from a certain place and when he looked up he saw a large crowd of people who were clad in white gowns, on the other side of the river. When he looked intensely he saw there his two brothers with whom he had been together and who were burned by the fire.

1.10. He wanted to go to them. But a voice said: 'You cannot go to your brothers. Because they died for the promise while you did not die for it.' Then this boy wept bitterly until the morning dawned and even when he had risen he did not cease weeping. He went to the Pope and said to him: 'I was wrong when I said that Thixo is found in the Roman Catholic Church only and when I wrote that affidavit. Rather Thixo is there in all things on earth.'

1.11. The Pope said: 'I do not know what I should say, because this comes from your heart. What do you say?' He replied: 'It would be better that the Pope would cut off my hand by which I wrote.' The Pope said, 'No, I cannot do that. I do not have the authority to do so even with your permission.' Then this boy went to the place where the fire was burning on the previous day and where his brothers had died. He stirred it up again with his hand, and when the fire was burning he burned himself to death.

1.12. But the lord said, 'This does not help you either because it has not been done by others to you. You did it by yourself. You separated from your brothers when they died, and you chose for yourself to live.

1.13. "The lord of Ekuphakameni [Shembe] said: 'The death of the young man did not help him in any way. He did not go to the place where his brothers were because he did not die for the promise. Now I speak no longer of these people. Rather I speak today to you people of Ekuphakameni. You have been told that a young man of Ekuphakameni should never write a letter to a maiden of Ekuphakameni and a maiden of Ekuphakameni is not allowed to write to a young man of Ekuphakameni. I ask you: what kind of a Bible do you write? Because you will suffer very much on the Last Day. And when you will then come to me and say: 'Our father, I wish to enter the Kingdom.' Then I shall be

unable to do anything because you have broken the law of which you were told not to break it."[56]

West has provided commentary that helps elucidate Shembe's parable. I highlight relevant details from West's commentary for reflecting on colonial translation as invasion. Shembe begins his parable by "re-membering" the South African story of conquest. The victorious nation stole the people's cattle and "en-schooled" their children.[57] The three boys then become the central characters in the story. Commenting on paragraph two, West points out that the boys had access to books that allowed them to rise to the level of bishops, but the Bible is the one special book that only the Pope could read. The boys then read the Pope's protected book in his house without his knowledge.

West notes that paragraphs three and four are the parable's climax.[58] In paragraph four, Shembe shows his concern for the rebuilding of African community in another form: as a postconquest, postcolonial, postmissionary African community. The partially educated children bring the Bible to their parents, "for it is these African elders who have the historical and local African resources necessary for restoring the community—together with the Bible."[59] The children use the skills they learned in colonial school to write the Bible. But they also resist the educational system by bringing the copied stolen Bible to their parents. West points out that stealing the Bible is a response to the cattle being stolen. In their home community, the children preach the oral word and leave the written word behind. The children evade the missionary-colonial surveillance system for a time because surveillance and control are never total.

Eventually, the children are forced to return to school. Back in school, the boys are drilled with traditional catechetical questions. However, the boys have now read the Bible for themselves, which enables them to reject the catechetical instruction because "the Bible confirms their African experience that God can indeed be found 'in all beings on earth.'" West notes, "Ironically, the deconstruction of the instruction is the 'faithful' response—being faithful to the Bible—but the missionary-colonial instructors are unable to recognize this."[60] Even the threat of "hell-fire" does not dissuade the boys from their conviction. Then the boys are subjected to earthly fire to represent the eternal fire of hell. The first two boys "stand with the Bible over and against missionary-colonial Christianity."[61] The

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[56] Irving Hexham and Gerhardus Cornelis Oosthuizen, *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, vol. 1, Sacred History and Traditions of the Amanazaretha 1 (Lewiston: Mellen, 1996), 225–28.

[57] West, *Stolen Bible*, 252.

[58] West, *Stolen Bible*, 253.

[59] West, *Stolen Bible*, 254.

[60] West, *Stolen Bible*, 255.

[61] West, *Stolen Bible*, 257.

first boy sings a hymn from the Nazaretha church tradition, and the second cites Rev 4:8, as each goes into the fire in turn and loses his life.

The boys' mother then intervenes, and the focus of the parable shifts to the third son. The third son pragmatically chooses to agree with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching to save his life, as requested by his bereaved mother. But the Pope cannily argues the boy must write his words down "and make an affidavit."[62] The boy does so. The third boy dreamt that night and "his spirit was taken up and brought to the joyful place of the elected ones."[63] The boy sees his brothers there but cannot go to them. West argues Shembe has reconfigured Jesus's parable in Luke 16:19–31, also drawing on Rev 7:9–17. Finally, in paragraph 12 the third boy is addressed by "the lord." West argues this is a reference to God. "God speaks directly to the third son, excluding him from among those who have been persecuted for their faith by the empire, whether the Roman empire of the book of Revelation or the Dutch and British empires of Shembe's South Africa."[64]

In the final sermonic paragraph where Shembe's voice speaks directly again, West observes that the rewritten Bible has changed. Once it has been stolen, copied, and shared with the community its message has changed. The Bible no longer contains missionary *instruction* but now contains *the law*. The law is central to Shembe's teaching.

Shembe's law primarily focuses on the relations between men and women.[65] Shembe was deeply concerned about young women and orphans in the early stages of industrial capitalism in the KwaZulu-Natal area. The needs of young women and orphans motivated Shembe to obtain land, which he did. He called the land Ekuphakameni. Ekuphakameni became the headquarters of Shembe's new community. Shembe combined his knowledge of the mission Bible and his respect for Nguni traditional ways with his knowledge of commodity capitalism. In so doing Shembe "constituted a new and hybrid regime of religious truth…in competition with ideologies of the state and the Christian mission."[66]

West argues that Shembe's biblical hermeneutics were crucial for establishing the community's religious and cultural practice with political and economic integrity.[67] West distills three moves in Shembe's hermeneutics that the parable illustrates in a succinct way. The first is to recognize the power of the Bible. Stealthily stealing the Bible is the second move. The third move is engagement and participation with the major characters of the Bible. In the content of his teachings, Shembe especially participates with Moses and Paul. However, participation is not a one-way street in terms of agentive influence. The Bible also takes

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[62] Hexham and Oosthuizen, *Story of Isaiah Shembe*, 1:227.
[63] Hexham and Oosthuizen, *Story of Isaiah Shembe*, 1:227.
[64] West, *Stolen Bible*, 259.
[65] West, *Stolen Bible*, 260.
[66] Muller, *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire*, 19.
[67] West, *Stolen Bible*, 249.

hold of Shembe, "drawing him and his female followers into its narratives."[68] West describes the biblical hermeneutical process as one of "mutual configuration."[69] The stolen texts can shape African communities, and postcolonial communities can appropriate a range of biblical resources in their religious/cultural, and political/economic reconstruction.

West's language of *mutual configuration*, describing Shembe's biblical hermeneutics, works with what anthropologist Tim Ingold describes as an *intransitive* notion of human production. When someone works with materials, the materials are transformed, and the process and experience also transform the laborer.[70] Michael Cronin argues that it is useful to think about translation as an intransitive process that changes the translator. As the translator plays with innovative ideas, the changed translator may change the world.[71] Translating and retranslating pulls the translator into a process of multiagentive influence. Participating with biblical narratives describes this process quite well

As noted, West describes the third move of Shembe's hermeneutics as engagement or participation. The third move corresponds with the hermeneutics of the West African prophet William Wadé Harris.[72] Before I turn to Harris's hermeneutics, I must describe another independent African practice of using the Bible in another Southern African context: Botswana.

3.2.4. A Semoya Approach to the Bible

Musa W. Dube has recounted how Africans in Botswana left the missionary churches to form their own independent churches. Within their communities, they appropriated the Bible as a tool of spiritual care and healing. Church leaders acting similarly to ngaka "diviner-healers" used the Bible as a "divining set" useful for interpreting social-spiritual-physical life and for diagnosing and healing health problems of individuals and communities.[73]

Dube has documented the missionary intention to dominate and subjugate Setswana culture expressed through specific translational choices in which missionaries denigrated African ancestors as demonic. Dube calls this planting a

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[68] West, *Stolen Bible*, 267.

[69] West, *Stolen Bible*, 317.

[70] Tim Ingold, *Evolution and Social Life*, Themes in the Social Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 321.

[71] Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 50–51.

[72] West, *Stolen Bible*, 260.

[73] Musa W. Dube, "Consuming the Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into 'Demons' in the Setswana Bible (Matt. 8:28–34; 15:22, 10:8)," *JSNT* 73 (1999): 55–56.

colonial bomb in the translated Bible.[74] However, among AICs, the bombs embedded in the colonial Bible were "defused" or rendered ineffective, not so much by a process of interpretation, but more by circumscribing the narrative and translated words of the Bible into a life-giving method of community material and spiritual problem-solving.[75] Dube has described this process of life-giving interpretation for healing as practiced among Batswana women as a Semoya framework for reading the Bible.

Moya, "the Spirit," led Africans to leave missionary churches and their discriminatory leadership methods. Moya is an agent of God at work among believers, bringing about restoration through healing. Dube writes, "Women and men receive the Spirit which empowers them to prophesy, heal the sick, assist those searching for jobs, restore family relations, ensure a good harvest and good rains, ensure good reproduction of livestock, and dispel the ever-intruding forces of evil from people's lives."[76]

A Semoya approach to using the Bible is postcolonial in that it is an inclusive approach that does not mimic the discriminatory and colonizing methods of missionary churches but uses the Bible in a manner that includes and heals people and communities through the Spirit. "Reading from a Semoya perspective, therefore, is an act of reading the written word for healing and hearing the word of the Spirit for empowerment."[77]

A Semoya approach to reading the Bible is postcolonial and feminist. Dube points out that women have played a significant role in these churches, even holding powerful positions and titles like "founders, bishops, archbishops, prophets, faith healers, preachers, and ministers."[78] In relation to particularly patriarchal

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[74] Dube, "Consuming the Colonial Cultural Bomb," 37–52. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o also argues that "the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb." *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Studies in African Literature (London: Currey; Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1986), 3.

[75] Catholic Priest and anthropologist Jon P. Kirby has "translated" the African religious practice of divining for a Western academic and religious audience broadly as "problem-solving" (Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*).

[76] Musa W. Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Saint Louis: Chalice, 2000), 40–41.

[77] Musa W. Dube, "Readings of Semoya: Batswana Women's Interpretations of Matthew 15:21–28," *Semeia* 73 (1996): 127.

[78] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 41. Dube also cites Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 79–93. Sundkler admits that many AICs are very patriarchal, but the Spirit remains the ultimate authority. In the case of the Akurinu churches of Kenya, women are excluded from leadership and from reading the Bible. However, they do practice important roles as prophetesses. Ndung'u comments, "Thus, while the Bible is used to oppress women it is at the

biblical texts, women leaders of AICs are called by the Spirit, and thus, they can operate with some independence from the written word. Dube cites an important statement by Bishop Virginia Lucas, the founder of the Glory Healing Church in Mogoditshane, Gaborone. Dube asked Bishop Lucas why she, a female, should be a leader in the church when biblical texts seem to suggest otherwise. Bishop Lucas responded, "When God spoke to me through the Spirit, God never opened the Bible to me. Instead, God's Spirit told me to begin a church and heal God's people and that is what I am doing."[79]

Dube's description of the Semoya approach to biblical interpretation has been articulated in relation to the Southern African context. The spiritual framework of Semoya interpretation is not unique to Botswana. In Ghana, AICs are popularly known as "spiritual churches."[80] In Kenya, the Akurinu church is also guided by the Spirit. They call themselves "People of the Spirit."[81]

While there are thousands of AICs across Africa, each with its own histories and practices, scholars have often found it useful to highlight the first innovators.[82] Shembe is one such innovator. In West Africa, Kwame Bediako has called William Wadé Harris "the first independent African Christian prophet."[83] Not only did Harris walk out of his position in the Episcopal church, but Harris also moved beyond the missionary-colonial baggage that accompanied the Bible in the missionary-colonial expression of Christianity. As a biblical interpreter, Harris operated with a worldview Bediako called "the primal imagination."[84] Harris represents a prophet who left the missionary-colonial paradigm, a prophet who is profoundly spiritual, religious, and Christian.

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same time used to liberate them as prophetesses in the Akurinu Churches" (Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 246).

[79] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 42. For an important discussion regarding patriarchal "texts of terror" see Gerald O. West, "Taming Texts of Terror: Reading (against) the Gender Grain of 1 Timothy," *Scriptura* 86 (2004): 160–73.

[80] Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 63. For a discussion of AICs in West Africa see also C. G Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some "Spiritual" Churches* (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 2004); Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*.

[81] Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 241, 244–45. The Akurinu uphold a Trinitarian doctrine, placing the Spirit in the second position.

[82] Drawing on the work of Inus Daneel, Musa Dube argues that the rise of AICs can be traced to a woman, Kimpa Vita, a Congolese Catholic Christian who protested against the Catholic church and proclaimed a culturally integrated form of Christianity before her martyrdom in 1706 (Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 41; see also Inus Daneel, *Quest for Belonging* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987), 46).

[83] Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 91.

[84] Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 92.

3.2.5. The Participatory Biblical Hermeneutics of William Wadé Harris

In the early twentieth century, William Wadé Harris traveled from Liberia across Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, converting up to 200,000 Africans over a seventeen-month period. This created a spiritual and social movement across tribal and political borders outside of colonial control.[85] Harris began his journey on foot in August 1913 and continued traveling past the outbreak of World War I in August 1914.

Harris was originally converted to missionary-colonial Christianity in the Methodist church. He married a woman from the Episcopal (Anglican) church and joined that church, working for it in a paid capacity for fifteen years. As a "civilized" African, Harris worked as a translator for the Liberian government among his own Glebo people.[86] "Harris's sympathies moved in favor of the Glebo people."[87] In 1908 Harris participated in an insurrection against the Liberian government in favor of British rule.[88] He was imprisoned, released, and then imprisoned again. During his second imprisonment the Liberian government with the aid of a US warship badly defeated the Glebos. During that imprisonment Harris was visited three times by the angel Gabriel. Through those encounters with the angel Gabriel, Harris became a prophet. "He turned from his revolutionary life back to the task of preaching, but now no longer as a civilized person to barbarians but as a liberated African to fellow Africans."[89]

Harris had tried to work in both the religious and political realms, and at one time he hoped for a harmony between missionary-colonial religion and politics, but when both of those turned against what he saw to be the just claims of the Glebo people, it was then that the angel called him to a new kind of prophetic Christian ministry.[90] Harris could not return to being an evangelist and a teacher, nor could he go back to the traditional life because of his prophetic call. Harris had to re-interpret his calling and his hermeneutical grid shifted accordingly. Harris returned to relying on ordinary Africans for his sustenance. He refused to wear Western clothing, instead wearing a white gown. White was a cultural and biblical

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[85] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 15.

[86] Another written form is Grebo.

[87] David A Shank, "The Legacy of William Wadé Harris," *IBMR* 10.4 (October 1986): 171. Glebos were in conflict with freed slaves from the United States who had settled on the coast of West Africa in what became the Republic of Liberia.

[88] Harris's trust in Episcopalian structures began to shift as early as 1904, when he was put under discipline for a year because of revolutionary activities. For the next years he oscillated between the Episcopalian hierarchy and the Glebo traditional system.

[89] Shank, "Legacy of William Wadé Harris," 172.

[90] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 82–103.

symbol.[91] He carried a cross as a staff, which was again both biblically and culturally symbolic. He had a Bible that he often raised to show its power. He used a calabash to baptize converts.

Harris criticized reliance on charms and objects of power rather than God. As a result, many fetish[92] objects of power were publicly burned, and many baptisms followed.[93] Harris's teachings included an emphasis on the Ten Commandments, including strict observance of the Sabbath as a day or rest. Harris taught that people should follow the colonial law, but not when it violated God's law.

Harris taught strict observance of Sunday as a Sabbath. Harris is reported to have called down fire on ships being unloaded on Sunday. Given Harris's numeric influence, his strict teaching on observing Sunday as a day of rest was undesirable to colonial merchants.[94] Harris was against violence, and thus, his teaching was

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[91] Harris's vision indicated he was no longer to wear boots, trousers, or collar. He was to wear a white cloth like a toga with a hole for where the head went. He put a turban on his head. From his Glebo tradition and the Bible the white emphasized his calling and status. White animals were used in peaceful sacrifices. White was the color of spirit or divinity. A white robe probably said God-man (Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 191–92).

[92] In Ghana fetishes are objects of power. Fetish is often used to describe the offices of tindana, ubɔɔ, and divination practices, in general. It is often used pejoratively. The word 'fetish' was coined in mercantile space in translation along the coasts of West African when the Portuguese encountered the objects of power worn or consumed by Africans with whom they were trading. "The category of the fetish emerged in the intersection of the Christian feudal, African lineage, and merchant capitalist social relations; it was the result of the intersection of two cultures that were incomprehensible to one another; it was elaborated by Enlightenment intellectuals in Europe from the late eighteenth century into a general theory of religion; it was even used by Dutch, French, and English Protestants to describe Roman Catholic sacramental objects." Roland Boer, "Imperial Fetish: Anti-Imperial Readings of the Bible," in *Psychoanalytic Mediations between Marxist and Postcolonial Readings of the Bible*, ed. Tat-siong Benny Liew and Erin Runions, SemeiaSt 84 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 48. Adrian Hastings argues that Portuguese and Africans had similar worldviews and understood each other better than most Europeans or Americans understand the sixteenth-century Portuguese or West African. Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa: 1450–1950*, The Oxford History of the Christian Church (Oxford; New York: Clarendon; Oxford University Press, 1996), 75. Charles DeBrosses took the concept of fetish and applied it to the ancient world in their practices of idolatry. Karl Marx turned DeBrosses' reading of fetishism in the ancient world and applied it to capitalism. For Marx fetishism encompasses idolatry (Boer, "Imperial Fetish," 57).

[93] The Ghanaian barrister Casely Hayford reported that after baptism, Harris laid a tattered Bible on your head before dismissing you as an act of confirmation. Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 213. For comparison see Ndung'u, "Role of the Bible," 243–44.

[94] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 11; 211–12.

not welcomed by the French government due to the outbreak of World War I.[95] This shows that although Harris left revolutionary politics, his postrevolutionary religious practices of Sabbath rest and nonviolence were not apolitical.

In terms of the Bible, Harris "used the Bible symbolically, liturgically, and sacramentally." Harris also "employed the Bible as a source for his own thought patterns."[96] After combing the historical record for Harris's references and allusions to biblical texts, Shank discerned several dimensions to Harris's biblical hermeneutics beginning in his preprophetic days, to his calling by the angel Gabriel, in his teaching ministry, and in his various interviews where he recounted aspects of his self-understanding.[97] In his preprophetic days, Harris learned to use Scripture in the manner of the Wesleyan (Methodist) church and then the Episcopalian (Anglican) church. Shank describes Harris's hermeneutics during this period of his life as exhibiting "Episcopalian orthodoxy, evangelical piety, and a belief in clear hierarchical structures."[98] Shank further describes Harris as employing an "analogical use of Scripture."[99]

As a prophet Harris retained his knowledge and practice of the analogical use of Scripture but went beyond it in three ways. First, Harris used an apocalyptic key from the books of Daniel and Revelation to understand his own calling in apocalyptic time. Themes from the book of Daniel resonated in Harris's own life. Daniel was imprisoned and was writing to a people displaced by an alien culture. The book of Revelation has similar themes to Daniel.[100] Shank discerned that Harris understood he had been granted a special dispensation as the last Elijah for the coming Kingdom of Christ in West Africa until the reign of Christ could be fully established on earth.[101]

Second, when Harris was called by the angel Gabriel, Harris began employing what Shank referred to as an "angelic hermeneutics of fulfillment."[102] On occasion Harris went into a trance-like state and the same angel who visited Daniel, Zechariah, Elisabeth, Joseph, and Mary would guide Harris in the spirit. Shank comments, "Harris was on solid biblical ground for trances and angelic visitations in the midst of persecutions, and guidance through angelic messages and healing."[103] However, in the missionary churches for which Harris had been an agent, such practices would not have been acceptable.

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[95] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 281.
[96] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 155.
[97] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 154–73; 212–15.
[98] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 155.
[99] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 169, 173.
[100] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 156.
[101] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 163.
[102] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 167–68.
[103] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 121.

In two different interviews Harris described the guidance of the angel as being in the spirit.[104] Harris refers to 1 Cor 14, using Paul's criterion for judging the spirit, whether being in the spirit builds up others in the church. Harris refers to the spirit in a way that is similar to Dube's Semoya hermeneutics. Harris claimed it was "the spirit of Pentecost" working in him that guided him.[105] The spirit enabled Harris to "cross over" from the present material world to participate in the biblical world.

The third way Harris went beyond his missionary-colonial hermeneutical heritage was when Harris employed the hermeneutics of participation through the power of the spirit of Pentecost. Shank writes,

> He [Harris] became a vital participant in the world of truth that the Bible constituted for him. It was not merely a matter of "belief in"; it was an African pattern of "participation in" the truth. It became a question of involvement—as with the ancestors, the living-dead—with Moses, with Elijah, with the Archangel Gabriel, and supremely with Jesus Christ.[106]

West described Shembe as also employing a similar participatory approach. Participating in the world of the Bible suggests that prophets like Harris and Shembe were operating with a similar notion of time as described by Mbembe.[107] Time for these prophets was entangled in such a way that they could participate in the present with biblical agents. Shank described Harris's participation: "Harris seems to 'cross over' time and time again into an actualizing or fulfilling of biblical reality in his personal experience."[108] Again Shank writes, "There is a sense in which he 'takes on' the task and role of Moses, Elijah and so on, but it does not

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[104] David A Shank, "The Taming of the Prophet Harris," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27.1 (1997): 61, 80, 90. Shank describes how a young French-speaking Protestant named Pierre Benoît interviewed Harris in 1926 in Harper, Liberia. Benoît was helping a Wesleyan missionary, William J. Platt. Benoît filled four notebooks with shorthand notes while meeting with Harris using shorthand in French and English. Shank refers to these as (BN) – Benoît's notes. Two days later, Benoît filled these notes out. Benoît partially edited his filled-out version in Abidjan. Shank refers to this report as (BR)—Benoît's report. Benoît's report was translated into English and then edited by the Wesleyan mission leader F. D. Walker for public consumption. Shank refers to Walker's version as the "tamed Harris." Walker's edition significantly excises any reference that is critical to French colonialists. The Report and the Public document excise Harris's clear teaching, which does not allow for adultery but does allow for polygamy.

[105] Pierre Benoît wrote in his *Notes* "Angel Gabriel tell me: search so and so—such verses. The spirit in me is the spirit of Pentecost. Corinth 14/2" ([BN 1.12] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 168).

[106] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 170.

[107] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 14, 16–17.

[108] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 169.

appear to him as a self-appropriation of roles. It is the angel Gabriel—or Christ, or Moses, or Elijah—who tells him, instructs him, commands him."[109]

Harris's biblical hermeneutics of participation, guided by the angel, empowered by the spirit motivated him to teach with authority, issuing laws in a manner like Shembe. In this participatory mode, Harris engaged with biblical characters, and that enabled him to reinterpret the Bible for the present situation in West Africa, which Harris perceived as his dispensation until the full revelation of the kingdom of Christ.[110] Harris viewed himself as a mediating dispenser of Christ's light for his context.[111]

It is significant to note that in the Harrist churches, preachers hold the Bible but are forbidden from opening it—at least in public.[112] Harris's prophetic dispensation for his West African coastal context, like Shembe's law for the Nazaretha church in South Africa's interior context, reinterpreted the content of the Bible's message, compared to the biblical interpretations and teachings of missionary-colonial Christianity.

It is important to note that the AIC's independence from missionary-colonial Christianity preceded political independence. As I argue below, the AICs began developing postcolonial and decolonial approaches to engaging with the Bible and Christianity long before scholars coined the terms.

3.3. Third Phase: New Christianity and the Prosperity Gospel

AIC prophets like Shembe, Harris, and others across the continent stand in contrast to the third phase of Christian biblical practice in Ghana, the era of the prosperity gospel. After AICs formed themselves across the African continent, many years passed before the third phase of Christianity in Africa ensued. Those years encompassed the transition from political colonization to political independence, followed by the reassertion of neocolonial interests: politically,

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[109] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 170.

[110] In an interview with Harris which took place in Grand Cess, Liberia in May of 1916, Father Peter Harrington asked Prophet Harris whether he could change the doctrine of Christ. Harris's response illustrates how he perceives his own eschatological position as a prophet. Harrington reports Harris as saying, "Man don't you see? The prophets can dispense—they cannot change. When all the prophets of Christ meet we shall get heavenly light from above—from God the Mysterious—and like the prophets in the Old Law we may grant certain dispensations until the reign of Christ is fully established on earth" (Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 163).

[111] Tim Hartman juxtaposes Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako's notion of Christological revelation in African religions with Swiss theologian Karl Barth's notion of Christ as the Light of Life shining freely yet occasionally in world religions. See *Theology after Colonization: Kwame Bediako, Karl Barth, and the Future of Theological Reflection* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2020), 175–76.

[112] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 213.

economically, and culturally.[113] Neocolonial resurgence in Africa initially retained an invasive political component connected to the imperial aspirations of the USA and the USSR. However, after the fall of the USSR, neocolonial interests were focused on the cultural and economic, asserted through policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The third phase of Christian biblical practice coincided with a radical shift in world economic policy called the Structural Adjustment Program. Structural adjustment has been implemented all over the world. Ghana is a good test case because, since the mid-1980s, it has given the IMF and World Bank a relatively free hand in shaping its economy.[114]

The affirmation of African culture and the focus on the spirit, part of the second phase, took a *new* turn with the emergence of a new form of African Christianity. The third phase of African Christianity, new Christianity, is characterized by the rise of "the health and wealth gospel," also called "the prosperity gospel" and sometimes "the faith gospel." The faith gospel emerged in the United States during an economic boom in the 1960s and early 70s. It has been propagated by well-known evangelists such as E. W. Kenyon, A. A. Allen, Oral Roberts, T. L. Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and John Avanzini. The faith gospel teaches God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness, and poverty. A believer has a right to the blessings of health and wealth and only needs to claim these blessings through a confession of faith. It is also called "name it and claim it theology." A fundraising component has developed within the prosperity movement that argues God is a rich God and those who want to share in God's wealth should give to God's servant, the evangelist of the prosperity gospel.[115]

The prosperity gospel valorizes the desire for wealth, the attainment of wealth, and the display of wealth. But this is done in a theological framework that takes for granted the fundamental reality of the spiritual world, a characteristic of indigenous African worldviews. The pastors of prosperity churches do not look like Harris or Shembe, who resembled a combination of African traditional healers and biblical prophets—whose very appearance signals their separation from

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[113] For a summary of this period of independence and neocolonial entanglement in Ghana see Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 208–11.

[114] "The World Bank and the IMF were led to trumpet their success story in Ghana, because they had been given such a free hand that if Ghana were not a success, they had little authority to direct reforms anywhere." Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 5.

[115] Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 39.

the mammon of the world. They look like CEOs, those incorporated into the center of the world economy.[116]

Beginning in 1979, the prosperity gospel, as practiced in American charismatic churches, entered African contexts. Since that time, in Ghana, the new churches have eclipsed the growth of other Christian churches.[117] AICs have recorded the most losses, but mainline churches were also seriously affected.[118]

At that time, the political and economic realities of neoliberalism were taking control of the world economy.[119] Soon after, in the mid-1980s, Ghana's leader, General Jerry Rawlings, opened Ghana's economy to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, giving them a relatively free hand.[120]

The prosperity gospel valorizes the economic policies of neoliberalism in theological terms.[121] Paul Gifford has shown that the influx of the prosperity gospel has been felt in many other African contexts, but not uniformly.[122] These new churches have developed into a new form of African Christianity.

3.3.1. Similar Problems, Different Remedies

The new African Christianity recognizes the symptoms of an individual's problems in similar ways as the AICs and African religions, while prescribing different

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[116] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 47–48.

[117] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 23, 27.

[118] Gifford, *African Christianity*, 62–63. Using data obtained from the Ghana Evangelism Committee who did comprehensive surveys five years apart, AICs reported losing members between 17–23 percent over the five years. Mainline Protestant churches were holding even reporting 7 percent growth—well below 17 percent growth of population. The Catholic church, the largest church, decreased by 2 percent.

[119] Neoliberalism is defined as "the free market ideology based on individual liberty and limited government that connected human freedom to the actions of the rational, self-interested actor in the competitive marketplace." See Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe : Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics*, updated ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 2. Neoliberal policies include deregulation, liberalization, and privatization. Deregulation involves reducing laws that require corporations to pursue anything other than profit. Liberalization refers to the removal of trade barriers designed to protect laborers. Privatization refers to removing properties and services from public control. See Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, *Neoliberalism : A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 14. See also Bruce Rogers-Vaughn, *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age*, New Approaches to Religion and Power (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 16–17.

[120] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 6.

[121] Another theological option Northern Europe has opted for is a secular appropriation of political and economic policies. Religion is relegated to the realm of the private. Does this religious disconnection from the economy still work behind the scenes to valorize economic policies?

[122] Gifford, *African Christianity*.

remedies to achieve a different vision of what constitutes a "good" life. In other words, the problems that supplicants express are similar in the new churches, the AICs, and in African religious shrines, but the diagnosis and remedy are different.[123] The AICs use the Bible to diagnose and remedy individual social-spiritual problems with the aim of restoring life holistically, with an emphasis on collective social healing.[124] In the Ghanaian context, Christian Baëta observes that the goal of AICs was similar to African religions: to increase what has been called "life-force," potency, vitality, élan—a vigorous, pulsating, and prolific life.[125] African religions and AICs have historically pursued a good life in a manner that does not prioritize acquiring, consuming, and displaying the goods of consumer capitalism. The aim of the new African charismatic churches, by contrast, is to guide individuals toward a healthy and wealthy life, emphasizing acquiring the goods of consumer capitalism as concomitant with achieving a healthy life. To "prosper the first requirement is to give to God or the nearest representative, the Man of God."[126] This is an economic prescription quite different from historic African religious practices. The man of God remedies the problem by using his powerful spoken word to remove spiritual blockages preventing the individual from accessing the promised wealth and health.

Among the Yoruba in Nigeria, Abiola Ibilola Mbamalu indicates that the notion of *alafia* pervades the Yoruba worldview. The same term, alafia, is similarly used in northern Ghana. Mbamalu defines alafia as "wellbeing" and "a state of peace, prosperity and progress."[127] Mbamalu argues that among the Yoruba, the emphasis on financial prosperity is a foreign element that reinterprets healing in line with neoliberal policies.[128]

3.3.2. Shifts in Teaching Emphasis in the New Christianity

Gifford has traced shifts in emphasis in the public teaching of the new churches in Ghana from the 1980s to the early 2000s. The faith gospel continues to be the underlying orientation of the new churches, but when the health and wealth promises were not materializing due to Ghana's economic straits in the 1980s and 1990s, the emphasis shifted to deliverances from spiritual blockages that were keeping individuals from accessing health and prosperity.[129] Deliverance camps

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[123] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 40–41; Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 89.

[124] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 192.

[125] Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 135. Cited in Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 63.

[126] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 62.

[127] Mbamalu, "The Use of 'Abundant Life' in John 10:10 and Its Interpretation among Some Yoruba Prosperity Gospel Preachers," 45.

[128] Mbamalu, "The Use of 'Abundant Life,'" 126.

[129] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 86.

peaked in about 1995. Their popularity waned, running into the same problem as the faith gospel.[130] The next shift was to the ministry of the prophet, the man of God. The underlying problems were the same: "husbands, children, success, wealth, jobs, promotion, visas—and there is the same understanding that their lack indicates demonic blockages." In the prophetic iteration, rather than querying individuals about potential causes of blockages, a man of God, a prophet, "is now able through his special anointing to identify and destroy your blockage and ensure your blessed destiny without your speaking."[131]

These theological topics are similar to those found in AIC teaching, but the content varies drastically. Words like health, healing, and prophet are found in both traditions. There are also similar concepts like vitality, spiritual blockages, and authority. However, the public teaching that fills out these topics and concepts differs widely. One could argue that these two phases of Christianity have rewritten different Bibles. New Christianity has rewritten its Bible to fit within neoliberal politics and economics.

The content of the new Christianity's Bible is found in the digital and print media which every church distributes to its members. Members are encouraged to buy these media to listen, watch, and read.

3.3.3. The Use of the Bible in the New Christianity

As churches rewrite the Bible, their teachings bear some relation to the biblical texts, but their rewritten Bibles embody biblical teaching for a new context. What biblical hermeneutics does the new Christianity use to rewrite its Bible and arrive at its public teaching? In the new charismatic churches in Ghana, the Bible is viewed as a "repository of narratives, overwhelmingly about the miraculous."[132] The following biblical characters are listed in what appears to be their order of importance: Abraham, Joseph, Elijah and/or Elisha, David, Daniel, Joshua, Moses, and Job.[133] The biblical narratives illustrate God's desire and ability to intervene and prosper his followers. The Bible is no mere historical record but is addressed to the believer now. The King James version is preferred to quote the text, even among preachers who preach in local languages. Gifford refrains from using the term fundamentalist because most elements that apply to fundamentalism in the United States lack relevance and coherence in Ghana.[134]

Mbamalu provides a close reading of the hermeneutics of several neo-Pentecostal preachers among the Yoruba in Nigeria, including Bishop David Oyedepo, founder of David Oyedepo Ministries International and the Living Faith Church

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[130] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 88.
[131] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 89.
[132] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 72.
[133] See Heb 11. Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 72.
[134] Gifford, *African Christianity*, 42–44, 333–34.

Worldwide, better known as Winners' Chapel.[135] Winners' Chapel is a very popular church in Ghana.[136] Mbamalu argues that neo-Pentecostal preachers use biblical texts to support a teaching as long as there are correspondences of words and topics with the prosperity gospel teaching. The Bible's literary and social contexts are not considered.[137] Words like "wealth" in Deut 8:18 activate the prosperity gospel teaching. It is not necessary to interpret the verse in context. Intertextual links are made by virtue of similar wording or doctrinal association between texts.[138] Foundational doctrines include the link between prosperity and God's covenant, and between prosperity and the atonement.[139]

Mbamalu focuses on how neo-Pentecostal preachers among the Yoruba people of Nigeria interpret John 10:10. Mbamalu locates the Yoruba cultural context and provides a detailed literary and socio-cultural analysis of John 10:1–18.[140] Mbamalu then compares three popular Yoruba neo-Pentecostal preachers' readings of that text, arguing that neo-Pentecostal preachers draw on their contextual situation of poverty and the Yoruba understanding of concepts like alafia, mentioned above. Neo-Pentecostal preachers also import the prosperity gospel doctrine to help them interpret the text in their context. They perceive that the words translated as "abundant life" in John 10:10 refer to life in the present world. Mbamalu notes that their interpretation provides a corrective to missionary-colonial Christianity's "world-denying" assertion that abundant life only refers to the

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[135] Mbamalu includes analyses of the hermeneutics of Bishop Wale Oke and Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye.

[136] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 58–69.

[137] Mbamalu, "The Use of 'Abundant Life,'" 230.

[138] Bishop Oyedepo frequently cites God's covenant with Abraham in Deut 8:18, highlighting the word "wealth" because of its link to the prosperity gospel. Oyedepo interprets Deut 8:18 intertextually using Gal 3:14 to clarify the covenant as referring to the prosperity gospel for Christians. What is important for Bishop Oyedepo is the language of prosperity in the verse, which he delinks from its literary and historical contexts. Oyedepo then relinks the words about prosperity to other intertexts and the prosperity gospel doctrine.

[139] Bishop Oyedepo frequently cites God's promise to Noah in Gen 8:21–22. Oyedepo understands the promise to be God's part of a covenant based on Gen 9:9–16. While these texts have been understood as God's promise to sustain all creation, Bishop Oyedepo uses 2 Cor 9:6 which associates "sowing" with "giving." This move allows Bishop Oyedepo to elevate "God's utterance of blessing on all creation to the status of a covenant and made it the prerogative of Christians" (Mbamalu, "Use of 'Abundant Life,'" 232). The key text for linking prosperity with the atonement is 2 Cor 8:9, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (KJV). From this verse, prosperity preachers argue that Jesus became poor so we might become rich. The primary way for believers to appropriate this in their own lives is to give financially (Mbamalu, "Use of 'Abundant Life,'" 235).

[140] Mbamalu, "Use of 'Abundant Life,'" 33–75, 135–211.

world to come and not the present world.[141] Mbamalu also states that neo-Pente-costal preachers do not have the tools to critically read the text in its ancient context.[142] Accordingly, they may not realize that they are reducing the Johannine notion of "abundant life" to *only* refer to the material world, missing the Johannine teaching of this life as a foretaste of the world to come. Furthermore, neo-Pente-costal preachers neglect biblical obligations to distribute wealth to the poor and to advocate for a social system that cares for the poor.[143] Wealth is viewed as a goal rather than a tool to benefit communal life. Neo-Pentecostal preachers draw on the American sense of individualism and wealth accumulation imported by the prosperity gospel and by the economic policies of structural adjustment rather than drawing upon a Yoruba sense of mutual sharing and community good.

As mentioned earlier, Gerald West argues that Isaiah Shembe and the Naza-retha church rewrote the Bible. West observes that Shembe, like Harris, used a hermeneutic of participation. In contrast, the new Christian churches use a doctri-nal approach, using the Bible to illustrate the doctrine of prosperity. In this way, the new churches resemble hermeneutical moves made by missionary-colonial Christianity. Missionary-colonial Christianity translated their catechisms and doc-trines before the biblical text. For missionary-colonial Christianity and the new Christianity, the Bible illustrates doctrine. However, the new churches also bear some similarity to the AICs because, for both the AICs and the new churches, the Bible's teaching is presumed to address tangible social problems. The remedy the new churches offer to those social problems is achieving individual wealth and health by participating in practices prescribed by high-profile church leaders. The Bible is reduced and rewritten to authoritatively illustrate the promise of individ-ual healing and individual economic prosperity in a neoliberal political economy predicated upon justifying individual wealth accumulation.

3.3.4. African Culture in the New Christianity

What is the role of African culture in the new form of Christianity? The affir-mation of African culture, which was so powerful in the AICs, takes on a different feel in Ghana's new Christianity. While the notion of spiritual causa-tion continues to be assumed in the practices of the new churches, traditional African culture and religion is often denigrated as "pagan" or "fetish." African

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[141] Mbamalu, "Use of 'Abundant Life,'" 270.

[142] Mbamalu, "Use of 'Abundant Life,'" 280–81. In Ghana, the critical study of the Bible is lacking in all three phases of Christianity. There is a disconnect between academic the-ology and Christian practice in Africa. Gifford, *African Christianity*, 333. However, there are efforts to use vernacular hermeneutics and popular Bible study groups as pathways to deeper critical study.

[143] Mbamalu, "Use of 'Abundant Life,'" 239, 289–90.

religion/culture is often publicly spoken of in a manner that demonizes it.[144] The historic demonization of African religion/culture is part of the legacy of missionary-colonial Christianity and continues to be part of the public transcript in neocolonial forms of Christianity.[145]

Many Ghanaians are interested in a prophetic practice that strikes a balance in its assessment of African culture/religion.[146] Traditional culture/religion should not be demonized, but it does not need to be treated as sacrosanct.[147]

3.4. Entanglement of Three Versions of Christianity

The three phases of Christianity: mainline, AICs, and new African charismatic, are entangled in northern Ghana. All three phases continue to be present as three versions of Christianity. The three versions interpenetrate each other. The mainline version of Christianity carries the legacy of missionary-colonial Christianity, expressed in both a traditional doctrinal manner and in a modern secular manner. The African Independent Churches represent an early version of postcolonial Christianity. The neo-Pentecostal version of Christianity works with both neoindigenous Africans and in concert with the neo-liberal and neo-colonial interests of the African state. Neo-Pentecostalism is the most popular version of Christianity, and it puts social pressure on the other versions.

To trace the entanglements of these interpenetrating versions of Christianity in the twenty-first century, I examine these related dynamics: the mode of translating the Bible and/or culture, the dialectical relationship between spiritual and material realities, and the relationship between the individual and the collective.

3.4.1. Missionary-Colonial Christianity's Entanglements

Missionary-colonial Christianity uses a doctrinal catechetical approach to understand and translate the Bible's meaning. In missionary-colonial Christianity, the translated Bible is useful to help people who cannot understand European languages and cultures so they can begin to understand its message in a European

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[144] Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 63.

[145] Some mainline churches have become so ashamed of their missionary-colonial heritage that they are afraid to diagnose anything negative in African culture.

[146] Whereas the mainline churches hesitate to criticize African culture, Mensa Otabil of the International Central Gospel Church argues that certain cultural practices prevent Ghana from developing. Otabil's remedy is education (Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 124–25). Otabil offered a list of seven strongholds that need to be torn down to move Africa forward: "inferiority complex, tribalism, cultural stagnation, idolatry and fetishism, village mentality, wrong negative leadership, apathy" (Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 131).

[147] Oduyoye refers to such an approach as "basking in the glory of 'old shells' retained to govern social relationships, when the material causes that gave rise to those structures are no more, or are fast fading away" (Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 75).

religiocultural frame. The translated Bible is understood to have the same content as the doctrine of missionary-colonial Christianity.[148] This missionary-colonial translation practice understands translation as a stopgap to help less educated and less civilized people understand the missionary-colonial message.

Missionary-colonial Christianity is still operative in twenty-first-century Africa through the influence of North American evangelicalism, which asserts itself doctrinally through claims to the Bible's inerrancy and fixed notions of the gospel.[149]

There is another iteration of missionary-colonial Christianity operating across Africa through the secular ministries of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The secular descendants of missionary-colonial Christianity are not interested in doctrinal Christianity or the Bible, preferring to address the material needs of African societies, such as clean water, better sanitation, health care, education, economics, and governance. The NGO offspring of mainline churches operate within what Anthony Balcomb calls a developmentalist model. This model perpetuates Europe as the ideal for development, where European nation-states and their model of economic growth are projected as the ideal for all to emulate.[150] Drawing on the claims of Ernest Gellner, Paul Gifford models a developmentalist approach when he promotes the notion of "getting to Denmark."[151] Denmark is perceived as the ideal state other states should emulate. This developmentalist approach translates its message in a top-down way that is similar to how missionary-colonial Christianity translates its message. The developmentalist approach seeks to educate and civilize Africans, who must learn and implement a rationalist despiritualized message.[152] Religion and the Bible are viewed as

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[148] Doctrinal content is difficult to control in translation.

[149] "Africa was informed that the interpretation of the Bible was endangered. 'Liberal' forces were supposed to discredit the trustworthiness of Holy Scriptures. *Afroscope*, the journal of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, which was founded in 1966, reported on 'inerrancy' conferences in the United States, 'inerrancy' being a kind of "fundamental of fundamentals" (Sundkler and Steed, *History of the Church in Africa*, 1026). The meticulous process of translation checking is related to convention: consistency in key term usage, spelling, word differentiation, versification, etc. These meticulous checks may also be motivated by a commitment to presenting biblical inerrancy.

[150] Anthony Balcomb, "Counter-Modernism, the Primal Imagination and Development Theory: Shifting the Paradigm," *JTSA* 157 (2017): 45.

[151] Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 154. See also Ernest Gellner, "The Importance of Being Modular," in *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, ed. John A Hall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 32–55.

[152] Theologians William Stringfellow, Walter Wink, and Bill Wylie-Kellerman engage the relationship of spiritual powers and material powers in a way that moves beyond Western dichotomies of spirituality versus secularism. See Bill Wylie-Kellerman, *Principalities in*

private issues that should be separated from political life. In Ghana and elsewhere in Africa, those European and American NGOs operating with a secular developmental model have significant economic resources to implement their agendas. Still, they struggle to articulate a connection between African spirituality and life's social, political, and economic realities.[153]

European and American mainline churches, who practice a critical approach to interpreting the Bible, share a similar developmentalist assumption with the NGOs. The developmentalist assumption influences the critical study of the Bible and theology. For example, African biblical scholars have often complained that biblical studies' modernist commitments, as expressed in the historical critical method, treat African religiocultural assumptions as irrelevant, as if the historical critical method is objective and scientific, devoid of Western cultural assumptions. Even though contemporary biblical studies embraces a plurality of interpretative approaches, a modernist version of the historical critical method continues to dominate and frustrate the relationship between European and American mainline expressions of Christianity and their counterparts who are the spiritual descendants of those African Christians who decided to stay in churches that were planted by mostly European missionaries.

Missionary-colonial Christianity, in both its doctrinal and secular forms, depends upon neoindigenous Africans who have chosen to engage its message and practice. To return to Kalu's observation, some Africans responded to missionary Christianity with *loyalty,* others voiced *dissent,* and still others took their *exit*.[154] Those who exited missionary-colonial Christianity in the second phase of African Christianity pioneered a postcolonial mode of retranslating the Bible.[155]

3.4.2. AIC Entanglements in the Twenty-First Century

The founders of AICs walked away from missionary colonial Christianity, taking their translated Bibles with them. In section 3.3 above, as part of my description of the second phase of African Christianity, I described the way AIC's recognized

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Particular: A Practical Theology of the Powers That Be (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2017). See also Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*, The Powers 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 3–10.

[153] In part, this disconnect may be due to the historic complicity of EuroAmerican mainline Christianity with the extractive practices that industrialization has depended upon for its profits. The EuroAmerican peasant and middle classes experienced a rise in their standard of living, benefiting from these economic profits. The middle-class and upper-middle-class descendants of the peasant classes constitute much of mainline Christianity in Europe and European settler-colonial countries. I used the word "complicity" because the rise in standards of living has only been shared with the elites of African society, excluding the African middle and peasant classes.

[154] Kalu, "Ethiopianism in African Christianity," 231.

[155] AICs can also be analyzed through the related lens of decolonial theory.

the power of the Bible, seized the Bible, and then participated in the Spirit with the characters and narratives of the Bible, retranslating, reinterpreting, and rewriting the Bible. AICs across the African continent initiated a postcolonial manner of retranslating the Bible for healing individual and collective social life.[156] Many AICs included African women's contributions to religious life and biblical appropriation. AICs also naturally integrated the spiritual and material realities of African life. They holistically linked the individual's concern for healing with collective practices of social healing. All this work prefigures aspects of what scholars would later describe as postcolonial and decolonial practice.

The primary entanglement of the AICs is with African religions. This is made clear when one compares the AIC approach to using the Bible, described by Dube as Semoya hermeneutics, with the African approach to divination as problem-solving described in section 1.4 above. Dube describes AIC church leaders using the Bible as a "divining set" useful for interpreting social-spiritual-physical life and for diagnosing the health problems of individuals and communities.[157]

In the colonial era, the AICs attempted to disentangle themselves from missionary-colonial Christianity by staying on the margins of society and not pursuing the enticing mammon of missionary-colonial Christianity. By contrast, in the early postcolonial era, after political independence, some prominent African leaders of missionary churches sought to engage with the AICs theological method. For loyal followers of missionary-colonial Christianity, this was because the AICs were perceived as gaining more members. For others, this was because the AICs postcolonial mode of retranslating the Bible and practicing Christianity was attractive to their African identity and religious inclinations. I address two forms of African translation theology in section 3.6 below.

As the postcolonial era continued into the era of accommodation to neoliberal global policies, Ghana's economic situation became more difficult.[158] Most churches, including AICs, are eager for outside assistance and engagement. Many AIC village churches in northern Ghana have added the word "international" to their church signboards to signal their attitude of "extraversion."[159] Starting in the late 1980s, many members of AICs began joining the new charismatic churches.

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[156] For an analogous transcontinental decolonial practice of "living well" or "living in plenitude, see Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, 64.

[157] Dube, "Consuming the Colonial Cultural Bomb," 55–56.

[158] Paul Gifford's summary of the Ghanaian context argues that structural adjustment policies of neoliberal economics have not worked in Ghana—even though Ghana has been trumpeted as a star of the program (*Ghana's New Christianity*, 5–6).

[159] "For all the talk within African church circles of localisation, inculturation, Africanisation, or indigenisation, external links have become more important than ever. Through these links the churches have become a major, if not the greatest single, source of development assistance, money, employment and opportunity in Africa. These links—bringing ideas, status, power, structures, and resources—operate for different churches in different ways, at different levels" (Gifford, *African Christianity*, 308).

Despite their preference to withdraw from the monetary enticements of mission-ary-colonial Christianity, the AICs have become entangled with the new Christianity, a phase of Christianity devoted to acquiring personal wealth by promising health to individuals without addressing systemic spiritual-material realities.

3.4.3. The New Christian Churches Entanglements

The new Christian churches have adopted a spiritual focus from African religions and the AICs. They have also adopted practices of African religion and the AICs in addressing an individual's need for healing through religion as problem-solving. The new Christianity has grown out of the social realities of the AICs. Yet, it has shifted changed the focus from collective spiritual-material realities to acquiring individual wealth and achieving personal health through spiritual means. The new Christianity is entangled with neoindigenous African predispositions, connecting African practices of collective and individual problem-solving with exclusively individualist solutions.[160]

The new churches address the spiritual categories of Ghanaian individuals who experience spiritual-material problems. However, from an African philosophical point of view, they unnaturally separate the spiritual from the political and economic dimensions of the community's spiritual-material reality.[161] This is due to their importation of an individualist and moralist lens from North American charismatic theology, which focuses on individual morality and ignores the political and economic dimensions of morality.

Gerald West has argued, in relation to the South African state, that the political stance of the new charismatic churches suits the African state. The state will deal with political and economic issues, whereas the churches can deal with

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[160] The term neoindigenous refers to Africans who seek to engage in strategies of auto-translation in relation to (neo)colonial economic realities, referred to in sections 2.4.2–2.4.3 above. Neoindigenous Africans are entangled with Africa's religious past. Kwame Bediako argues Africans are connected not so much to a chronological past as to an "ontological past." See *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History And Experience*, Theology in Africa Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 51. Tim Hartman argues "By 'ontological' Bediako meant that the very being of an African—Christian or non-Christian—has been indelibly formed by the primal imagination of African spirituality and religion, including beliefs about ancestors" (*Theology after Colonization*, 143).

[161] "Many African societies in fact forestalled this kind of perversion. Making the visible world continuous with the invisible world reduced the dialectical contradiction between 'inside and outside.' For them heaven was not outside the world but inside it. These African societies did not accept transcendentalism, and may indeed be regarded as having attempted to synthesize the dialectical opposites 'outside' and 'inside' by making them continuous, that is, by abolishing them" (Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 12).

individual moral issues.[162] In a roundabout fashion, African states have achieved a separation of the sacred and the secular in a way the colonial powers could not. The result is that the African state is free to practice "policies of wealth extraction whether by neo-colonial trans-global multinationals or neo-patrimonial local elites."[163] The state is happy when the leaders of the new Christianity tell their members to focus on acquiring material goods by removing individual spiritual blockages rather than focusing on the spiritual dimensions of their policies and practices that affect collective well-being.[164]

The new Christian churches are also entangled with both versions of missionary-colonial Christianity described above. First, the new Christianity and missionary-colonial Christianity share a doctrinal manner of retranslating biblical texts.[165] Whereas missionary-colonial Christianity used confessional approaches to shape its retranslations of texts, new Christianity uses a singular doctrine, the prosperity gospel, to form its understanding of the purpose of retranslating and reinterpreting biblical texts.

The new churches are also entangled with the secular offshoots of missionary-colonial Christianity, the NGOs, in how they address the relation of spiritual and material realities, and in their preference for individual salvation/healing over collective approaches to salvation/healing. European and American NGOs address material aspects of reality, divorcing the relationship of the spiritual to the material.[166] The new Christian churches address the spiritual's relationship to the material, but they do so in truncated, individualist terms, ignoring the African state's spiritual and material relationship to African individuals in society.

NGOs, like missionary-colonial Christianity and the new Christian churches, are entangled with European and American capitalism. The new Christian churches are entangled with the neoliberal policies of the African state, and thus, via neoliberalism and the prosperity gospel, they are entangled with American-led capitalism and American individualist neocharismatic missionary-colonial Christianity.

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[162] West, *Stolen Bible*, 512–36.

[163] West, *Stolen Bible*, 535.

[164] West, *Stolen Bible*, 533.

[165] For evangelicals in the twenty-first century, inerrancy is a substitute for confessionalism, a "fundamental of fundamentals" that is a stopgap for preventing the questioning of certain long held doctrinal positions.

[166] For Nkrumah, matter is the primary reality, not the sole one. There is the possibility of categorical conversion between matter and space, or between mind and body. Furthermore, matter is alive with forces in tension. Nkrumah claims this is also true within African philosophy (Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 20, 86–91, 97). Nkrumah sometimes speaks of categorical conversion *without residue* which seems to be problematic from a translation studies perspective (Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 91). In translation studies, conversion without residue sounds like an application of Eugene Nida's notion of equivalence.

3.4.4. Entangled Christianities in Dialogue

The rough outline of entangled practices of Christianity described above require more reflection and dialogue between actors who practice these differently entangled forms of Christianity. Each phase of Christianity continues to be in movement. For example, some characteristics of the AICs have become characteristics of the mainline churches of missionary origin.[167] Some of those characteristics are also entangled with the new Christianity. Rather than collapsing the distinction between these versions of Christianity, I find it useful to maintain the distinctions. That way, one can see how the new Christianity is interpenetrating the mainline and how practices of the AICs are also interpenetrating the new and mainline churches.[168] It is also useful to note which practices continue and which practices and features are adapted or lost.

An example of these entangled Christianities in dialogue can be found at the Akrofi Christaller Institute founded by Kwame Bediako.[169] Akrofi Christaller Institute was founded in the same physical space where the Basel mission was located in Akropong Ghana.[170] While Bediako appreciated the example of faith set by the European ancestors in the faith, and especially appreciated their decision to translate the Bible into the vernacular, nevertheless, Bediako recognized the legacy Africans received from Western theology was sorely lacking.[171] Bediako viewed Western theology as having an impoverished relationship with

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[167] Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 66.

[168] For the statistical data supporting this claim, see Gifford, *African Christianity*, 62–63. For a theological analysis, see Cephas Narh Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2006).

[169] Sara J. Fretheim, *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship: Emerging Religious Discourse in Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 148–90. Fretheim argues that the Akrofi Christaller Institute was Bediako's magnum opus. In this sense the institution is a form of postcolonial experimental practice (Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:xii, 31).

[170] Fretheim, *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship*, 154–56.

[171] For African translation theology, the translation of the Bible claimed continuity between the widespread African belief in a Creator with the God of the Bible. "In contrast to what had happened in the earlier evangelization of Europe, in Africa, the God whose name had been hallowed in indigenous languages in the pre-Christian tradition was found to be the God of the Bible, in a way neither Zeus, nor Jupiter, nor Odin could be. Onyankopon, Olorun, Ngai, Nkulunkulu are the names of the God of the Father of Jesus Christ; Zeus, Jupiter, and Odin are not" (Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 16–17. For an in-depth discussion of translating gendered names for God see section 5.1.1).

European 'primal' religions, and as being "syncretistic with Western culture."[172] As such Western theology "distorts the gospel." In terms of translation, Tim Hartman makes Bediako's position clear, for Bediako "translating this distorted Western gospel is not sufficient for churches in the Global South. They must go further." Africans must engage "alternative sources to shape an African Christian identity. And Bediako believed these sources already reside in the heritage of African religions."[173]

At Akrofi-Christaller, the African Christian practices of the AICs are welcomed as African and Christian, but they are also reflected upon in a theological manner using scholarly dispositions associated with the academic study of religion.[174] African religions—what Bediako referred to more generally as "primal" religions—are seen as a religious partner of Christianity.[175] Scholars studying at the Akrofi Christaller Institute come from all three phases of Christianity, breaking down barriers between these versions, integrating what is useful for African social life, and setting aside that which does not bring life to the individual and the community.[176] Akrofi-Christaller's sociocultural practice embodies the AICs' postcolonial disposition toward African culture and its use of the Bible for social healing.

3.5. Entanglements in African Translation Theology

Scholars and students at Akrofi Christialler participate in an African theological discourse that Tinyiko Maluleke has called "African translation theology."[177] Scholars like John Mbiti, Lamin Sanneh, and Kwame Bediako have reflected on how translating the Bible into African languages helped prompt Africans to theologize in their own language and cultural idiom. African translation theology has two different forms: one with a neocolonial emphasis and the other with a postcolonial emphasis.

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[172] Evangelization in Europe "proceeded on a basis of substitution to such an extent that the primal traditions were virtually completely wiped out." See Kwame Bediako, "The Impact of the Bible in Africa," in *On Their Way Rejoicing: The History and Role of the Bible in Africa*, ed. Ype Schaaf (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), 248.

[173] Hartman, *Theology after Colonization*, 140.

[174] Fretheim, *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship*, 160–61.

[175] Fretheim, *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship*, 170–72.

[176] "He [Bediako] notes that in African indigenous knowledge systems, knowledge is not the possession of an individual 'but is held in trust by and for the community, for the common good and for meeting community needs'" (Fretheim, *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship*, 163; quoting Kwame Bediako, "A New Era in Christian History–African Christianity as Representative Christianity," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 9.1 [2006]: 6).

[177] Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies," 19. See section 4.1 below.

The AICs developed a precursor to the postcolonial form of African translation theology as a form of religious practice. The AICs used the translated Bible and pivoted away from negative Eurocentric religiocultural assumptions towards African religiocultural assumptions. As Dube's research has shown, AICs were so creative in their appropriations of the Bible that even European attempts to plant colonial bombs in the translated Bible could be defused—even when a word like "demon" was translated with the word "ancestors."

African translation theology emerged as some Africans who remained in missionary-initiated churches voiced dissent regarding missionary-colonial Christianity's renunciation of African religions and cultures.[178] As part of their dissent, African theologians developed the "comparative hermeneutical method," comparing aspects of African religions and cultures with biblical religions and cultures.[179] For example, Kenyan scholar John Mbiti articulated a different relationship between "African Religion" and "the Christian faith."[180] Mbiti sought to reconnect Africans to their African religious identity while maintaining a commitment to missionary-colonial doctrine. "The outcome of the comparative approach," Eric Anum writes, "is that African Tradition Religion constitutes a *praeparatio evangelica*."[181] But Anum notes, it is "not enough" to see African religious practices merely as preparation for the Christian message.[182]

The neocolonial version of African translation theology continues to view African religions, cultures, and languages as preparation for the Christian message rather than constitutive of it. Recalling Shembe's parable, the neocolonial version of translation theology is like the third son who, for pragmatic reasons, confesses the church's exclusivist doctrine despite his African religious convictions and the biblical witness.[183] For neocolonial translation theology, the content of *the Gospel* with a capital "G" is fixed.[184] Salvation is only for those individuals who confess

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[178] Kalu, "Ethiopianism in African Christianity," 231.

[179] Anum, "Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa."

[180] West, *Stolen Bible*, 237–38.

[181] Anum, "Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa," 468.

[182] Anum, "Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa," 470.

[183] West, *Stolen Bible*, 255.

[184] John Mbiti made a distinction between Christianity and "the Gospel." Christianity "results from the encounter of the Gospel with any given local society." The Gospel is "God-given, eternal and does not change" (quoted in Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 117). Elsewhere, Bediako argues Mbiti's theological program was too prescriptive. Bediako writes sympathetically of Mbiti, "Under constant flogging from a critical European public impatient with Africa, because it was largely without understanding on the continent, these and other pioneers of African theology saw it as their task to construct the prescribed theology. Yet in actual African Christian life, where the faith had to live, a deep apprehension of Jesus Christ had laid the foundations for African theology that, on discovery, can be seen to be the only valid basis for a tradition of academic theology" (Kwame Bediako, *Jesus*

it with the prescribed missionary content. In addition to African inheritors of missionary-colonial Christianity, there are also EuroAmerican missionaries and theologians from evangelical backgrounds who promote a neocolonial form of translation theology in African contexts.

The second form of African translation theology, prefigured by the AICs, was articulated by African theologians from mainline churches like Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako. Postcolonial African translation theology argues that voices from all cultures must make their theological contributions before the ecumenical church can claim to understand the universality of the gospel.[185] Postcolonial translation theology recognizes significant continuity between the missionary message and African appropriations of that message, but it argues that the African soil makes a substantive contribution to the gospel. Sanneh writes, "the God of the Bible has preceded the missionary into the receptor-culture—so the missionary needs to discover Him in the new culture."[186] Gerald West describes the postcolonial version of translation theology this way: we cannot claim to know what the gospel is, until all voices have spoken.[187] Again, Sanneh writes, "Bible translation has breached the walls of missionary seclusion: if God could dispense with European languages, converts could dispense with missionary hegemony."[188] West contends that "what the gospel is, is always contested precisely because post-colonial 'others' can and do speak (back)."[189] West argues that South African Black Theology is the postcolonial African theology that addresses the notion of speaking back to missionary-colonial Christianity. I explore the concepts of struggle and contestation that come out of South African Black Theology in relation to postcolonial African Translation Theology in chapter 4.

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and the Gospel in Africa, 16). Bediako goes on to show that Mbiti explicitly recognized this twenty years later.

[185] Michael Cronin argues for a critical universalism, despite poststructuralism's and postmodernism's suspicion of universal notions. Cronin writes, "In the context of travel and translation, it seems necessary to distinguish between *pathological universalism* and *critical universalism.* Pathological universalism is the translation movement that would end all translation. Everybody, everywhere is translated into the dominant language and culture. The universal is the universal projection of the language and values of a hegemonic nation or class. Language and cultural difference are asperities leveled out by a global translation process of homogenisation that seeks an increasingly rapid circulation of signs and images" (Cronin, *Across the Lines*, 91).

[186] Lamin O. Sanneh, "The Horizontal and the Vertical in Mission: An African Perspective," *IBMR* 7.4 (1983): 166.

[187] West, *Stolen Bible*, 241.

[188] Lamin O. Sanneh, "Translations of the Bible and the Cultural Impulse," in *From 1750 to the Present*, vol. 4 of *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. John Riches (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 90.

[189] West, *Stolen Bible*, 241.

3.6. Ideotheological Frames that Circumscribe the Translated Bible

Looking at the three phases of Christianity in Ghana together in terms of their significance for translating the Bible, each phase or version of Christianity uses a different framework for understanding what the Bible is, its message, and how it will be used in the present. These ideotheological frameworks influence what the translated Bible means for people.[190] Ideotheological frameworks are explicit or tacit agreements that attempt to summarize and sometimes limit the meaning of the translated Bible. I use the words attempt and limit because ideotheological frameworks are partial and cannot circumscribe the infinite potential of the text as it encounters agentive readers in new contexts.

Another way of looking at ideotheological frameworks takes the distinction between the Bible and the ideotheological frames communities use to appropriate the Bible a step further. Ideotheological frameworks can help individuals and communities effectively write and rewrite the Bible, harnessing the Bible's power to communicate something specific for communities. Shembe used this language when he asked his community members, "What kind of Bible do you write?" Shembe's teachings included retranslating, reinterpreting, and rewriting the Bible.[191] Shembe's community members participated in rewriting the Bible when they wrote down their understandings of his authoritative teachings in their notebooks and later in their hymnal and catechism.[192] Looking at ideotheological appropriations of the Bible in this way suggests that all churches harness the power of the Bible. Using their ideotheological frameworks, all churches effectively retranslate and reinterpret the Bible, calibrating it in a manner commensurate with their contemporary teachings about what the Bible is for and what the Bible is trying to do in the world.

For example, colonial expressions of Christianity translate and write the Bible using missionary-colonial frameworks and ideals that African church adherents are expected to emulate. Missionary-colonial doctrine is written into catechisms or other church media. These summarize the Bible's meaning but also limit it.

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[190] Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics"; West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial."

[191] West offers a table that compares a detailed "re-membering" of Judg 11:30–40 with Shembe's version, the 1893 Ibaible eliNgcwele (Holy Bible) that Shembe would have used, and a fairly literal English back-translation. This table compares Shembe's version and the translated Bible he read (West, *Stolen Bible*, 303–4).

[192] "'The Nazarite Catechism', compiled by Petros Dhlomo consists of two parts. Part one contains 'Material Attributable to the Prophet Isaiah Shembe' and part two contains 'Material Attributable to the "Revived Law" of Johannes Galilee Shembe', who led the church after Isaiah Shembe's death, from 1936 until his death in 1977" (West, *Stolen Bible*, 298–99).

AICs take the translated Bible they received from missionary-colonial Christianity and then retranslate it, using participatory hermeneutics in an African religiocultural frame. They appropriate and embody the retranslated Bible in their church practices and teachings, and they may rewrite the Bible in notebooks or archives as in the Shembe tradition. In so doing, AIC's pioneered aspects of postcolonial translation practice and they prefigured postcolonial expressions of Christianity before postcolonial consciousness had been articulated.[193]

Neocolonial practices of Christianity also retranslate the Bible, reasserting colonial interests through the doctrine of prosperity. Neocolonial Christianity is entangled with neoindigenous African spirituality. The ideotheological frameworks of neoindigenous communities help them retranslate the Bible in a manner that valorizes the spiritual-material activities of prosperity-seeking pastors and individuals while protecting the political and economic agendas of elites who control the African nation-state.[194] The neocolonial forces that are entangled with neoindigenous Africans already purport to know the Bible's meaning before retranslating the Bible and communicating its message of prosperity and/or eternal life.

Amidst these entangled Christianities, how can scholars and ordinary people work together to embody life-giving postcolonial translation practices in twenty-first-century Ghana? How do scholars trained in European and American ways of thinking avoid promoting Eurocentric standards, ideals, and interests for translation practice?

In subsequent chapters, I will argue for a postcolonial retranslating practice influenced by the AICs' practice. The early prophets of the AICs were wary of valorizing the perspectives of elites and aspiring elites in their communities. So, too, scholars and practitioners of postcolonial translation must be wary of valorizing their own perspectives. Postcolonial translation must prioritize the perspectives of ordinary Africans who live on the peripheries of the political and economic system.

3.7. Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced a series of tools to uncover a diversity of translational practices in African indigenous/precolonial lifeworlds. Divination was a key

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[193] The AICs did not only take an anticolonial stance toward the colonial yoke. They also went beyond being against colonial forces by being for life forces, cultivating other ways of being that "confront, transgress and undo modernity/coloniality's hold" (Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, 18).

[194] In the new Christianity neoindigenous African assertions of African spirituality are circumscribed by theological individualism, and that ends up serving elite neocolonial interests that covertly retranslate for subjugation and colonization. The covert interests are not clear to many adherents.

precolonial translation practice that is picked up in this chapter's discussion of AICs using the Bible as a "divining set."

Chapter 2 argued that colonial translation selected certain practices and perspectives from the precolonial lifeworld and transformed those practices through colonial acts of translation. The key to colonial translation was reducing a mutlivocal, multiperspectival social discourse into a univocal discourse that voiced elite royal perspectives on history and law. This made ruling and extraction easier under indirect rule. The emphasis on a singular perspective is picked up in this chapter's discussion of translation in missionary-colonial Christianity and translation in the new Christianity.

Chapter 3 describes the history of Christianity in West Africa in three phases: colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial. These three phases have become entangled in the present as three versions of Christianity: mainline, AICs, and new Christianity. The new version of Christianity is currently the strongest socially as it imitates the systemic practices of neoliberal capitalism, interpreting material problems on an individualist and moral plane. The mainline developmentalist version of Christianity has the strongest economic impact but does not know how to engage with African religiosity. The AICs have integrated spiritual and material practices but are being pressured by the developmentalist, secular version of Christianity on the one hand and the new Christianity on the other.

Each of these versions of Christianity circumscribes the translated Bible with its teachings. But none of them can fully control the potential of the Bible. The missionary version of Christianity originally wrote its Pietist doctrines into the translated Bible using an analogical and doctrinal hermeneutic. The AICs defused what was harmful in the Bible translated by missionary-colonial Christianity by circumscribing the Bible with indigenous practices of divination for social healing. The AIC prophets seized the translated Bible and engaged in retranslating it by participating with biblical characters and events to continue the life-giving trajectories of the narratives for their community in the present. The community of AIC believers participated in the prophet's hermeneutics by putting the prophet's teachings into communal practice. Contemporary communal practice was established by harnessing the power of the Bible and using it for social healing. To varying degrees, AICs rewrote the Bible to further their larger purposes without giving into elite African uses of writing.

The developmentalist version of colonial Christianity in Ghana rewrites the Bible within the secular-doctrinal framework of the Enlightenment. Africans are encouraged to imitate the processes of Western nations, the principles of which are evident in dry developmentalist interpretations of biblical history. Similarly, the neocolonial version of translation theology engages African culture as preparation for the full doctrinal truth of the singular colonially defined and translated "gospel."

The new charismatic churches have adapted the missionary-colonial approach, reducing church doctrine to prosperity. They rewrite the Bible, addressing

the perceived spiritual causes of individual people's social problems in a material way. The causes of people's problems are individualistic and moral. The causes of individual and collective social problems never address the neoliberal political and economic practices of the African state.

The AICs developed a method of postcolonial translation prior to the coining of the term. A key to their practice is maintaining an openness to the contributions from African lived realities in discerning and articulating the content of the Bible's message. This means remaining open to Africans from all levels of society and religious experience.[195] Furthermore, this means maintaining a holistic link between African spiritual and material realities, not just on the individual moral level but also on the collective and systemic levels.

Chapter 4 develops an approach to postcolonial retranslation that embraces entanglement within postcolonial time and the contested space of northern Ghana. It engages the lived realities of groups of ordinary Africans, not only those inside the boundaries of a particular version of Christianity. Chapter 4 adapts an approach to retranslating and rewriting biblical texts that incorporates the critical study of the Bible and offers those resources to ordinary Africans from sectors of society actively marginalized by political and economic forces. Ordinary Africans naturally address African problems using the holistic spiritual-social-material framework that African worldviews assume. The additional material offered to them through the critical study of the Bible opens additional spaces for them to inhabit the life-giving trajectories they find in biblical texts and lifeworlds in their collective struggle for a better life and world.

The case study in chapter 4 engages in retranslating from the perspective of Africans living with disabilities as an alternative to the neocolonial health and wealth gospel on the one hand, and the developmentalist gospel on the other.

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[195] "To oppose and confront the modern/colonial world of today, it is not necessary to be decolonial, Marxist, or an adherent to the theology of liberation. It requires an ethical commitment of the people who are not controlling and managing but are being managed and controlled" (Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, 139).

4.

Translating and Retranslating Bodies in Postcolonial Northern Ghana

The first three chapters of this book offer a sociohistorical description of the development of translation in present-day northern Ghana. The contextual history I have narrated offers multiple simultaneous possibilities with which contemporary (re)translations must contend.

Chapter 1 uses anthropological tools to describe translation, arguing that the lifeworld of indigenous/precolonial time was not (and is not) an uncontested time for African communities. Indigenous/precolonial time was an era of many indigenous conversations with many layers and possibilities. How is that multilayered past experienced in the present? Which layers and trajectories are emphasized in the translations we have and the retranslations we produce? Which are downplayed in the present "time of existence and experience, the time entanglement"?[1]

Chapter 2 focuses on the political and economic aspects of translation. It argues that colonial-era translation latched onto certain trajectories within the indigenous/precolonial lifeworld and re-presented those trajectories in a way that prefigures and justifies colonial invasion and political occupation. Colonial translation created alliances between colonizers and local elites and prepared the way for ongoing neocolonial practices of extraction after political occupation ended.

Chapter 3 addresses theological translation, the main concern of this book, focusing on the history of Christianity in Ghana and the practices of translating and retranslating the Bible. The three phases of Christianity and their associated practices of translation and retranslation all seek to circumscribe *what* the Bible means and *how* the Bible means in the present. If a group engages in (re)translating a powerful text like the Bible, whether that group recognizes it or not, that Bible translation process will be circumscribed by active interpretative traditions ready to retranslate and rewrite the Bible. The ideotheological frameworks that groups use to retranslate the Bible can be evaluated for how they construct and constrain African spiritual-social life.

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[1] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 16.

I am now moving into the reconstructive portion of this book. Given the realities of the present time of entanglement, how might African communities seize the Bible, and remake it with postcolonial translation practices that are life-giving for African society, particularly for those on the margins?

In this chapter I discuss "experimental practices" of postcolonial translation.[2] When Africans "consume" the translated Bible, even with the tools of postcolonial translation theology, they risk contributing to their own subordination.[3] So that this risk is taken with greater recognition of its inherent dangers, I explore translation as a site of struggle in both its sites of production and its sites of reception. I discuss translation as a site of struggle in dialogue with African translation theology and South African Black theology. In addition, I address translation as a site of struggle in translation studies using an approach called Skopos theory, emphasizing its notion that purposes govern translation decisions. I show how Skopos theory can be reworked to make it more useful for postcolonial African contexts that have received the Bible through missionary-colonial translation. I move from a focus on purpose in translation to explore the ways translation studies scholars have described the governing "logics" for communities who desire to retranslate biblical texts. I settle on the postcolonial logic of liberation to govern both the purpose and the process of retranslating. Drawing on Achille Mbembe's notion of entangled time, and Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopic space, I recognize the limitations of a translator's embodied entanglements, and the limits of a translator's individual agency. Mbembe and Foucault's concepts help us understand how human bodies are differently entangled with biblical narratives across time and space. When groups who are marginalized in society become agents who retranslate biblical texts, they can calibrate their acts of translation to chart a pathway across entangled time and heterotopic space towards liberation. In this chapter's case study, I explore how people living with disabilities in northern Ghana move from being translated by traditional, developmentalist, and health and wealth theologies to being agents who retranslate Job 2:7–10, Job 3, and Job 42:7–11. Motivated by an emancipatory purpose and using an emancipatory process, people living with disabilities rework the logics of retranslation in ways which are life-giving for them. In so doing, a translation's sites of production and its sites of reception are blurred. Through the contextual Bible study method, people living with disabilities experiment with crossing time and space to participate with Job in offering life-giving visions of social progress. Contextual Bible study (CBS) seeks to become a space of increasingly shared control, such that people living with disabilities become the agents of their own liberation. The chapter concludes with a reflection on how postcolonial retranslation continues the trajectory initiated by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, who argued that their theological approach which privileges

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[2] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:xii, 31–32.
[3] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:xii.

the praxis of the poor as a starting point for theology and biblical interpretation constitutes an irruption in theological discourse that powerfully responds to the oppressive neocolonial political and economic order.

4.1. Translation Theology in Postcolonial Dialogue

In chapter 3, I introduced African translation theology in relation to its origin as praxis in African independent churches. Now I discuss African translation theology in scholarly dialogue with South African Black theology as two postcolonial African theologies.

Writing in the 1990s, after the liberation of South Africa, and after the fall of the Soviet Union, Tinyiko Maluleke argued that the various branches of African theology, that is, theology done by Africans in/with African churches and communities, were coming closer together. Maluleke comes from a branch of theology called "South African Black theology." South African Black theology was considered different from "African theology." African theology developed the comparative paradigm discussed in section 3.6 above.

Maluleke surveyed some of the emerging theological models in Africa, highlighting "translation theology" as an innovative and far-reaching proposal emerging from within the discourse of African theology.[4] Maluleke surveyed the proposals of Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako and engaged their proposals with his concerns.[5] In so doing, Maluleke recognized that history had driven formerly distant discourses closer together; African theology and South African Black theology are both postcolonial African theologies.[6] In this chapter I sustain a methodological dialogue about translation using the insights of both African translation theology and South African Black theology.[7]

To remind the reader of the claims of African translation theology, I return to a quote by Sanneh referenced in section 3.2.3. Sanneh argued of missionary-initiated Bible translation, "When one translates, it is like pulling the trigger of a

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[4] Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies," 19.

[5] Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "Black and African Theologies in the New World Order A Time to Drink from Our Own Wells," *JTSA* 96 (1996): 3–19.

[6] "With the changing ideological map of the world and the sweeping changes on the African continent itself, the agendas of what has been termed 'African theologies of inculturation' as opposed to 'African theologies of liberation' plus South African Black theology are moving closer together." Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century," 16. For an argument for African inculturation and liberation hermeneutics as "post-colonial" see West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-colonial, Tri-polar, and a Site-of-Struggle," 247.

[7] African translation theology was initially articulated by Sanneh. It was theologically framed by Kwame Bediako, and it was extended into a theological and historical project by Ogbu Kalu.

loaded gun: the translator cannot recall the hurtling bullet. Translation thus activates a process that will supersede the original intention of the translator."[8]

The process that translation activates for Sanneh is African religious revitalization. Translation revitalizes African religions rooted in language and practices that preceded the missionary presence and proclamation of the gospel message.[9] The original intention of the translator, which Sanneh says is superseded in translation, includes the intention of the missionaries to colonize Africans into European missionary-colonial religion.

Sanneh's argument is based on an axiom familiar to all students of anthropology: language and culture are integrally linked. Sanneh takes this observation further, arguing language, culture, and religion are so intertwined that simply to translate a religious text using the vernacular language valorizes African religious sensibilities.[10] "Missionary adoption of the vernacular, therefore, was tantamount to adopting indigenous cultural criteria for the message."[11] Kwame Bediako expanded on this link, focusing on the religious aspects that are inherently part of "primal" language and culture by drawing on Harold Turner's characteristics of primal religions. Turner characterizes the primal worldview with six features: a sense of kinship with nature, a sense of humanity's creaturehood, a recognition of the spiritual world of powers or beings more powerful than humanity, an understanding that humans can enter into a relationship with the benevolent spirit-world and share in its blessings including protection from evil forces, a belief in the reality of an afterlife, and a conviction that there is no sharp dichotomy between

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[8] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 53.

[9] "The God whom the missionary came to serve had actually preceded him or her in the field and that to discover His true identity the missionary would have to delve deep into the local culture. It is the hidden reality of this divine presence that both validates external mission and requires translation as a sine qua non of witness. Thus the central categories of Christian theology—God, creation, Jesus Christ, and history ('the world')—are transposed into their local equivalents, suggesting that Christianity had been adequately anticipated." See Lamin O. Sanneh, "The Horizontal and the Vertical in Mission: An African Perspective," *IBMR* 7.4 (1983): 166.

[10] "The problematic relation of Christianity to culture hinges on the necessity for the message to assume the specific terms of its context and the equal necessity for it to be opposed to the normative idealization that leads to particularism. Christianity is parallel to culture, but is not completely proportion to it. The religion is not culture, but it is not other than culture" (Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 53).

[11] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 3. Gerald West observes Sanneh's argument has two important dimensions. First, Africans are agents who can use the translated Bible to recover primal religious practices. Second, Africans are agents who can bring their own questions to the Bible and interpret the Bible using the particularities their language, culture, and historical experience offers. West takes Sanneh's argument further to explore how Africans use their vernacular Bibles and how, beginning with translation, Africans alter their Bibles (West, *Stolen Bible*, 242–43).

the physical and the spiritual.[12] Bediako observed that African religious worldviews and biblical worldviews are both steeped in the underlying assumptions of primal religions.

In other words, in postcolonial African translation theology both the content of the gospel's message and the "shape" of the gospel must be discerned by African hearers in African languages using their religiocultural categories and their own experience of what constitutes good news.[13] (I described how African slaves and former slaves heard the gospel using their own cultural categories in section 3.1.3 above. I also distinguished a neocolonial version of translation theology from a postcolonial version of translation theology in section 3.5 above.) Both Sanneh and Bediako employ a radical hermeneutic of reception[14] that places all vernacular languages and cultures, including Greek and Hebrew languages and cultures, on equal epistemological footing.[15] All languages offer partial pictures in their articulations of what the gospel is, and thus African voices and bodies are crucial for articulating and discerning what the gospel is in its fullness.[16]

For Sanneh, the missionary act of translating initiated a trajectory, that unknown to the missionaries, inevitably and inexorably undermined missionary-colonial religion.[17] Sanneh writes, "the instrument that enabled local criticism [of

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[12] Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 87–88.

[13] Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1988), 14–17. Nolan argues that the content of the gospel message is contextually dependent, but the shape of the message as good news for poor and marginalized sectors of society persists across contexts.

[14] Gerald O. West, "The Bible and/as the Lynching Tree: A South African Tribute to James H. Cone," *Missionalia* 46 (2018): 236–54.

[15] Bediako grounds his notion of translation in the incarnation and arguing, "For the Incarnation, whereby 'the fullest divine communication has reached beyond the forms of human words into the human form itself,' is also translation, thus rendering all translation of the Word of the Lord into whatever language essentially and substantially equal." See Kwame Bediako, "Biblical Exegesis in the African Context: The Factor and Impact of the Translated Scriptures," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 6.1 (2003): 17.

[16] Gerald O. West, "On the Impossibility Necessity of Translation" (The Nida School of Translation Studies, Misano Adriatico, Italy, 2016), 13.

[17] Steve de Gruchy makes a long-term argument drawing on Sanneh's insight. 2007 was the 150th anniversary of the Setswana Bible, initiated and translated in Kuruman by missionary-colonizer Robert Moffat. Moffat represents missionary-colonial Christianity, which imagined its mission as unidirectional from the center, London, to the periphery, Kuruman. De Gruchy argues that the translation and printing of the Bible in Kuruman, which Moffat participated in was the pinnacle of missionary-colonial work, and at the same time, translation work like Moffat's repeated in many contexts over time turned the tide of the London Missionary Society such that 150 years later it has become a sincerely postcolonial mission society. See Steve De Gruchy, "Reversing the Biblical Tide: What Kuruman Teaches London about Mission in a Post-colonial Era," *AcTSup* 12 (2009): 49, 60.

Western presupposition] to take root and flourish was the translation machinery that mission itself had put in place."[18]

Having discussed the key arguments of African translation theology, I want to return to Maluleke's observation that the translation theology proposal of Sanneh and Bediako is an innovative and far-reaching proposal for a larger African theological project in the twenty-first century. While Maluleke appreciates the potential of African translation theology for an intraAfrican theological dialogue, he is also critical of how African translation theology has been used by scholars to imply that translation somehow magically delinks Christianity from colonialism.[19] For Maluleke, missionary translation is an ambiguous tool that must be intentionally used (and sometimes subverted) to facilitate the inculturation of Christianity and the Bible.[20] Maluleke refers to the inculturation of Christianity as Africanization rather than Christianization. Africanization is a process with many possible outcomes. What kind of Africanization will translation contribute to constructing? Maluleke argues that Africanization must be "an inclusive process driven by the poorest of the poor in Africa."[21]

The differences between Maluleke's and Sanneh's perspectives can be viewed in different ways. Their differences could be viewed as different understandings of translation as a metaphor for inculturation.[22] As referenced above, their differences could be analyzed in terms of employing a radical hermeneutic of reception as compared to a radical hermeneutic of production.[23] Jean and John

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[18] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 3.

[19] Maluleke, "Black and African Theologies," 9. "The very fact that we can speak of orthodoxy in Christian theology is proof that the translation logic can be arrested – for centuries at least." Maluleke is concerned with translation theology's hesitancy to distinguish the Bible from the word of God.

[20] "While the gospel may indeed be eminently translatable, human intervention can affect the pace and quality of such translation—even arresting it into all sorts of orthodoxies." Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies," 20.

[21] Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "The Africanization of Theological Education: Does Theological Education Equip You to Help Your Sister?," in *Inculturation and Postcolonial Discourse in African Theology*, ed. Edward P. Antonio, Society and Politics in Africa 14 (New York: Lang, 2006), 71. In a world where global capitalism has reached all corners of the globe, Africanization means a lot of things, not all of them are liberating for the African masses.

[22] "Translation in this sense is much more than a technical discipline, it is a metaphor for forms of inculturation." See Gerald O. West, "Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A Tentative Sketch," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 46. The problem from Maluleke's view might be understood to be an overapplication of the metaphor as if once translation is employed as a strategy of inculturation, all the work of inculturation necessarily follows.

[23] This analysis more aptly fits a comparison between Sanneh's translation theology hermeneutics and the hermeneutics of Itumeleng Mosala. To compare Mosala's hermeneutics with James Cone's, see West, "Bible and/as the Lynching Tree."

Comaroff provide a third option that nuances the relationship between Christianity, modernity, and colonialism. How entangled were they? Can they be pulled apart? The Comaroffs describe the relationship between Christianity and colonialism as inherently entangled in the dialectics of modernity.[24]

> In our view, it [colonialism] is always to be understood, *at once,* as economic and cultural, political and symbolic, general and particular. Indeed, colonialism was intrinsic to the rise of modernity in Europe, itself a historical movement whose universalizing ethos was indissolubly material and moral, secular and spiritual.[25]

From the perspective of entanglement, Maluleke is right. We cannot easily extract missionary Christianity from colonialism. But Sanneh is also right in calling for greater nuance than boiling historical data down to the colonizer/colonized binary. My own study must take note of the dangers of reducing everything to dualistic contrasts, such as invader and invaded, a tendency that characterizes colonial discourse.[26]

4.1.1. Translation as a Site of Struggle

Both Sanneh and Maluleke recognize that translation involves a variety of agents acting with a mix of intentions at the translated Bible's sites of production and reception. In other words, to use a term from South African Black theology, translation is a "site of struggle."[27]

One of the leading theologians of South African Black theology from what Gerald West calls the second phase of Black theology is Itumeleng Mosala.[28] Mosala argues that each transmission of the biblical text passes on the struggles

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[24] West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial," 245.

[25] John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 409.

[26] "And yet, for all the tangled composition of colonial worlds, their own historical dynamics conduced to imaginative simplification, to the objectification of stark, irreducible contrasts … ruler and ruled, white and black, modernity and tradition, law and custom, European and *non*-European, capitalism and its antithesis" (Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2:25).

[27] Itumeleng J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 185.

[28] Gerald West maps South African Black Theology as developing in four phases. Maluleke is part of the third phase (West, *Stolen Bible*, 318–62).

from earlier transmissions of the text.[29] Mosala's emphasis was on sites of pro-duction. The translation theology debate insists that colonizing intentions at the sites of Bible translation production can be undermined—at least in part—by translation, and especially by African agents pressing the religious and cultural logic of translation theology in the sites of the translated Bible's reception.[30] I argue that postcolonial translators who desire to participate in Sanneh's vision of translation theology as African cultural and religious revitalization can more ef-fectively participate in that vision through a greater awareness of translation as a site of struggle in translation's sites of production and reception. In this way I am trying to incorporate both Sanneh's and Maluleke's concerns.

4.1.2. Skopos Theory

To help make this argument within the discipline of translation studies, I turn to Skopos theory. While Skopos theory may not be the best tool for an African post-colonial approach to translation, I choose it because of its growing popularity in the Bible translation industry. Skopos theory's focus on purpose and intentional action makes it useful for me in the discussion of the entanglement of neocolonial and postcolonial intentions and actions in Bible translation.

Skopos theory is part of the functionalist school of translation studies, and even though its key proponents argue in a manner that sounds "positivist and pre-scriptive,"[31] translation studies scholar Maria Tymoczko argues that "most functionalists have moved away from strictly prescriptive approaches, valorizing the premise that *positionality* and purpose drive the strategy of translation."[32]

Skopos theory distinguishes various translation roles in a translation project, such as initiator, text commissioner, translator, source-text producer, target-text

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[29] Mosala argues that the discipline of biblical studies has long asserted that texts embody their prior sites of production in what is known as redaction criticism. Mosala adds an overtly ideological dimension to redaction criticism both in the past and in the present (Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, 32, 101).

[30] Translation also embeds struggles from earlier sites of the Bible's re-production and reception, which translators and communities may or may not perceive (Briggs, "Contested Mobilities," 287).

[31] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 37.

[32] "A weakness of this branch of translation studies is that there is relatively little explora-tion of the ways that translators have particular frameworks or perspectives that affect perception of function and specific translation practices, notably ideological commitments that get written into the definition and execution of any translation project. It is also unfor-tunate that functionalists are rarely sufficiently self-reflexive about their own cultural and ideological positioning and their role in social systems as they advocate certain approaches to particular functions that translation can or should assume" (Tymoczko, *Enlarging Trans-lation, Empowering Translators*, 38).

receiver, and target-text user. Skopos theory recognizes that translation partici-pants attempt to do something in a context.[33]

Skopos theory argues that translation participants should be overt about what they are collectively trying to do in their translation, and they should "translate, consciously and consistently in accordance with some principle."[34] To delineate this principle, Skopos theory argues that every translation should include a "trans-lation brief." A translation brief identifies the translation participants and gives the translator general instructions about the situation calling for translation.[35] In Skopos theory, the translator is understood to be a cross-culturally astute commu-nicator who interprets the instructions in the translation brief and presents the translation product to the end-users in a manner that meets their expectations and accomplishes the guiding purpose of the translation project.[36]

Postcolonial contexts demand that translation be recognized as a site of strug-gle at its sites of production and its sites of reception. In other words, translation participants are not necessarily trying to do the same thing. The entangled reality of postcolonial contexts bring contestation to the fore in translation.

Skopos theory can be made to fit the contested nature of translation in post-colonial contexts. For example, a key contemporary theorist of Skopos theory, Christiane Nord, argues that various translation roles may intend different pur-poses for a translation.[37] Nord argues that a translator must manage these competing purposes by using some form of decision making.[38] Whereas Katharina Reiss uses a more top-down approach arguing that a translator will either agree to a publisher's skopos or the publisher's skopos (purpose) will replace the transla-tor's.[39] Anthony Pym, a translation studies scholar but not of the functionalist

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[33] "Translation is first and foremost *intended* to change an existing state of affairs" (Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 19).

[34] Hans J. Vermeer, "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action," in *Readings in Translation Theory*, ed. Andrew Chesterman (Helsinki: Oy Finn Lectura Ab, 1989), 182.

[35] The concept of the translation brief, "implicitly compares the translator with a barrister who has received the basic information and instructions but then is free (as the responsible expert) to carry out those instructions as they see fit" (Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 30).

[36] Three rules summarize the claims of Skopos theory stated in order of importance. First the Skopos rule states the purpose of a translation justifies the method of translation. Sec-ond, the intratextual coherence rule states that a translation should make sense within the receiver's context. Third, the intertextual coherence rule states a translation should bear some relationship to the source text (Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 29–33).

[37] Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 20.

[38] Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 30.

[39] Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer, *Towards a General Theory of Translational Ac-tion: Skopos Theory Explained*, trans. Christiane Nord and Marina Dudenhöfer (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2013), 90–91.

school, has offered Aristotle's notion of multiple causation to help nuance the complexity of purpose in translation.[40]

The literature on Skopos theory does not emphasize how to deal with multiple purposes and intentions in a translation. But I find the question of how a particular skopos is determined and who writes the translation instructions crucially important in neocolonial/postcolonial contexts.

Musa Dube and Robert Wafula have recently edited a volume arguing for a greater awareness of the dynamics of "postcoloniality in African Bible translation. Wafula argues that the major problem African Bible translation faces is privileging Eurocentric epistemological frameworks that are hierarchical, racialized, and patriarchal.[41] Is not Skopos theory just one more example of using a Eurocentric epistemological framework for African translation? Why should anyone try to make Skopos theory or some other European theory work for African postcolonial contexts? Is this just one more theoretical invasion serving outside political and economic interests?

4.1.3. Reworking Skopos Theory for Postcolonial African Bible Translation

I choose to engage with Skopos theory for three reasons. First, I recognize that Skopos theory is an approach to translation that grew out of European translation studies with European epistemologies that serve European interests. The theme of this book, translation as invasion, must deal with Skopos theory and other EuroAmerican theories of translation in terms of their appropriateness for African contexts. All approaches to translation, even those that engage in American-style postcolonial discourse are connected to contextual interests. Translation methods with links to American/European contexts, including Skopos theory, must be "reworked" to use Cindi Katz's language to make them appropriate for African contexts![42]

For example, Skopos theory normally speaks about a singular purpose in translation. While Skopos theory scholars recognize that many purposes are theoretically possible for translation in any given context, Skopos theory emphasizes choosing a single purpose and applying it consistently throughout the translation

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[40] Anthony Pym, *On Translator Ethics*, 89, 100.

[41] R. S. Wafula, "On Reading the Enculturated–Hybridized Bibles of the African Postcolony," in *Postcoloniality, Translation, and the Bible in Africa*, ed. Musa W. Dube Shomanah and R. S. Wafula (Eugene: Pickwick, 2017), 205–7. "Most of the problems inherent in African Bible translations have to do with the Eurocentric epistemological framework that continues to place the white male 'expert' at the top of the African Bible translation hierarchical structure."

[42] Nathan Esala, "Loyalty and Liberation: Skopos Theory's Ethic in Dialogue with Contextual Bible Study's Commitments," *OTE* 29.3 (2016): 434–54. See also section 2.4 above where I introduced Katz's concept of reworking.

process. I have shown how scholars of Skopos theory do recognize competing purposes among translation participants. Given my discussion of translation as a site of struggle at a translation's sites of reception and its sites of production, I am arguing that if Skopos theory is pushed further than it is normally pushed to recognize the presence of multiple purposes among translation participants , it may offer resources African communities can use to foster dialogue about what the Bible is saying. Community dialogue about what the Bible is saying opens the opportunity for negotiating community resilience in the face of economic isolation under policies of "structural adjustment."[43] Community dialogue also opens the possibility for developing theologies that offer resilience and even resistance for African communities facing economic and political policies that bring death to ordinary African communities!

When communities engage in practices that foster forms of resilience, they do so to assert their own dignity in the face of harsh, dehumanizing economic and social forces. Katz points out that practices of resilience may tacitly or even explicitly reinforce the very structures that oppress communities in the first place. Resilience is one step toward resistance, but more must be done before resilience leads to reworking the inner logic of oppression. The goal is to move from practices that foster resilience toward reworking practices so they might more overtly serve the needs of struggling communities.

A second reason I choose to engage with Skopos theory is because EuroAmerican Bible translation agencies are using it around the world.[44] The language of Skopos theory, especially its notion of the translation brief, has been adopted by several EuroAmerican Bible translation agencies. The Skopos theory framework has become familiar to African Bible translation consultants even if it has not filtered down to the local level. Whatever framework one chooses for

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[43] Paul Gifford argues that structural adjustment policies have not worked in Ghana. *Ghana's New Christianity*, 5–6.

[44] Lourens de Vries, "Bible Translations: Forms and Functions," *BT* 52.3 (2001): 306–19; Jacobus A. Naudé, "An Overview of Recent Developments in Translation Studies with Special Reference to Its Implications for Bible Translation," *AcT* 22.1 (2002): 44–69; Ernst R. Wendland, *Translating the Literature of Scripture*, Publications in Translation and Text-linguistics 1 (Dallas, TX; Winona Lake, IN: SIL International, 2004); Lynell Zogbo, "Introduction: The Field Today," in *A History of Bible Translation*, ed. Philip A. Noss (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letturatura, 2007), 337–50; Christo H. J. Van der Merwe, "The Bible in Afrikaans: A Direct Translation; A New Type of Church Bible: Original Research," *HvTSt* 68.1 (2012): 1–8; Esala, "Skopostheorie: A Functional Approach for the Future of Bible Translation in Africa?"; Nathan Esala, "Implementing Skopostheorie in Bible Translation," *BT* 64.3 (2013): 300–323.

translation, that framework will need to be reworked to include the bodies of Africans on the margins of their societies.[45]

To recall Wafula's criticism of the EuroAmerican translation industry, Africans must work toward an egalitarian, African-centric, African women's approach to Bible translation. How might Skopos theory and its concept of the translation brief be reworked to be more useful for African communities?[46]

Jonathan Draper argues that at its deepest levels, intentionality (or purpose) is hidden from authors, readers, and translators. Nevertheless, making explicit one's ideotheological approach, or preunderstanding, to the text is essential for an interpretation (or a translation) that is accountable to its audiences.[47] Draper speaks as a biblical scholar about biblical interpretation, but his argument applies equally to translating biblical texts. A translation brief might be utilized as an opportunity for translation participants to be accountable to their audiences, making their presuppositions explicit, to the best of their ability.[48]

A translation brief could be a tool that facilitates transparency and accountability to concrete groups of people in the translation process. But that is not a given. How can translation participants identify and negotiate competing purposes?

James Scott's analysis is illuminative for me regarding the negotiation of purpose and intention in translation.[49] Scott suggests that whenever dialogue takes place between groups with asymmetrical levels of power, the dialogue will normally take place in such a way that what is openly communicated will match the frames of reference and expectations of the dominant group. Scott refers to this discourse dynamic as "the public transcript."[50]

According to Scott's notion of the public transcript, if Bible agencies are considering how to go about a task like Bible translation in a marginalized rural context such as northern Ghana, the public dialogue about how to go about that task will reaffirm the position, assumptions, and epistemologies of the dominant groups. In a postcolonial/neocolonial context such as northern Ghana, the public transcript supports the interests of foreign and local elites. (See section 2.3.3 above.) Applying Scott's notion to translation agents sitting around a table discussing how to write a translation brief, the conversation cannot be open and

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[45] I made this case in relation to Biblical Performance Criticism. See Nathan Esala, "Ideology and Bible Translation: Can Biblical Performance Criticism Help?," *BT* 66.3 (2015): 216–29.

[46] For a reflection on my extended work with Skopos theory see Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 253–58.

[47] Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics," 13, 19.

[48] See section 4.1.5.1 for a discussion on accountability in tripolar hermeneutics.

[49] I introduced Scott's notions of the public transcript, infrapolitics, and the hidden transcript in section 2.3.1.4 above (Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 1–5).

[50] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2, 4.

equal. Due to the legacy of colonization and the ongoing power dynamics in a neocolonial and neoliberal economy, the dialogue about the translation brief would necessarily favor the status quo of contemporary power relations.

Scott's theory suggests that Bible translators will, by default, produce texts that exhibit signs of loyalty to the dominant group and their expectations. Subversive signs in the translated text must be carefully shielded from the dominant group's awareness. Dominant group interests may be asserted throughout a translation's production process in the various stages of what the Bible industry calls *translation checking*.[51]

Historically, the vernacular language is a shield that can be difficult for dominant (missionary) interests to penetrate.[52] Sanneh pointed out that vernacular language in nineteenth-century missionary Bible translation made contrastive signals. Missionaries could understand the meaning of a translated passage in a way that corresponded to their own sense of orthodoxy, whereas ordinary Africans could understand a translated passage according to their own primal religious framework. Sometimes canny translators were aware of these contrastive signals.[53] Sometimes the nature of language and communication creates these contrastive signals even if the translator is not overtly aware of it. The translation brief can be a place to articulate the dominant interests that a translation house or a group of churches expect to be communicated in a translation. A translation brief can also be leveraged to encourage accommodating different local agendas and points of view in a sacred translated text and corpus.[54]

Another way that Africans might rework Skopos theory is to engage Christiane Nord's notion of *loyalty*. Nord uses the concept of loyalty as an ethical constraint for Skopos theory. Nord was concerned that Skopos theory, as articulated by Hans Vermeer, left itself theoretically open to any skopos, including an explicit intention to subordinate and dominate. To remedy this problem, Nord

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[51] In the Bible translation guild, local language translations go through a series of quality assurance checks. Eugene Nida developed the role of Bible translation consultant. A Bible translation consultant asks the translators a series of questions to check the exegetical and communicative quality of the translation draft.

[52] To assess the content of a translation draft, translation consultants ask translators questions about the content of their draft using a language of wider communication. Sometimes, consultants require that the translators produce a written or oral "back translation" from the local language into the language of wider communication so that the consultant can assess the basic communicative content of the draft.

[53] Scott characterizes such canny intentionally shielded language as *infrapolitics* (*Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 200).

[54] Nahum Ward-Lev argues that the technology of writing enabled Jewish scribes to weave together more than one perspective in a single instantiation of discourse. "The scribe let the differences be, weaving together a text that is itself a conversation of many voices, presenting many points of view." See *The Liberating Path of the Hebrew Prophets: Then and Now*, Kindle (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019), 141.

added the notion of loyalty to Skopos theory's functionalism.[55] Nord argues that translators should make their loyalties to people in their audience explicit. These loyalties supersede the skopos. Loyalty is different from notions of intertextual fidelity. Nord argues that loyalty is to people, not texts.[56]

Even though Skopos theory often talks about an audience as if an audience is a single entity, in reality, an audience or a community has subgroups and layers. Given that there are many layers to a translator's audience, which sectors of the audience should translators be loyal to as they translate? Elsewhere, I have argued that translators, translation agencies, and publishers should be loyal to groups who are marginalized in their audience, prioritizing their desires for liberation. In so doing, I reworked Nord's notion of loyalty using the commitments or values of the contextual Bible study method to make it more subtle and useful for a post-colonial context like northern Ghana.[57]

Bible translation processes and assumptions are entangled with colonialism's legacies. The processes of colonial-era translation have worked their way into the minutiae of the (post)modern world.[58] These processes have conditioned well-intentioned translation project participants, and thus, they are not able to perceive some of the implicit power-laden decisions assumed by standard processes. What is needed is not just an emancipatory purpose but also an emancipatory process that can help participants explore the partially recognized layers of ideological awareness in themselves and in other members of their communities.

Jean and John Comaroff refer to "the realm of partial recognition, inchoate awareness, of ambiguous perception, and sometimes, of creative tension."[59] What is needed is a process that reworks the translation-as-invasion paradigm, a process that allows for discovery of what translation participants are only partially aware of.[60]

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[55] Nord describes her approach as "function plus loyalty." "Function refers to the factors that make a target text work in the intended way in the target situation. Loyalty refers to the interpersonal relationship between the translator, the source-text sender, the target text addressees, and the initiator" (*Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 126).

[56] Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 125.

[57] Esala, "Loyalty and Liberation."

[58] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2:29–35.

[59] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:29.

[60] Friedrich Engels emphasized that humans distinguish themselves from animals by their "aim laid down in advance." Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 34. Engels worked with a hylomorphic model of thinking, a mode of thinking that can be traced back to Aristotle. A preconceived design is imposed upon matter. Michael Cronin, *Eco-Translation: Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene* (London: Routledge, 2017), 45–46. Skopos theory is articulated in an analogous way, privileging ends over process. In contrast, Michael Cronin writes, "The privileging of ongoing process over the final form means that we end up with a substantively different notion of what it means to produce" (*Translation in the Digital Age*, 51).

Translation participants work with practices of translation that are historically influenced. Not all translation practices are emancipatory and appropriate for African contexts. As part of reworking what translation processes do ideologically, we must bring the underlying logic for translating texts into our explicit awareness. In other words, we need to understand the logic that is built into translation's standard operating practices before that logic can be reworked in a more emancipatory fashion. In the preceding chapters, I outlined the different historical eras of translation that are entangled in the contemporary northern Ghanaian context. In the following subsection, I take a more theoretical approach that privileges the historical development of the different logics of "retranslation" expressed by European and American translation theorists.

Translation studies scholar Deborah Shadd provides a historical analysis of the logics for retranslating a text in the history of modern and postmodern European and American translation. Shadd highlights how the Bible is a text that continues to be translated and retranslated. What underlying logics have governed translation and retranslation in EuroAmerican translation practices? Once Shadd makes explicit what the logics of retranslation have been, Shadd raises the question of what other logics for retranslating biblical texts are possible.[61]

4.1.4. The Logics of Retranslation

In a 2015 paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Shadd suggested that a long-running discussion on retranslation in translation studies could be usefully applied to Bible translation.[62] Shadd highlighted an insightful comment by Sharon Dean-Cox and expanded upon Dean-Cox's language. Dean-Cox argued: "While retranslation can certainly be understood as a reiterative act, it does not necessarily follow that the repetition is tautological. To say the same thing twice (or multiple times) would appear to be a redundant enterprise, unless it is motivated by an alternative logic."[63]

Shadd asked, "What are the alternative logics for retranslation?"[64] And specifically, what are those logics as applied to Bible translation? Shadd argued the two dominant logics translation studies scholars have described for retranslation include the logic of progress and the logic of challenge. Shadd then proposed an additional motivating logic for retranslation, the logic of dialogue. Gerald West picked up Shadd's notion of retranslation in the second of a series of three lectures

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[61] Deborah Shadd, "Response to Carolyn J. Sharp: Translating Alterity: Conflict, Undecidability, and Complicity" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, GA, 2015).

[62] Shadd, "Response to Carolyn J. Sharp."

[63] Sharon Deane-Cox, *Retranslation: Translation, Literature and Reinterpretation*, Bloomsbury Advances in Translation Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 2–3.

[64] Deane-Cox, *Retranslation*, 2–3.

in 2016.[65] West observed that each of Shadd's logics could be given a postcolonial frame. Instead of doing that, West thought it more important to propose a fourth alternative logic for retranslation emerging from postcolonial contexts: the logic of liberation.[66] Subsequently, Shadd expanded her argument in another conference paper and included West's fourth alternative logic in her analysis.[67] I draw on Shadd's description of the logics of retranslation in what follows.

4.1.4.1. The Logic of Progress

The first logic for retranslation developed in translation studies is related to the historical development of the logic of progress, which comes from German romantic idealist philosophy. The notion of progress was applied to translation by von Goethe in 1819. von Goethe outlined three stages for translation. The first stage "acquaints us with the foreign country on our terms." In the second stage "the translator endeavours to transport himself into the foreign situation."[68] "The third epoch of translation is the final and highest of the three. In such periods the goal of translation is to achieve perfect identity with the original.… We are led back to the source text."[69] Shadd remarks that "this tripartite formulation was characteristic of the day.… This was 1819."[70] Shadd observes that this same tripartite formulation was replicated in a 1990 special edition of the journal *Palimpsestes* by translation scholars such as Antoine Berman and Paul Bensimon. The difference in the 1990s was that the world was now governed not by German idealism but by the natural sciences and notions of testing and verification. Thus, the tripartite formulation was framed as the "retranslation hypothesis," summarized by Andrew Chesterman as follows: "Later translations tend to be closer to the source text."[71] Translation studies scholars began to test the retranslation hypothesis and eventually leveled two important critiques. First, scholars questioned by what standard a translation is judged to be closer to its source.[72] Secondly,

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[65] Gerald O. West, "On the Necessity of Re-translation" (The Nida School of Translation Studies, Misano Adriatico, Italy, 2016), 12–14. West inserts a hyphen in "re-translation" to signal the tension inherent in the term with previous and subsequent translations.

[66] West, "On the Necessity of Re-translation," 14.

[67] Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 13–14.

[68] Lawrence Venuti, "Retranslations: The Creation of Value," *Bucknell Review* 47.1 (2004): 34.

[69] Venuti, "Retranslations," 35–36.

[70] Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 6.

[71] Andrew Chesterman, "Hypotheses about translation universals," in *Claims, changes, and challenges in translation studies: selected contributions from the EST Congress, Copenhagen 2001*, ed. EST Congress et al. (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2004), 8.

[72] "What constant can reliably be used as a *tertium comparationis*—that is, as the third invariant element of a comparison, an objective reality or referent standing outside of language or text" (Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 7)?

scholars questioned the inevitability and universality of the order of progression in the retranslation hypothesis.[73]

A more common argument for retranslation is the notion of an aging translation, which requires retranslation. This argument suggests that translations have a half-life due to the inevitability of language and cultural shifts.[74] Shadd notes that this argument has been made from "both sides of the textual relationship."[75] Scholars such as Berman and Lowe have argued that the original text remains eternally young and that translations age. Whereas, others, such as André Topia, argue it is "the original which changes whereas translations do not."[76]

Shadd points out that language and cultural change as the primary motivator for retranslation cannot explain why multiple translations of the same text occur simultaneously. This situation occurs frequently in Bible translation, especially in large language communities.[77]

The idea that an aging translation requires retranslation is built upon the logic of progress as if one era inevitably leads to the next. Mbembe's notion of the African time of entanglement adds to Shadd's critique of the aging translation argument. For Mbembe, one era does not logically lead to the next, but eras are entangled. Each era contains multiple possibilities and multiple discourses in its lifeworld. The "languages of life" from the different eras interlock with each other; they influence, alter, and maintain each other.[78]

From a colonial-era perspective on translation, which I have characterized as translation as invasion, the logic of progress looks more like progress towards domination, progress towards achieving the ends of cultural invasion. Given my focus on developing a postcolonial practice of translation that reworks colonial practices in a more emancipatory manner, what would the logic of progress look like?

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[73] Other material factors may influence what happens in particular instances of translation, such as the preferences and abilities of the translators themselves, specific constraints imposed by publishers of translations, and the more general and harder to perceive constraints of sociocultural situations.

[74] Lowe, "Revisiting Re-translation," 416. Shadd also quotes French historiographer Charles Sorel as cited in Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 8; Sorel, *La Bibliothèque Française*, 216.

[75] Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 8.

[76] André Topia, "Finnegans Wake; La traduction parasitée. Étude de trois traductions des dernières pages de Finnegans Wakes," *Palimpsestes* 4 (1990): 46, cited in Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 8;

[77] Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 8.

[78] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15–16.

4.1.4.2. The Logic of Challenge

The second dominant logic for retranslation, the logic of challenge, has been de-scribed by translation scholars Anthony Pym and Lawrence Venuti.[79] Rather than taking each translation as having an independent relationship with the source text, scholars of translation working with the logic of challenge are interested in how translations interact with one another.[80] The focus is on how translations differentiate themselves from earlier versions. Establishing difference becomes the justification for a translation's existence. Retranslation is "a purposeful act of differentiation which seeks to (re)inscribe particular cultural, religious, economic and so on values into a selected work."[81] While a translator or translation may not necessarily be focused on differentiating itself from other translations, the institutional settings that constrain a translation affect how that translation does or does not establish "difference."[82] A translation's response to the limitations institutional or religious norms impose becomes notable.[83] Venuti characterizes retranslation as an "inscribed interpretation of a foreign-language text."[84] Siobhan Brownlie suggests that a source text contains the possibilities for its reinterpretations; its new contexts "give birth to reinterpretation informing retranslation."[85]

   Considering the logic of challenge in relation to the theory of translation as invasion being developed in this book, how would retranslation in a postcolonial context resist neocolonial intentions to invade and control in order to extract resources? Drawing again on the language of Skopos theory, what is retranslation trying to do? And which sectoral perspectives are inscribed in postcolonial translation processes and products?

   Shadd's third logic for retranslation, which Shadd introduces to (Bible) translation studies, is the logic of dialogue.

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[79] I acknowledge my dependence on Shadd's summation of this logic (Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 9–12).

[80] Venuti, "Retranslations," 25.

[81] Deane-Cox, *Retranslation*, 12.

[82] Shadd compares Pym's notion of passive translations (and active translations) which because of vast differences in time and space are not aware of an earlier version, with Vandershelden's notion of hot translations which are published at roughly the same time and thus do not have sufficient time to develop an awareness of the need to differentiate. Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 9; Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1998). Isabelle Vanderschelden, "Re-translation," in *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English*, ed. Olive Classe, vol. 2 (London: Dearborn, 2000).

[83] Venuti, "Retranslations," 26.

[84] Venuti, "Retranslations," 25. Contextual Bible study fits this definition rather well with an expanded concept of who can be a translator.

[85] Brownlie, "Narrative Theory and Retranslation Theory," 153. Shadd categorizes Brownlie as part of the logic of challenge, but also picks up some of Brownlie's logic in the discussion of the logic of dialogue.

4.1.4.3. The Logic of Dialogue

Shadd proposed a third logic to motivate retranslation, the logic of dialogue.

> The logic of dialogue takes as its starting point that all retranslations which present alternative perspectives with regard to some given aspect of the text or some particular element within it by their very existence point toward key spaces of potential interpretive difference extant within that text, spaces which should not be easily dismissed or discounted. Without losing sight of the source text which gave rise to the subsequent versions, the logic of dialogue trains its gaze on the interaction of the various translated iterations of the text, much as the logic of challenge did, with the key difference being that these retranslations are now welcomed as partners in a dialogic endeavour to enrich the understanding of all, rather than denigrated as inferiors, as competitors or, worse, as threats. Instead of casting individual translations or translation choices in negative light, criticizing them for the particular manner in which they constrained a given alternative or excluded a given potentiality, the logic of dialogue would by contrast invite us to consider all retranslations in the textual sphere collectively, stepping back to see how together they draw an outline of these spaces in which different voices, different languages and different cultural perspectives can be heard. By intentionally considering retranslation this way, according to a logic of dialogue, we find ourselves better positioned to listen attentively to what difference in translation or interpretation may tell us not only about the language, expression or ambiguity of the source text, but also about the limitations of our own understanding, our own perspective, and our own articulation.[86]

The logic of dialogue would be careful to listen to all retranslational voices. Shadd argued that the retranslational logic of dialogue helps us learn not only about the potentialities of language in the source text that the perspectives of new contexts awaken in us, but also by attending to the logic of dialogue we can learn something about the limitations of our own articulations.[87]

The logic of dialogue can be applied to African translation theology. The neocolonial version of translation theology, introduced in chapter 3, indicates that when the Bible was translated into vernacular languages the content of the gospel was essentially the same as what the missionaries preached, an assertion which is not very dialogical. However, the postcolonial version of translation theology argues that each translation of the gospel articulates something about the gospel such that we need to hear from all languages and cultures to understand the gospel in its fullness and complexity. And while the source languages of the Bible are important, they are not definitive. African bodies must be part of discerning the

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[86] Shadd, "Retranslation and Revision," 12.
[87] I understand Shadd's use of "us" to broadly refer to any person who seeks to engage, and narrowly refer to translation scholars.

content of the gospel for theology.[88] A postcolonial practice of retranslation recognizes that *we* cannot know what the gospel is until *all* voices have spoken and have been heard.[89] *All* includes postcolonial *others*, not only recognized translators, theologians, or scholars. And *we* especially refers to those sectors who enjoy the privilege of speaking, more or less freely, in the public transcript in each context. By listening, *we* may come to understand different viewpoints and the limitations of our own viewpoint and articulation.

4.1.4.4. The Logic of Liberation

Shadd's initial discussion of the logics of retranslation, presented in 2015, sparked a dialogue with South African scholar of liberation hermeneutics Gerald West. West responded to Shadd a few months later at the Nida School of Translation Studies by suggesting that the logic of dialogue is insufficient in a postcolonial context "because of the entanglement of the translator of biblical texts in the missionary-colonial project." West is not only referring to North Americans or Europeans involved in translation. West claims, "(missionary) educated post-colonial African translation *agency* is itself implicated in the missionary-colonial project in its post-colonial forms. So, re-translation is again required, 'in-corporating' other African agents."[90]

West proposed a fourth alternative logic for retranslation, that is the postcolonial logic of liberation.[91] West argues that retranslation governed by a logic of liberation must also incorporate those groups in the postcolony who have been marginalized by colonizing processes as retranslators. "If other Africans, those on the margins of the neo-missionary-colonial project, are to be 'in-corporated' as re-translators, what processes would enable this? What forms of entanglement does post-colonial African translation of biblical texts require?"[92]

West then describes the contextual Bible study method (CBS), a community form of liberation hermeneutics that has been practiced for over thirty years by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and

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[88] "In its post-colonial form, because God (and the Bible) are already present among Africans, African bodies and African realities are required for an understanding of what the Bible (and God) says. And while the so-called 'original' languages in which we (scholars) have the Bible are important, they are not definitive. God does not require them to be present or to speak. But God does speak through them, provided they are translated by local African vernaculars" (West, "On the Necessity of Re-translation," 1).

[89] "This is why the exegesis of the biblical words and texts may not be taken as completed when one has established meanings in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek; why, instead, the process needs to continue into all possible languages in which biblical faith is received, mediated, and expressed" (Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 79).

[90] West, "On the Necessity of Re-translation," 1.

[91] West, "On the Necessity of Re-translation," 14.

[92] West, "On the Necessity of Embodied Translation," 1.

Research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. CBS focuses on disruptive detail in the biblical text and offers that detail to marginalized communities struggling with contemporary issues of oppression to strengthen emancipatory action. CBS constructs sacred spaces connecting entangled marginalized groups in contemporary contexts across time and space with characters, voices, and emancipatory intentions embodied in the biblical text.[93]

In the next subsection, I reflect on how the CBS methodology reworks the positionality of translators by prioritizing the purpose and process of liberation in translation.

4.1.5. Negotiating a Translator's Entanglements

In the preceding subsection, I described the logics of retranslation as part of the discussion of translation as a postcolonial site-of-struggle. In the emerging postcolonial response to the paradigm of translation as invasion, I am advocating for making liberation an explicit purpose in retranslation. Concurrent with foregrounding social liberation, we must address a translator's positionality. As stated above, "positionality and purpose drive translation strategy."[94]

A translator must be cautious of the temptation to think his or her translational perspective represents the entire community. Recalling the argument of chapter 2, this is precisely what happened in the colonial translation of lunsi drum poetry into the historiography of invasion in northern Ghana. The social perspective of chiefs and their patrilineal sons and grandsons became the singular sectoral perspective for establishing a founding myth for society. Their social perspective was also used to develop customary law. A translator in the tradition of written translation is likely to emulate this practice, enshrining a singular translational perspective as the starting point for the whole community. What processes are possible to broaden the translation perspective to welcome and include other bodies and perspectives in the community in the translation process?

Mbembe's notion of entanglement offers a lens for understanding a translator's positionality. Mbembe argues that the African "time of existence and experience, the time entanglement" is not linear or sequential, but "an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones."[95] Gerald West has expanded Mbembe's notion of entangled time

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[93] Ancient scribal "awareness of different perspectives created a radically new possibility for the scribe: a text could present more than one point of view and include many voices. In other words, a text could embody a conversation." Ward-Lev, *Liberating Path of the Hebrew Prophets*, 140.

[94] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 38.

[95] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 16.

to include entangled spaces and human bodies across space and time.[96] West does this by referring to a tripolar method of hermeneutics, and Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopic space. I will briefly explore these concepts and then connect them to the concept of entanglement applied to (re)translators and the biblical text.

4.1.5.1. Tripolar Hermeneutics and Entanglement

As briefly introduced in section 3.6 above, the tradition of the comparative method of African biblical hermeneutics links text and context as two poles of interpretation.[97] What is implicit but not stated in the bipolar method is the role of the interpreter in comparing text and context. Jonathan Draper has developed a tripolar method of hermeneutics, arguing that there is a third pole which governs the way text and context relate to each other. The third pole is the interpreter's ideotheological orientation.[98] Ideotheological orientations, referenced in chapter 3's discussion of different versions of African Christianity, circumscribe the meaning of the Bible. Ideotheological orientations operate in the translation and retranslation of the Bible. The ideotheological orientations of individual interpreters are, or should be, accountable to their communities. An interpreter's ideotheological orientation, whether explicitly or implicitly, determines how text and context come into dialogue. Draper argues that the more explicit an interpreter is about one's ideotheological approach, the greater the potential for a genuinely transformational communication.[99]

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[96] West, "On the Impossibility-Necessity of Translation," 1; West, "On the Necessity of Embodied Translation," 6.

[97] Anum, "Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa."

[98] Jonathan A. Draper, "'For the Kingdom Is Inside of You and It Is Outside of You': Contextual Exegesis in South Africa," in *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament*, ed. P. J. Hartin and J. H. Petzer (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 235–57; Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics." See also Gerald O. West "Interpreting 'the Exile' in African Biblical Scholarship: An Ideo-theological Dilemma in Post-colonial South Africa," in *Exile and Suffering*, ed. Bob Becking and Dirk Human, OtSt 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 247–67; Gerald O. West, "Exegesis Seeking Appropriation; Appropriation Seeking Exegesis: Re-reading 2 Samuel 13:1–22 in Search of Redemptive Masculinities," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34.2 (2013): 1–6.

[99] "It is precisely the particular reader's "ideo-theological orientation" (the goals and choices she makes) which brings the text and context into dialogue and enables the production of meaning and hence transformative praxis." Failure to acknowledge one's ideotheological orientation "leads to a breakdown of genuine dialogue between a text and a reader from the outset, because it is a pseudo communication in Habermas's terms and is likely only to confirm the reader's prior commitments and re-assure her or his pre-judices.

On the other hand, recognition by the reader of her or his ideo-theological orientation can also open the way for real possibilities of conversation" (Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics," 13–14).

There is no possibility of a neutral, objective interpreter or translator. All interpretations and translations are contextual and ideotheologically motivated. Therefore, foregrounding one's ideotheological commitments, including one's preferred tools of interpretation, while recognizing the limitations (and opportunities) of one's embodied perspective are all necessary for an overtly positional and purposeful (re)translation of a biblical text.

The tripolar hermeneutic approach is useful in describing the process of how texts and contexts relate to one another through individual bodies and their interpretative desires and choices. But (African) interpretation is communal and recognizes an individual's group affiliations and relations to broader historical trends.[100] Accordingly, West lays out six different ideotheological approaches to biblical interpretation that are common in African biblical hermeneutics. All of these are postcolonial ideotheological orientations.[101] The oldest forms are inculturation hermeneutics and liberation hermeneutics, which began in the 1970s. African feminist hermeneutics and postcolonial hermeneutics emerged in the 1990s. African queer hermeneutics and psychological hermeneutics have emerged more recently.[102] These ideotheological approaches of real human interpreters (and translators) are all useful in helping discern potential ways to relate text to context. However, because African interpretation is communal, the methods alone are insufficient. African interpreters need to engage with actual communities of people with real bodies in space. The same is true for translators.

4.1.5.2. Heterotopic Space as Entangled Space

How important is physical space and the dynamics of power relations in physical spaces to the processes of translation and interpretation? In two essays Gerald West engages Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopic space and relates that

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[100] In my view, sacred text interpretation should engage with and be accountable to real communities. African interpretation is consciously communal, whereas EuroAmerican interpretation is often content to remain individualistic. To the extent EuroAmerican interpretation is collective, it is often idealistic, preferring abstract ideal readers over flesh and blood real readers.

[101] Referring to the work of Roland Boer and his own prior article Gerald West writes, "Before post-colonial theory travelled from its subaltern sites of actual colonial struggle to the metropoles of Euro-America, African biblical scholarship (and related analytical discourses) were 'post-colonial.'" West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-colonial," 247. See also Roland Boer, "Remembering Babylon: Postcolonialism and Australian Biblical Studies," in *The Postcolonial Bible*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 24–48. Gerald O. West, "What Difference Does Postcolonial Biblical Criticism Make? Reflections from a (South) African Perspective," in *They Were All Together in One Place: Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, ed. Randall C. Bailey et al., SemeiaS 57 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 256–73.

[102] West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-colonial," 248.

notion to the practice of contextual Bible study.[103] Foucault argues, "Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites."[104] According to Foucault, a heterotopia is defined as a countersite to a utopia. A utopia is a site with no real place. It is an idealized site.[105] However, heterotopias are real places, unlike all other real places. A heterotopia is a place where all the real sites in society are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.[106]

Gerald West writes:

> As Michel Foucault observes, one of the features of a heterotopia is that they "are most often linked to slices of time" which "open onto what might be termed … heterochronies." (1967, 5). However, because Foucault believes, incorrectly, that time, unlike space, "was detached from the sacred in the nineteenth century" (1967, 2)—again betraying his European social location—he is unable to recognize fully, that sacred heterotopias are sites that connect across sanctified time, so that for example, a Contextual Bible Study can connect HIV-positive people in their contexts to the disciples in the boat of the biblical context (whether the literary or socio-historical context).[107]

Thus, if the African time of existence is entangled, as Mbembe has argued, and if sacred spaces can be heterotopically related, as West via Foucault has argued, then bodies in the sacred, heterotopic space of contextual Bible study, and

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[103] Gerald O. West, "The Not So Silent Citizen: Hearing Embodied Theology in The Context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa," in *Heterotopic Citizen: New Research on Religious Work for the Disadvantaged*, ed. Trygve Wyller (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 23–42; Gerald O. West, "The Biblical Text as a Heterotopic Intercultural Site: In Search of Redemptive Masculinities (A Dialogue Within South Africa)," in *Bible and Transformation: The Promise of Intercultural Bible Reading*, ed. Hans de Wit and J. W. Dyk, SemeiaSt 81 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 241–57.

[104] "Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias," Michel Foucault, Info., August 26, 2019, https://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en/.

[105] "Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real Space of society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces" ("Of Other Spaces [1967], Heterotopias").

[106] "There are also probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about. I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias" ("Of Other Spaces [1967], Heterotopias),

[107] West, "Not So Silent Citizen," 40.

bodies in the heterotopic biblical text are entangled in particular ways across time and space.

4.1.5.3. Entangled Bodies across Sacred Time and Space

Bodies are entangled across time and space in particular ways. Not all bodies are entangled across time and space in the same ways. How are different bodies entangled in contemporary Bible translation?

Bediako argues that Africans ontologically belong to the African past, arguing African identities, including translators, are entangled with Africa's primal religions.[108] African Bible translators in the guild of Bible translation are also entangled with the contemporary world economy and missionary Christianity. In the ancient world, African Bible translators might be entangled with bodies who negotiated between imperial and vassal religious groups in the ancient world and in biblical texts. By contrast, my body, coming to Africa from North America, is entangled with the contemporary world economic system and with bodies that were politically and socially privileged in ancient empires. By contrast, the bodies of marginalized sectors of people in the African communities who receive Bible translations are less entangled with the forces of neoliberal capitalism and the ongoing impulses of missionary-colonial Christianity than my body or the bodies of African Bible translators. Marginalized groups in contemporary audiences of Bible translations might be partially entangled with characters in the biblical text and the history of textual transmission who were marginalized by ancient imperial and vassal systems.

It is important for translators to embrace their own agency and to interpret from their own embodied and contextual point of view. This is especially true for African agents struggling with the legacy of missionary-colonial presence in Bible translation.[109] That said, postcolonial African translations must not stop with independence from (overt) EuroAmerican presence because, as Gerald West argues, African postcolonial agency itself is also entangled in the neocolonial missionary project.[110] Postcolonial agents working toward community-driven liberation must seek to facilitate *power with* rather than *power over* sectoral perspectives in their community other than their own.

Those normally considered good candidates to be translators as part of a (Bible) translation team are often those with education qualifications in their

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[108] Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa* 51.

[109] Wafula, "On Reading the Enculturated–Hybridized Bibles," 205–7.

[110] "The post-colonial version, a post-colonial necessity, thus requires an-other translation. And even then we are not done, for (missionary) educated post-colonial African translation agency is itself implicated in the missionary-colonial project in its post-colonial forms. So, re-translation is again required, 'in-corporating' other African agents" (West, "On the Necessity of Re-translation," 1).

communities. It is tempting for a translator to assume that his or her position represents the entire community. Recalling the argument of chapter 2, this is what the translation-as-invasion paradigm assumes. In the translation-as-invasion paradigm, the perspective of a privileged sector of society becomes the singular point of departure for translating and interpreting history and law.

By contrast, as an example of how a scholar (or a translator) can facilitate power with rather than power over their community, I turn to Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, a scholar from the University of Ghana who hails from a rural area in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Amenga-Etego describes a method she has used to help navigate her entanglements as a scholar engaging her home community.[111] Amenga-Etego identifies herself as a native researcher, a "hybrid" Nankani woman engaging in research in her native community.[112] Amenga-Etego uses a process she calls negative questioning to discover things from the elders that she is expected to know as a native person. Using this method, Amenga-Etego describes a ritual of entering the earth or the land, a ritual I describe as contextually grounded ecological translation that offers life-giving guidance to the community.[113] Amenga-Etego's method is suggestive for translators who also must negotiate the way they are differently entangled in African time and space as compared to the people in their audiences. Amenga-Etego's method also resonates with aspects of contextual Bible study, the method of postcolonial retranslation I am going to be employing in the remaining portions of this book.

4.2. Contextual Bible Study as Emancipatory Postcolonial Retranslation

In the first section of this chapter, I explored West African translation theology in dialogue with South African Black theology as two forms of postcolonial African theology, both of which are relevant to postcolonial praxis. I introduced the logics of retranslation developed in translation studies, settling on an emancipatory logic as the governing logic for retranslation in entangled postcolonial contexts. Postcolonial contexts are entangled across time and space. Therefore, an emancipatory postcolonial translation praxis requires involving bodies from all sectors of society as retranslating agents.

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[111] For a discussion of organic theologians and their relation to institutions of higher learning see Alpheus Masoga, "Redefining Power: Reading the Bible in Africa from the Peripheral and Central Positions," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town*, GPBS 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 108–9.

[112] Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 227, 242–43.

[113] This ritual is performed at night by a tindana and a set of assistants (perhaps diviners) in the rivers, caves, and sacred groves of the community. The ritual begins in the community's territorial shrine and enters "the spiritual depths of the land" as a ritual that "predicts the crops, livestock and fortunes of the following year" (Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 227).

In this section I focus on retranslation having both an emancipatory purpose and an emancipatory process.[114] I bring sites of production and sites of reception into dialogue by employing the contextual Bible study method (CBS) as a form of emancipatory retranslation. CBS has been described as

> a collaborative post-colonial praxis in which the already present Bible is re-read communally and critically, drawing on the local interpretive resources of particular organized communities of poor and marginalized 'ordinary readers' of the Bible and the critical interpretive resources of socially engaged biblical and theological 'trained readers', working together for systemic social and theological transformation.[115]

Aloo Mojola identified the need for "an interpretive and translational praxis" for the average Bible reader in poor and marginalized African communities.[116] Mojola's statement suggests that it is important to take CBS in a translational direction. I describe CBS as a process of retranslating for community-led transformation. By dialogically retranslating a biblical text from a marginalized group's social location and collectively enacting a biblical text to build a better social life in their context, CBS participants participate in reworking ideotheological interpretative pathways at the grassroots level, and they begin experimenting with prophetic critiques of economic, religious, cultural, and political social systems.

4.2.1. Contextual Bible Study's Historical Development

The method of Bible reading known as CBS emerged in South Africa in the 1980s as part of the struggle against apartheid. Its origins come from the worker-priest movement of 1930s and 40s.[117] It uses the See, Judge, Act method of community-based Bible reading for liberation.

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[114] An emancipatory process helps avoid what Hans de Wit criticizes as "flat activism" and "superficial criticism." "In liberation hermeneutics, praxis is the space within which the humanizing and liberating potential of biblical texts is explored. Praxis is a continuing process of searching, of transformation, of continually deciding, choosing, judging, and determining who we are and who we shall be—not as a private or an individual act but as a public and communal activity." See Hans de Wit, ""It Should Be Burned and Forgotten!" Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics through the Eyes of Another," in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation*, ed. Alejandro F. Botta and Pablo R. Andiñach, SemeiaSt 59 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 45.

[115] Gerald West offered this definition in a workshop in January of 2019.

[116] Mojola, "Bible Translation in Africa," 162.

[117] Gerald O. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context*, 2nd rev. ed., The Bible and Liberation Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 188–93.

The particularities of the CBS method emerged from engagement with poor and marginalized groups of ordinary people reading the Bible for social change at the Institute for the Study of the Bible at the University of Natal. The Institute was influenced by the "Popular Reading of the Bible" developed by Centro de Estudos Bíblicos (CEBI) which was founded in Brazil in 1979.[118] Around the time of South Africa's liberation in 1994, the Institute for the Study of the Bible became the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The postcolonial element of CBS emerged after political liberation was achieved as poor and black communities continued to be socially and economically oppressed. Over the past thirty years, the Ujamaa Centre has been using CBS with specific groups struggling to achieve a better life under the weight of South Africa's postcolonial capitalist realities. Forged in the struggle against apartheid, it has been used to address a variety of issues of oppression in South Africa, including the HIV and AIDS pandemic, gender violence in church and society, the struggle for land in rural and urban communities, and discrimination based on sexuality.

During that thirty-year span the CBS method has been taken across Africa into parts of Asia, Europe, and the United States. The transplanting of the CBS method to new contexts raises significant challenges and opportunities. Practitioners of liberation hermeneutics in Brazil and South Africa prefer that each context adapt and recreate CBS in a manner appropriate for the needs and histories of its context. At the same time, seasoned practitioners have gained wisdom through their years of experience that can help eager facilitators learn dispositions to foster more thorough-going transformation.

4.2.2. CBS Values or Commitments

Seasoned and experienced practitioners-scholars of liberation hermeneutics have distilled their ethos into six core values or commitments. These values indicate that CBS attempts to reconfigure the normal processes of power-laden interaction between social groups.[119]

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[118] "History," Centro de Estudos Bíblicos, February 11, 2020, https://cebi.org.br/historia/.
[119] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. In power-laden communication, the default manner of communication is the public transcript. The hidden transcript is the kind of articulation that subordinate groups use outside of the earshot of dominant groups. Infrapolitics is a mediating form of language that takes place in public in a coded fashion so that a dominant group member might hear it as innocuous rather than critical.

Initially, CBS articulated four key commitments expressly for the South African context.[120] This was subsequently expanded to five, the five "C's" of CBS.[121] CBS has been taken to contexts across Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and the North America. This prompted the Ujamaa Centre to articulate the commitments of its method.[122]

As part of the process of documenting the approach to liberation hermeneutics in January of 2015, the Ujamaa Centre met with its sister organization, the Centro de Estudos Bíblicos (CEBI). The two organizations gathered in Bogotá, Columbia, to discuss the values or commitments that have shaped their Bible reading practices. They agreed on five ideological commitments or core values, while the Ujamaa Centre firmly argues for a sixth.[123] A commitment to these core values is a necessary starting point for those trying to recreate the transformational potential this kind of work has generated in new and different contexts. For any group coming from a translation background, the core values are a key place to start to help reorient a translation team's purpose and process. CBS embodies a different kind of engagement than typical translation, especially the translation-as-invasion paradigm.

4.2.2.1. Community

CBS is not about individualized interpretation. It is about interpretation for the life of the community. CBS begins with a community's perspective. The process

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[120] "A commitment to read from the perspective of the South African context, particularly from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. A commitment to read the Bible in community with others, particularly with those contexts different from our own. A commitment to read the Bible critically. A commitment to individual and social transformation through contextual Bible study." Gerald O. West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993), 12.

[121] "The five key words which correspond to the five C's … are interactive (Community), context of the reader (Context), context of the bible (Criticality), critical dialogue and raising awareness (Conscientisation) and transformation (Change)." Sarojini Nadar, "Beyond the 'Ordinary Reader' and the 'Invisible Intellectual': Shifting Contextual Bible Study from Liberation Discourse to Liberation Pedagogy," *OTE* 22.2 (2009): 390–91.

[122] The Ujamaa Centre staff were asked by colleagues already using CBS to design a manual, which they consented to do, and which they continue to update from time to time. See The Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research, "Doing Contextual Bible Study: A Resource Manual," Resources of Ujamaa/Manual, May 2015, http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/RESOURCES_OF_UJAMAA/MANUAL_STUDIES.aspx.

[123] Gerald O. West, "Reading the Bible with the Marginalised: The Value/s of Contextual Bible Reading," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 1.2 (2015): 235–61.

of CBS intentionally fosters community.[124] CBS aims to build redemptive communities "full of dignity, decent work, and abundant life for all."[125]

CBS embodies this communal approach quite differently than the communal approach is embodied in the translation-as-invasion paradigm. CBS is committed to the perspectives of "ordinary readers of the Bible."[126] Ordinary readers of the Bible are people whose epistemological toolbox for reading the Bible has primarily been shaped by their lived experience within their home and religious communities. Their accountabilities are within those relationships and not to groups within the academy of biblical studies. Within that group of people, CBS is even more specific about its commitments. Because of its overall purpose of interpreting the Bible for social liberation, CBS is committed to the epistemological priority of poor and marginalized groups within a community of ordinary readers as a dialogical starting point.

The epistemological priority of the poor and marginalized reconfigures the translation-as-invasion paradigm. Under the invasion paradigm, many social groups who had participated in precolonial discourse were suppressed. In the invasion paradigm, there can only be one definitive social perspective as the basis for local rule under the colonial authority. Under the invasion paradigm, social groups must conform to the dominant perspective. Other points of view are not legal starting points. They are deprivileged. Contrastively, CBS privileges voices that have been suppressed so genuine dialogue can begin. CBS recognizes marginalized groups as dialogue partners and coactors in addressing a community's social, cultural, economic, and legal problems. CBS shares this dialogical commitment with the indigenous/precolonial era. In chapter 1's discussion of oral tradition, I observed that in a funeral, most social sectors have an opportunity and a genre to make their voice heard. For CBS, the dialogical starting point is the perspective of organized groups of poor and marginalized people in a community.[127]

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[124] John S. Pobee, "Bible Study in Africa: A Passover of Language," *Semeia* 73 (1996): 168.
[125] West, "Reading the Bible with the Marginalised," 238.
[126] Gerald O. West, "Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities: An Introduction," in *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*, ed. Gerald O. West, SemeiaSt 62 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 1–6.
[127] Rather than speaking of poor and marginalized groups in general, CBS works with specific groups who have organized themselves over a period of time and have developed "a foregrounded subjectivity" with the capacity to speak to themselves and to others outside their group in pursuit of a better life for themselves and their communities. See Gerald O. West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar: Training for Transformation, Doing Development," in *For Better, for Worse: The Role of Religion in Development Cooperation*, ed. Robert Odén (Halmsted: Swedish Mission Council, 2016), 139. See also James R. Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection*

To anticipate criticism, some will claim that CBS, as emancipatory retranslation, repeats the logic of invasion. The dominated become the dominant. Such a criticism does not yet perceive the methodological shift I am arguing for. The argument is for a return to multiperspectival dialogue, not to a reversal of monologue. Epistemological privilege is a starting point, not an ending point. It is a necessary movement based on the current balance of power. Once dialogue has been initiated, the formerly dominant are invited to engage in dialogue with all the human actors in their context, so they can all work together to solve their communal problems. Furthermore, the See-Judge-Act methodology, explained below, calls for a continual reassessment of context. As emancipatory retranslations and social actions take place, the ongoing emancipatory logic calls for a critical reappraisal of context to reveal how and where the "idols of death" have established their life-negating activities and to see where God is bringing life to the cries of the people.[128] No one social perspective is established as the eternal starting point. At any given point in time, the See-Judge-Act method attends to the realities of systemic oppression and marginalization of some groups. It grants those groups epistemological privilege as a dialogical starting point.

The approach being argued here is not simply an open dialogue of all the voices around the table speaking in public. Such an open dialogue does not consider Scott's notion of the public transcript, in which Scott observes that the public dialogue tacitly favors the dominant voices at the table.[129] Instead, CBS's dialogue is carefully calibrated to privilege voices marginalized in the public transcript.

4.2.2.2. Criticality

The value of criticality suggests that every social group involved in CBS as emancipatory retranslation should be growing in their critical assessment of the local context and the biblical text under consideration. This especially includes analyzing the structural and systemic causes that produce the problems people are experiencing in their specific context.

For example, a local community group that is suffering from a social problem might organize itself by discussing the systemic causes of the problems facing them in their own "safe and sequestered" locations.[130] Organic intellectuals among them could ask questions about the causes of suffering and poverty in their contexts. Socially engaged biblical scholars would address questions to the ancient (con)text which arise from analogous issues the contemporary community

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(Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 88, 111. See also Crystal L. Hall, *Insights from Reading the Bible with the Poor* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019), xviii–xix, 29–30.

[128] Franz J. Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986).

[129] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2–4, 18–19.

[130] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 115, 120.

is facing. Together, the group might notice critical details in the text that highlight the trajectories of death and life at work in the ancient world and lend themselves to appropriation in the contemporary context.

In the early years of contextual Bible reading, scholars assumed a strong notion of criticality such that poor and marginalized communities were "colonized" by the dominant ideology to the extent that they are considered to be enveloped in a "false consciousness."[131] Drawing on the analyses of James Scott and Jean and John Comaroff, some scholars work with a thin view of hegemony, recognizing that marginalized groups are more constrained in action than they are in thought,[132] and that hegemony is inherently unstable and can be undone.[133] Socially engaged biblical scholars of contextual Bible reading methodologies have come to understand that poor and marginalized communities already have their own critical capacities, which they bring to the interpretative experience. Socially engaged scholars bring a set of critical tools. Each group offers their critical capacities to the collaborative effort.

4.2.2.3. Collaboration

CBS is a collaborative project between the following social groups: poor and working-class groups, organic intellectuals, and socially engaged biblical scholars and theologians. While the poor and working-class groups are granted epistemological privilege, as discussed above under the value of community, the experience of the apartheid struggle in South Africa led theologians of Black theology and contextual theology to articulate that each of these groups has a unique contribution to make to the collective struggle for liberation.[134] Within biblical studies, *reading with* ordinary readers developed from recognizing that different social groups can make different kinds of contributions.[135] Rather than merging

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[131] Gerald O. West, "Liberation Hermeneutics," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Stephen L. McKenzie, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 509.

[132] "Other things equal, it is therefore more accurate to consider subordinate classes less constrained at the level of thought and ideology, since they can in secluded settings speak with comparative safety, and *more* constrained at the level of political action and struggle, where the daily exercise of power sharply limits the options available to them" (Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 91 [emphasis original]).

[133] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:27.

[134] Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*; Nolan, *God in South Africa*.

[135] Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube, "An Introduction: How We Have Come to 'Read With,'" *Semeia* 73 (1996): 1–16. Reading with/ speaking with comes out of feminism's critique of the notion of universal experience and subjectivity. Selves and communities are always in the process of being constructed and negotiated. See Jill Arnott, "French Feminism in a South African Frame? Gayatri Spivak and the Problem of 'representation' in South African Feminism," *Pretexts* 3 (1991): 125.

these groups into one, which will tend to favor the dominant group and mimic the translation-as-invasion paradigm, the value of collaboration suggests clarifying differences in social locations and working towards solidarity through dialogue.[136] Jill Arnot describes the nature of such dialogue as "a genuinely dialectical interaction between two vigilantly foregrounded subject-positions."[137]

Scholars need to be careful not to speak for marginalized groups, those whom Gayatri Spivak has called the subaltern.[138] They must avoid a naive and romantic listening to. Scholars cannot become transparent (see-through). Marginalized groups must not become caricatures for scholarly representation. Instead, scholars must continuously foreground their own positionality and the positionality of their discourse partners.[139]

Socially engaged biblical and translation scholars must recognize that they can learn something from ordinary people in community groups. That is why, as I will explain below, CBS engagements begin and end with the community. Whatever resources are offered from critical scholarship are offered as potential resources but not as one-way communication. The community groups have the final say in what they find useful.

4.2.2.4. Change

Community groups in Africa desire the transformation of their contexts. The realities of poverty and suffering in African contexts are too great to ignore. African communities demand that biblical scholars make their work relevant to them. The scholar who lives in the world cannot very successfully insulate himself or herself from the realities of the African contexts. However, it is not always clear how to make one's work relevant in a way that brings genuine social change to the community. CBS offers a method for scholars to make their academic work relevant to community problems. Scholars, intellectuals, and community members work together for change. CBS processes are not interested in translating literature to make it available. CBS is not committed to the biblical text itself, or its availability, but to change. Through CBS, systemic change is led by the communities,

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[136] Beverley G. Haddad, "The South African Women's Theological Project: Practices of Solidarity and Degrees of Separation in the Context of the HIV Epidemic," *Religion & Theology* 20.1–2 (2013): 2–18.

[137] Arnott, "French Feminism in a South African Frame?," 127.

[138] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988), 271–313. In response to Spivak's question, drawing on James Scott, Gerald West argues, "The subaltern do speak in gesture, facial expression, performance, gesture and ritual." Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 49.

[139] West, *Academy of the Poor*, 49.

groups, and individuals most affected by harmful social, economic, political, and theological practices.[140]

The dominant theology for many churches in Africa and around the world is preoccupied with personal moral transformation, but they put much less emphasis on the causes of social injustice. CBS is interested in social change and social justice. That is why it engages in acts of retranslation. The process of addressing social change and social justice is assisted by the retranslation of biblical texts, and individual transformation also occurs.[141]

Through CBS's processes, biblical scholars and translators are returned to the community's life. The resources they offer the community are calibrated to bring life to the community. This makes the scholar and translator valuable. The arcane work scholars do in relation to the ancient world and ancient texts is oriented to serve the real struggles of a community. When a scholar becomes useful to a struggling community, sometimes the scholar undergoes a transformation. The scholar's loyalties shift in service of marginalized groups in their community.

When organic intellectuals, translators, and community groups engage in re-translation for social action, this activates the potential for social change. This activation process brings hope to people in contexts that often feel hopeless. As change begins to occur, one remembers what it is like to be human and to do the work of one's vocation as part of a human community struggling to survive and live with dignity.[142]

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[140] Using James Scott's theory of hidden transcripts, marginalized groups practice their hidden transcripts of dignity in their sequestered locations. When someone articulates a hidden transcript in public, there is a potential to connect marginalized people who recognize their own experience in someone else's. This can potentially connect them to what Scott calls a "single power grid." This grid is a resource for change (Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 223–24). For a discussion of CBS's theory of change see West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar."

[141] "However, over the thirty years of our work, we have come to recognise a more modest goal. It would seem that we have discovered through participant feedback that our work with them has enabled them to re-turn to church." Gerald O. West, "Contextual Bible Study and/or as Interpretive Resilience," in *That All May Live! Essays in Honor of Nyambura J. Njoroge*, ed. Ezra Chitando, Esther Mombo, and Masiiwa Ragies Gunda (Bamberg: University of Bamburg Press, 2021), 149.

[142] Because the West and those entangled with the West's humanist project have not come to terms with colonial conquest and brutality, "the West has never been further from being able to live a true humanism—a humanism made to the measure of the world." Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Robin D. G. Kelley (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 73.

4.2.2.5. Context

The fifth value is context. Contexts have many layers or dimensions: economic, political, social, cultural, and religious. These layers of context formatively shape people, society, and the Bible. This is also true about the ancient world. While both the Ujamaa Centre and CEBI have emphasized the economic layer of oppression as the fundamental reality of the poor, they also recognize the intersections of people's lived reality in terms of class, race, gender, HIV status, disability, sexuality, etc.[143] Contexts have multiple layers and intersections of marginalization.

It is the commitment to context that makes using the Bible so important. Because the Bible is already present in the contexts where CBS takes place, the Bible is already at work, often doing damage. That is why CBS engages in retranslations of the already-present Bible to help communities being victimized by oppressive systems hear a word of life from God instead of words of death. CBS is a process committed to struggling on the side of the God of life against the idols of death.

4.2.2.6. Contestation

CBS as retranslation emphasizes contestation in the theological and ideological realms. Society itself is engaged in struggle regarding the theological and ideological formations of our world. South African Black theology, which was born in the struggle against apartheid, has long recognized that similar kinds of theological and ideological struggles taking place in our present contexts also took place in Bible times. The Bible is filled with struggle as different theological and ideological groups in the ancient world competed for dominance.[144]

South African Black theology contends that not all theological perspectives in the Bible speak a word of life. Drawing justification from biblical texts, the dominant theology of the apartheid government did not speak a word of life. CBS incorporates this insight from South African Black theology, arguing that theological frames are built on "bits" of the Bible and that all theological frames are partially built on the Bible.[145] In this way, the Bible speaks with different voices in our present contexts. CBS's goal is to struggle with the Bible, to retranslate it, and thus wrestle a word of life from it that has bearing on a present social struggle.

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[143] West, "Reading the Bible with the Marginalised," 241.

[144] Itumeleng J. Mosala, "The Use of the Bible in Black Theology," in *The Unquestionable Right to Be Free: Black Theology from South Africa*, ed. Itumeleng J. Mosala and Buti Tlhagale (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), 175–99; Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*. See Takotso Mofokeng, "Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation," *Journal of Black Theology* 2 (1988): 34–42. See also Maluleke, "Black and African Theologies."

[145] West, "Reading the Bible with the Marginalised," 242.

4.2.3. CBS Movements

CBS's values describe the dispositions that CBS facilitators embody as they work with groups in communities for locally directed social change. CBS's hermeneutical movements describe how CBS works out these values in a community Bible-reading experience.

CBS is intended to be a collaborative reinterpretation and retranslation of a biblical text on the side of marginalized groups experiencing social pain related to the problem or issue being discussed. CBS consists of a series of strategically organized questions that guide a marginalized group already engaged in social struggle to study a biblical text by going through a process of community-based liberation hermeneutics. The overall framework of CBS follows the See-Judge-Act movement of liberation theology. The See-Judge-Act movement "begins with social analysis of a context of struggle (See) and then moves into a similar systemic analysis of the Bible which brings texts and contexts into dialogue (Judge), and then moves into community controlled action (Act)."[146] The action creates a new situation, which calls for assessing the previous action and reassessing the social context of ongoing struggle (See). Thus, the process is iterative and dynamic.[147]

Two submovements within the larger See-Judge-Act framework support the study process and describe aspects of the interpretative process.

4.2.3.1. The Submovement of Community Consciousness

The first submovement in CBS relates to the already existing ideotheological perspectives in the community. This submovement begins with *community consciousness* and normally asks a question that evokes the community's collective memory about the biblical text in focus for the study. The responses indicate how this text has already been appropriated in the community, indicating the prevalent ideotheological orientations in the community's memory. It is important to begin in this way to recognize that the Bible is already present in the community, and that people already have been doing ideotheological processing. It is important to observe that communities are typically more critical of their context than they are critical of the Bible.[148] That being said, careful attention to the actual biblical hermeneutics that ordinary African interpreters use in preaching or daily

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[146] West, "Liberation Hermeneutics," 513.

[147] Because the context changes as a result of the action of the study, the process is not repetitive in a static fashion, but iterative in a dynamic fashion, more like the coils of a spring than an unending circle.

[148] Gifford, *African Christianity*, 42–44, 333. Gifford argues that African Christianity approaches the Bible uncritically, but he rejects the word fundamentalist because its political connotations in North America do not apply in Africa.

rhetoric reveals more playfulness and creativity than their theological statements often indicate.[149]

The next phase is the *critical consciousness* phase, corresponding to the Judge phase of the overall framework. The questions prompt participants to reread the text several times, bringing the detail of the text to the group's attention. During this critical consciousness phase, an offer of information from the discipline of critical biblical studies is made to the community. The questions invite the community to consider the detail of the (con)text. This enables them to draw lines of continuity and discontinuity in relation to their present circumstances and the overall theme of the study. The critical consciousness questions encourage participants to begin to judge their reality based on a theology of life. This prophetic theological perspective suggests God's judgment is on the side of the poor and marginalized. Then the participants move back into a second iteration of the community consciousness phase, where they appropriate what they have learned, bringing the critical knowledge they explored into their overall awareness. In this second community consciousness phase, they appropriate the text for themselves by drawing lines of connection from the ancient (con)text to their present reality. These lines of connection connect communities across (entangled) time and (heterotopic) space. (See section 4.1.5 above.) The act of appropriating the text prepares them to consider what action they should take in the final Act phase of the study. The actions taken will further cement the knowledge they have appropriated into their community's collective consciousness.

4.2.3.2. The Submovement within Biblical Studies

The second submovement within the See-Judge-Act framework is related to the disciplines within biblical studies. This submovement occurs within the Judge phase of the overall movement and as part of the offer of information, which occurs in the critical consciousness phase of the community's awareness. As participants move through the CBS questions of this submovement, they also move through a range of approaches within biblical studies: thematic, literary, and sociohistorical. The thematic issue is the burning social issue or problem in front of the text that serves to connect contexts and focuses the participants' purpose for studying the Bible. The thematic issue serves as the point of departure in their own contextual reality and guides their focus when they move into a literary analysis of the text. The literary approach within biblical studies usually receives the lion's share of questions within CBS. This is because literary analysis provides an egalitarian starting point, setting ordinary interpreters and scholars on relatively equal ground. One does not need to be an expert in the Bible or its history to use the analytical skills of literary analysis. Another optional move within CBS is to consider the world that produced the ancient text, the world behind the text,

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[149] Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies," 14–15.

through questions that encourage participants to use sociohistorical or sociocultural analyses. These forms of analysis usually require a facilitator to share expert knowledge relevant to the text and the thematic issue. Frequently, the literary analysis brings sociohistoric questions to the forefront. For instance, in studying the temple narrative in Mark 11–13, participants may inquire what the temple was like in the first century and how its structure was related to the ancient economy of Israel.

In their journey through the various critical approaches within biblical studies, participants look for "lines of connection"[150] between the critical readings of the Bible, whether thematic, literary, or sociohistoric, with their own contextual situations. As participants construct lines of connection, one may notice a "fusion" of hermeneutical horizons.[151] The participants will be asked a question that prompts them to reconsider the the study's theme in light of the lines of connection they have made between the text and their context, asking participants what they want to appropriate from their study as they return to focusing on their context. At this point, they are ready to consider how to appropriate the text, in preparation for action.

As the study moves toward its conclusion, participants move into the "Act" phase. They return to focusing on their contextual location in-front-of-the-text. One or two questions will prompt them to consider what contemporary action they want to take related to the study's theme to change their situation.

CBS begins and ends with the community's experience and perspective, and in between, it helps participants carefully and slowly interpret the detail of a biblical text. In this process, CBS avoids cultural invasion. CBS's methodology does not seek to dominate or subjugate a community as objects to be manipulated by expert knowledge. Rather, CBS treats participants as actors who change their world. They have valuable ideotheological knowledge. They are locally accountable. At the same time, CBS also avoids the danger of cultural isolation, which would treat communities like ghettoes or enclaves that must be separated from knowledge of the outside world. CBS facilitates a reciprocal mode of critical knowledge appropriation, which affirms local knowledge and offers further critical resources from the disciplines of biblical studies, which the group can consider and choose to integrate with their preexisting knowledge structures. A community group is offered time to consider the critical resources implicit in the questions, dialogue about those resources, relate them to their previous knowledge, and then choose if and how to integrate those perspectives into their existing knowledge structures. All this provides a basis for choosing appropriate action. Knowledge is never neutral. It is always meant to be used.

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[150] Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 225.

[151] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Continuum Book (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 273.

CBS makes this explicit. Knowledge is meant to interpret and potentially change a community's lived reality.

4.2.4. CBS Questions and Facilitation

CBS offers participants a structured set of questions that take them on a hermeneutical journey into a biblical (con)text with the participants' social issue as a focus point. Frequently, the participants are those who are being marginalized or discriminated against in relation to the social issue being discussed. The hermeneutical journey the participants experience is described by the CBS movements above. The questions are written on large sheets of poster paper or projected onto a screen. One question is asked at a time. Normally, participants break up into small affinity groups based on gender, age, ethnicity, kinship group, or any important marker of group affinity. Participants are encouraged to discuss each question in the privacy of their affinity groups. One member of each group is asked to summarize what their small group has just said for the entire group. Not everything shared in private will be shared in public. This gives individuals the protection of the group. Individuals are not to be singled out, embarrassed, or criticized. Each group spokesperson's response will be written on poster paper for everyone to see. If there are good writers in each group, scribes may write the group's responses on the paper. Spokespersons from each group present the group's responses to the larger group. Sometimes, the facilitators will do the work of transcribing the responses of the spokespersons for the large group.

Group facilitation skills are crucial for CBS.[152] Good group facilitation skills include ensuring the space is affirming and that one or two individuals are not dominating groups. CBS is meant to read and interpret the Bible on the side of those who are marginalized or hurt by the social problem being discussed. The CBS experience is meant to be inclusive and affirming for marginalized groups and individuals. It is intended to be a sacred space of healing. Unfortunately, many religious spaces are not inclusive and healing spaces, blaming marginalized groups as the cause of their own marginalization. The standard expectation for poor and marginalized groups studying the Bible is that the dialogue about the Bible, the public transcript, will be against them.[153] The theological public transcript implicitly favors theological perspectives which favor dominant groups and

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[152] "If 'See-Judge-Act' is the wheel of praxis, then facilitation is the oil of praxis that enables the wheel to turn." West, "Contextual Bible Study and Resilience," 145; Gerald O. West, "Artful Facilitation and Creating a Safe Interpretive Site: An Analysis of Aspects of a Bible Study," in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible*, ed. Hans de Wit (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 211–37.

[153] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2–5, 18–19.

implicitly or explicitly blame poor and marginalized groups for their situation.[154] That is why CBS must be facilitated to be a safe and sacred space on the side of marginalized groups, so they can practice their hidden transcripts of dignity together, rework detrimental theologies, and consider how they might engage in transformational social action.

CBS recalibrates the normal communication patterns that occur when marginalized communities dialogue with representatives of dominant groups. This is accomplished by working with marginalized groups within marginalized communities and openly improving the dialogical position of marginalized groups within those marginalized communities during the safe and sacred time of the CBS encounter.[155] The experience of reconfiguring common communication patterns can be healing for facilitators and participants alike.[156]

4.2.5. CBS as Collaboration, Not Invasion

I am offering CBS as a postcolonial alternative to the colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm. As I conclude this section, I return to the question of how CBS avoids invasive tendencies in its methodology.[157]

Part of my motivation for asking that question is linked to my identity as a North American involved in Bible translation. While I struggle to move beyond colonial ideotheological orientations, my body has been and continues to be entangled with neocolonialism in both political and religious spheres. This ambiguity motivates me to look for pathways that are not invasive but also not isolationist.[158]

I argue that as a methodology, CBS avoids being invasive and neocolonial by grounding itself in local praxis and affirming local epistemologies.[159] The overt intention of CBS is to serve specific groups engaged in specific struggles for liberation. While there is a temptation for scholars, leaders, and intellectuals to be directive in projects of liberation, CBS works towards an emancipatory process as well as an emancipatory purpose. The process is collaborative. As

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[154] Bob Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

[155] Nathan Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study' among the Bikɔɔm Peoples and Their Neighbors in Ghana," *JTSA* 154 (2016): 111.

[156] Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study,'" 125.

[157] "How can CBS, which was developed in South Africa and which seeks to affirm expressions of local liberation through a process of community Bible interpretation, be recontextualized in a different postcolonial context without operating in neocolonial modes?" Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study,'" 106.

[158] Cultural and political isolation is a strategy the minority Western world employs to insulate itself from the poverty and instability in the majority world even though the minority world bears significant responsibility for the situation of the majority world.

[159] Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study,'" 108.

described above, CBS does make an offer of information from the discipline of critical biblical studies for marginalized groups to consider. CBS makes ideotheological suggestions, but this is done after affirming local knowledge. Additionally, the question-and-answer structure of CBS limits the power of the facilitators and the scholars to the careful articulation of questions. The question-and-answer format of CBS, paired with its use of small affinity groups, encourages dialogue among participants. The facilitation practices of CBS welcome the articulation of different perspectives among group members. Marginalized groups are not monolithic, and they must engage in internal dialogue as they consider how to translate, interpret, and appropriate information as they consider how to act for change in the world.

The See-Judge-Act movement recognizes that marginalized groups are the proper agents of their own liberation. The role of the socially engaged scholar is to recognize a marginalized group's agency and to facilitate a process of practicing their internal hidden transcripts as they consider overtly emancipatory perspectives on biblical texts. The process is a collaborative effort towards social change that recognizes the epistemological priority of local marginalized groups.

4.3. People Living with Disabilities as Retranslators of Job

I have established that CBS is a postcolonial emancipatory form of retranslation that avoids the pitfall of the colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm without falling into different forms of isolationism. Now, I move into this chapter's case study in which people living with disabilities experiment with the processes of retranslating Job using the CBS method.

Chapter 3 discussed the popularity of the prosperity gospel. People living with disabilities present a challenge to the prosperity gospel because if God wants all followers to be healed and successful, how does one explain those who are not being healed? To some extent, the health and wealth gospel is translating/interpreting their bodily experience for them.

Chapter 3 also discussed the developmentalist paradigm that mainline Christian churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) promote.[160] A developmentalist perspective assumes African countries should imitate Western countries on their pathway to development. Again, the bodies of people living with disabilities in African contexts present a challenge to the paternalist presuppositions of the developmentalist paradigm. If people living with disabilities in African contexts are to be the agents of their own liberation, their religiocultural lived reality cannot be ignored.[161]

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[160] Balcomb, "Counter-Modernism," 44–45.
[161] Balcomb, "Counter-Modernism," 58.

This case study describes how people living with physical disabilities in two communities in northern Ghana are experimenting with CBS as emancipatory re-translation.

4.3.1. Engaging People Living with Disabilities with CBS

To describe how this case study came about, I need to tell some of my own story. I lived in northern Ghana in the area south of the Gambaga escarpment for ten years and was engaged in local language development in the Likɔɔnl language.[162] I worked with a local organization called KOLIBITRAP, the Komba Literacy and Bible Translation Project. KOLIBITRAP took responsibility for developing literacy materials, facilitating literacy classes, and engaging in Bible translation. As part of the New Testament translation process, my colleague David Federwitz and I introduced translators to the inculturation hermeneutics of Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako, discussed above. After the completion of the New Testament translation, I began exploring the contextual Bible study method's overt emancipatory processes with my translation colleagues. Learning about CBS began reworking, reorienting, and recalibrating the process of interpreting and translating biblical texts. My first forays into CBS were with colleagues James Adongo, Samson Bilafanim, and Elijah Matibin. These colleagues had already worked in Likɔɔnl literacy and Bible translation.

We began considering what kinds of organized groups and social issues were crying out for a word of life in their local communities. Samson Bilafanim immediately suggested engaging people living with physical disabilities. Bilafanim himself had injured a leg in his youth and walked with a limp. As well as being a translator and a Lutheran pastor, Bilafanim was the secretary for the people living with disabilities group in the town of Gbintiri. He also volunteered with a small, locally-based NGO that helped people with disabilities get surgeries, prosthetics, wheelchairs, and job training. As part of the process of considering what biblical text might lend itself to studying with people living with disabilities, Bilafanim suggested we explore the question posed to Job in chapter 2, "Why do you not curse God and die?" From Bilafanim's initial desire for that question, we developed two CBS engagements inspired by studies developed by the Ujamaa Centre in South Africa.[163] In the first study, we explored Job 2:7–8, Job 3, and Job 42:7-8. In the second study, we explored Job 42:7–11.[164] Participants in these studies were people living with disabilities. Their religious affiliations included Christians, Muslims, and Africanists.

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[162] Masoga, "Redefining Power: Reading the Bible in Africa," 109.

[163] The Ujamaa Centre developed the studies with Job collaborating with people living with HIV. We adapted these studies for people living with physical disabilities.

[164] These studies were facilitated between May 2015 and August 2016 in two different towns.

In what follows, I describe how CBS reconfigured our translation process by prioritizing the logic of liberation. (See section 4.1.4.4 above.) Through CBS, people living with disabilities experienced the agentive process of retranslating a biblical text in a life-giving way. (See section 4.1.5 above.) The emancipatory grain of the CBS questions urged participants to consider detail in the biblical text which subverts the dominant theological explanation of disabilities that sees disabilities to be a result of an individual's sin or the sin of family members. The process of CBS encourages participants to reinterpret and to retranslate the text of Job from their own point of view. In what follows, I highlight the movements of CBS, focusing on the way the movements of CBS engage the logics of retranslation. I will review each of the logics introduced by Shadd in reverse order, beginning with the priority of the logic of liberation. By prioritizing the logic of liberation and using the CBS process, the logics of dialogue, challenge, and progress are reworked from the influence of the translation-as-invasion paradigm.

4.3.2. Liberation as the Governing Logic of CBS as Retranslation

From the perspective of the CBS facilitators, we learned the CBS process by doing it together. We learned about the CBS values or commitments, which changed how we approached translating the Bible. We learned that CBS was designed to bring life to marginalized people. Consequently, we sought ways to emphasize that emancipatory intention with people living with disabilities in the communities. As facilitators, we collaborated amongst ourselves as we developed a CBS for the local context as part of the method's liberating logic.[165]

An emancipatory tone for our engagement was set when James Adongo told a traditional story.[166] Before opening the Bible, Adongo told a story about a farmer who hated his horse. The farmer's horse allegorically represents the people living with disabilities. At the end of the story, the people were urged to be like the horse, "to shake themselves so that people do not bury you." The shouting, clapping, and cheering responses made it clear that the people living with disabilities resonated with this opening story.

Through the story Adongo signaled to the disabilities group that today, we would be doing a different kind of Bible study. We would be doing Bible study in a way intended to help people "shake themselves." We would be offering them tools and resources they could use for their own liberation since some people wanted to bury them prematurely.

Adongo's decision to begin the study with a story made the space more playful and egalitarian since storytelling is a genre that everyone in that culture practices. It also affirmed local knowledge and epistemologies. The emancipatory

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[165] The emancipatory or liberating logic covers purpose and process and is related to the liberating arts.

[166] Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study,'" 107, 126.

energy generated by the story seemed to motivate the group participants to explore the critical detail from the Bible passages as potentially worth integrating into their lives. The story may be why the groups responded to the opening questions with such vulnerability.[167] The emancipatory purpose of our engagement was reinforced at the end of the study, as groups considered how to get their versions of Job 3 into their churches, mosques, and homes.

4.3.3. The Emancipatory Grain of the Critical Questions

The critical study questions of CBS are intended to offer an array of critical tools from the discipline of biblical studies to a community that is already engaged in its own struggle for liberation. The critical questions are structured in the manner discussed above. The questions respect the prior experience of the host community with the biblical text, offering critical detail about that text from biblical studies, and then respecting the host's community's decision about what to do with the offer of critical information.[168] The questions we used were as follows:

> Retell the basic outline of the introduction of Job.
> Read Job 2:7–9.
> > 1. How does Job/Ayoub's wife statement sound to persons living with disabilities?
> > 2. If you were to respond to Job/Ayoub's wife, what would you say?
> Read Job 2:10–13.
> Read Job chapter 3 fully.
> > 3. What is Job trying to say in this text? (What did you hear?)
> > 4. What does Job 3 say to people *living* with disabilities?
> > 5. What would be your own version of Job 3?
> Read Job 42:7–8.
> > 6. What is God's view of how Job has spoken in chapter 3?
> > 7. How can you share your version of Job 3 with your local church or community?

Utilizing both the participants' embodied experience in the real world of their context and the resources of biblical studies, the ideotheological grain of the questions invites the participants to consider a narrative about Job that sounds different from the narrative the dominant theology would suggest. First, their lived experience is treated as a valid theological starting point. The narrative indicates Job's lived experience was a valid starting point, so their lived experience must also be

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[167] Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study,'" 120–21.
[168] James A. Maxey, "Hostile Hosts and Unruly Guests: Bible Translation as Hospitality and Counterinsurgency" (Bible Translation 2013, Dallas, TX, 2013), 1–13, https://map.bloomfire.com/posts/692586-hostile-hosts-and-unruly-guests-bible-translation-as-hospitality-and-counterins.

valid. Second, question 6 indicates that God approved of Job's expression of pain in contrast to God's disapproval of Job's friends' speeches. The question suggests that God is also on the side of people living with disabilities and their expressions of pain.

4.3.4. Retranslating Job 2:7–10 and Job 3 from Alternative Perspectives

The participants did not view the emancipatory grain of the CBS questions in the same way. The CBS questions invite dialogue as small groups answer them. CBS uses the postcolonial logic of dialogue to encourage participants to retranslate the narrative of Job in a manner that is relevant to their own life situations.

After telling the story of the farmer who hated his horse, a facilitator summarized what happened to Job in chapter 1. Facilitators discovered that few participants were familiar with Job's story.[169] Then, a facilitator asked participants to read Job 2:7–9 in two of their local translations. The public readings were followed by the question, "How does Ayoub's/Job's wife's question sound to people living with disabilities?" Note that Job's response to the question was not read until after these questions were asked.

The first question of this CBS is unconventional. The first question of CBS usually inquires about the participants' initial understanding of the whole text. Our first question focused participants on the critical question asked by Job's wife in the narrative. We chose this text because Bilafanim, one of the facilitators who himself was connected to the disabilities group, was drawn to the question of Job's wife. We knew this question touched on themes relevant to the lived experiences of people living with disabilities. We felt asking the question this way would strategically engage the participants in the relevance of this text for their lives.

To answer the question, the study participants arranged themselves into small groups based on gender and age. Participants grouped with people of the same gender who were nearest to them in age. There were groups older women, older men, younger women, and younger men. There may have been other sectoral markers unknown to me. Small group responses were articulated mostly in Likɔɔnl, one of the languages used by communities south of the Gambaga escarpment, and the language our team was translating the Bible into. Some participants spoke in the language of Ŋmampulli. Others spoke in Kusaal or Mɔɔr, two other local languages. Responses were orally translated into English, the official

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[169] The 'remembered Bible' in this case was not as useful as we hoped it might be. So the read Bible became an offer of new information. Lees, "Enabling the Body," 170–71. Lees cites West, *Academy of the Poor*, 96.

language of Ghana, and written on large sheets of paper so everyone could see the responses.[170]

The written responses of the different small groups reveal the way people living with disabilities integrated the logic of dialogue into the process of re-translation. The answers that the groups articulated reflect an inner dialogism. Not all the answers agree with one another. Many of them pull at different tensions in the narrative. Each bullet point is the answer of a different group, translated into English.

- It will pain you a lot.
- It will be better to end your life.
- We agree with the woman.
- Don't kill yourself if God doesn't kill you.
- If you kill yourself, you don't have life after death.
- Once you are alive, you rely on God, not on human beings.
- Killing yourself will affect your children.
- A child living with disabilities once said, the sickness is from God, so why end your own life? It is the will of God that I am what I am.
- The woman should have advised Job to seek treatment and not to die.
- The woman thought Job's life was useless.

It turns out many people living with disabilities have been asked a question like Job 2:7–8. Their life experience reveals that there is not one way to understand Job's wife's question. Job's initial response in verse 10 suggests that Job's wife was wrong to ask this question. Job asks, "Shall we receive good from God but not bad?" But the CBS questions insert a pause between verses 9 and 10 to allow people living with disabilities to listen to Job's wife's question before hearing Job's response. Their responses indicate that they understood that Job's wife's question can sound different depending on how one understands the positioning of Job's wife in relation to Job's situation. Was Job's wife only articulating what Job himself was thinking and feeling? Was Job's wife empathizing with Job? Was she positionally on Job's side, inviting Job to take his case directly to God? Or was Job's wife negatively disposed to Job? Did she want him to die because he had become burdensome to her?[171]

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[170] Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study,'" 117–18. CBS lends itself to reworking practices of "ethnicity." Physical disabilities might be an appropriate issue with which to cross differently constructed "ethnic" spaces. The easy movement between languages is reminiscent of chapter 1's discussion of indigenous precolonial language practices.

[171] Sarojini Nadar, "'Barak God and Die!' Women, HIV, and a Theology of Suffering," in *Grant Me Justice! HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro (Cluster Publications, 2004), 60–79. Nadar would prefer a translation that remains ambiguous between blessing and cursing. Nadar observes that Job's wife's question becomes the theme for the rest of the book.

From the very first question of this study people living with disabilities engaged in a participatory hermeneutic, like the Prophet Harris as discussed in chapter 3. Even though they would not view themselves as prophets; nevertheless, in their own way they entered the story and participated with Job's wife and with Job. The groups of people living with disabilities heard the question in light of their human experience, using their capacity to listen and understand nuance in human communication. Their dialogue is crucial to understanding the narrative potential of Job's wife's question.

By separating out Job's direct response in 2:10–13 from the question, the format of this CBS opened space to consider dialogical possibility. Job 3 might be understood as Job's second response to Job's wife's question. Perhaps Job's second response recognizes that Job's wife's question can come from a position empathetic to Job's situation.

Prior to question 3, the facilitators invited the participants to read Job 3 in two local languages. While Job 3 was being read, one could hear a pin drop. People were listening intently. There was silence after it was read, and we observed a pause before inviting people to respond to the next question.

Question three asked, "What is Job trying to say in this text?" Some of the answers were:

- Because of suffering.
- Job was right to have said so because God had failed to help Job.
- Because of the pain, but Job was still having his faith.
- Maybe the devil came to Job.

These initial responses reveal a dialogism between groups. Differences in perspective between groups may be due to differences in age, gender, individual experience, and ideotheological orientation. (See section 4.1.5.1 above.) Some groups focused on understanding what Job was saying. Other groups shifted the focus to their own experience. The process of retranslating governed by an emancipatory logic takes the embodied reality of people in an analogous situation to Job as a key interpretative starting point for understanding Job's situation. Job's lament helps them understand their situation and engage in their own laments.[172]

Retranslating governed by an emancipatory logic is open to dialogue rather than promoting a single point of view or interpretation. In this way, CBS reworks the lack of perspectival dialogism in colonial translation. In the translation-as-invasion paradigm, the perspective of chiefs and princes was enshrined as the

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[172] Job's former social position, described in Job 29, indicates Job was accustomed to a higher social position than most of the study participants. CBS allows participants to recognize similarities and honor differences between their own experience and the experience of biblical characters. June Dickie, "African Youth Engage with Psalms of Lament to Find Their Own Voice of Lament," *JTSA* 160 (2018): 4–20.

starting point for understanding history. In postcolonial retranslation for liberation, dominant social groups in the community are not granted the right to represent the translational and interpretative perspective of the entire community. A dialogical practice of emancipatory retranslation welcomes possibilities into a marginalized group's inner dialogue. Intrasectoral dialogue may lead to a more cohesive collective understanding. After groups articulate their collective understanding to other sectors of society, it may provide a starting point for a larger intersectoral social dialogue.

4.3.5. Responding to the Logic of Challenge by Retranslating for Liberation

The contextual Bible study method walks people through a process of retranslating for liberation. I have just explored how the logic of dialogue is an important part of an emancipatory postcolonial retranslation process. Now, I turn to the logic of challenge.

The word challenge presents a problem for emancipatory postcolonial retranslation because translation as invasion embodies the notion of challenge, invasion, and conquest. How can the logic of challenge be responded to in an emancipatory postcolonial fashion that moves beyond invasive logics?

In CBS, facilitators collaborate with marginalized groups to secure spaces that do not openly encourage them to speak their hidden transcripts of dignity. In the spaces of churches and schools, CBS flips the script and claims that during this time and in this space, the perspectives of marginalized groups will take center stage. Asserting the core tenet of liberation theology can help secure the space for marginalized groups that God is on the side of marginalized groups and desires such groups to experience a better life.

This is the first theological response to the challenge that dominant theologies press upon people living with disabilities. The next responses involve people living with disabilities reinterpreting/retranslating biblical texts as a pathway to reworking theologies that denigrate them.

However, before describing that second response it will be useful to describe what dominant theologies say to people living with disabilities. Chapter 3 asserted that the new Christian churches have the most theological influence on the masses. The new churches specialize in individualist solutions to spiritual problems. They address people living with disabilities as victims of witchcraft, but they cannot heal them of their chronic condition. They may resort to blaming an individual's lack of faith, or they may identify individuals in their family or ancestry who caused the disability.

The second dominant theology operating in the mainline churches and NGO's is characterized by the developmentalist approach. Western media outlets also take this approach. This ideotheology dismisses witchcraft concerns as unreal, the result of an "enchanted worldview" that must be changed for Africa to

develop.[173] The developmentalist approach is not likely to work if it does not address the systemic causes of witchcraft, with which Eurocentric development agencies are themselves entangled.[174]

To fully respond to the colonial logic of challenge in an emancipatory postcolonial manner, people living with disabilities must consider the causes of disability from inside their own religiocultural worldview. They do not need to accept the terms of translation that colonial translation has set for them. In other words, witchcraft is an English term that has been infused with Eurocentric baggage by missionary-colonial Christianity and the Enlightenment. The new churches do not bypass this baggage, using the term witchcraft offered to them by missionary-colonial translation.

Retranslating witchcraft theologically would require engaging the terms for witchcraft in the local languages. For example, I have been told the term kusɔɔg in the Likɔɔnl (or Komba) language, often translated as witchcraft, is something every person has. It can be used positively and negatively. However, the word usɔɔn, a word that is often translated as witch in English, is not a term that can be applied to every person. Grillo's more in-depth research in Coté d'Ivoire confirms that not everyone is agn in the Adioukrou language. Agn is usually translated with the one-word gloss of witch in English. However, that one-word translation can be deceptive. Grillo explains that the power behind agn is ambiguous. It is a singular power that can be used positively and negatively.[175] Grillo finds that "the problem is that the Western construct itself is so heavily weighted by the moral judgment that witchcraft is singularly negative."[176]

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu claims that popular conceptions in Ghana connect witchcraft to disabilities.

> Very wealthy people therefore easily come under suspicion of having gained
> their wealth through blood rituals. When such people have deformities or when
> any of their close relatives are deformed or disabled in any way, the deformity

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[173] Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 154.

[174] "In the mid seventeenth century this was done. Then the Medieval synthesis, which Reformation and Counter-Reformation had artificially prolonged, was at last broken.… Thereafter society might persecute its dissidents as Huguenots or as Jews. It might discover a new stereotype, the 'Jacobin', the 'Red'. But the stereotype of the witch was gone." Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 122, quoted in Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 158.

[175] Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 36–38; Asamoah-Gyadu, "Witchcraft Accusations and Christianity in Africa," 23.

[176] Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 39.

may be explained in terms of their having visited a shrine, where they exchanged their own or someone else's normal body for material wealth.[177]

Having heard what dominant theologies say about people living with disabilities we now turn to the next step of people living with disabiliteis responding to dominant theologies from their own exegetical and theological perspective.

Sometimes openly discussing issues like witchcraft can do more harm than good. Experienced practitioners of CBS have found that it is often more effective to address a fraught and potentially dangerous discussion indirectly. The narrative of Job offers just such an indirect approach to discussing the causes of disability. Retranslating governed by an emancipatory logic argues that any such discussion must include marginalized groups, dialogically reworking the logic of challenge for themselves. Their bodies understand the kind of damage that dominant theologies do. Not only do they deal with the limitations of their disability, but they also deal with a dominant theology that marginalizes them, operating through their kinship groups and their religious communities—Africanist, Muslim, and Christian.

As "pain-bearers" in their communities, people living with disabilities may be well-positioned to navigate through the pain and trauma in their context, toward addressing the source of that pain and healing that pain from the inside out in a manner that other social locations cannot.[178]

But how can people living with disabilities respond to the structures that cause them pain in a manner that has the potential to heal rather than in a manner that activates more trauma for them and for their community?[179] How can they begin to address the entanglement between domination, theologies, and the Bible in a manner that can help heal the multiple wounds and traumas the northern Ghanaian context has experienced and continues to experience?[180]

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[177] J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Witchcraft Accusations and Christianity in Africa," *IBMR* 39.1 (2015): 24.

[178] Drawing on Walter Brueggemann's notion of the embrace of pain, June Dickie writes, ""Pain-bearers" is a general term including those who bear physical or emotional pain, and those caught in situations of political, social, and economic distress" (Dickie, "African Youth Engage With Psalms," 7).

[179] Pobee, "Bible Study in Africa," 168–69. Pobee avers that "authentic praise and authentic theology begin in the matrix of pain." And he makes a link between lament and worship, and the preservation of lament in the Biblical documents. For an analysis of the Priestly contribution to and stewardship of the Psalms see J. David Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 429.

[180] Philippe Denis refers to damage done by many layers of colonization and suffering in South Africa as "multiple wounds." Denis, "Storytelling and Healing," in *A Journey towards Healing: Stories of People with Multiple Woundedness in KwaZulu-Natal*

The simple act of people living with disabilities reading Job 3 together injected a holy energy into the group.[181] Job's discourse, though it is in the Bible, makes dominant church theologies uncomfortable. The dominant theology of the church (and mosque) asserts that someone in Job's situation cannot talk like Job does. How can someone even consider cursing God? How can someone curse the day they were born? Nevertheless, the groups living with disabilities understood Job's dark rhetoric. Some agreed with Job's wife. Some agreed with Job. Others did not. Some of the facilitators were pastors, and they remarked that they were surprised to see Job 3 and Job 42:7–8 in the Bible. The reading practices of the church, including church lectionaries, have hidden these texts. When people living with disabilities read Job 3 and Job 42:7–8, they expose the non-neutrality of church lectionaries, and call forth subversive memories in the book of Job that powerfully respond to the challenge of dominant church theologies.[182]

Question 5 asks, "What is your version of Job 3?" Here are some of their retranslations of Job's rhetoric for their own situations.

- The suffering we are undergoing should not get to any other one, but we alone, so that when we die, other healthy people can bury us well. We don't attribute our cases to anyone, but God, and He knows why. (Older women's group)
- We pray and hope that God will turn things around, so we look unto him. We do not have another power to look unto. (Mature women's group)
- We leave our suffering unto God who created us and the sickness." (Mature women's group)
- We will not do anything that will deny us God's kingdom because there no one will experience suffering. (Mature women's group)
- God knows the plan he has for us. We do not know why we face these problems. We hope we shall overcome these problems. (Youngest women's group)
- We will encourage our friends to give all to God because God know all things. It is God who gives and takes, also no condition is always the same, time changes as well as condition. It is God who created us, and he knows what is good for us. If it is good, we thank him. If it is bad, we still thank him because he knows what is the best for us. (Youngest men's group)
- I will ask my friends to keep me in prayers because it is God who has made me. I am not the first person that this has ever happened to because it has happened to people before me. It is Satan's desire that sickness should come to me, but I

(Dorpspruit: Cluster, 2012), 5. After a safe environment has been secured, Denis argues for "two key processes … the elaboration of the painful experience and its validation through empathic listening" (Denis, "Storytelling and Healing," 11–12).

[181] "The Biblical text sanctifies both time and space, enabling faithful readers of the Bible to connect across both, finding and foraging lines of connection between their own sociocultural sites and sacred "textual" sites within and behind the biblical text" (West, "Biblical Text as a Heterotopic Intercultural Site," 254).

[182] Lectionaries focus on Job 2, and Job 38. These texts appear to justify God.

know that God is more powerful. I will tell my friends that God has made me. (Elder men's group)

- We should fear God in every situation we find ourselves. It was a test and God still tests people today. Trust in God. We should pray always and hope that God will answer our prayers. (Mature men's group)
- What we have comes from God. Pray always. Look up to God. Wait to be called by God, do not try to kill yourself. (Mature men's group)
- God you are the power, you are driving your things without asking anybody. So, this problem has already done to a lot of people, but we do not forget about God so try and help me with this problem. We thank God that you know the reason why you are giving me this problem. If anything is happening to your life you have to give back to God. (Young men's group)
- God created us this way. Let's live and see what happens. (Older men's group)

The versions of Job 3 were quite short. The harshest and most painful words spoken by the participants were not voiced in their own versions of Job 3 but were expressed in the recapitulations of Job 3 explored in question 3. For them, Job says things that may be true, but he speaks more harshly than they prefer to speak in the still-developing safe space of CBS.[183]

In question 5, their versions of Job 3 focused on God as the origin of their suffering, as an ultimate reason that they should continue to live, and as a reason that other people should value their lives. The speakers recognize that their situations are difficult and should not be wished on anyone else, but they also recognize that they are part of a historic and present community. They desire that the problems they are facing should end or be relieved. When they die, they desire a good burial.[184] They desire to be recognized and *re-membered* as part of the community.[185]

Considering God as the ultimate cause of disability responds to debilitating assertions of shame in culture, kinship group, and religious communities.[186] When

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[183] Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), "Her Appropriation of Job's Lament? Her-Lament of Job 3, From an African Story-Telling Perspective," in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, ed. Musa W. Dube Shomanah, Andrew Mũtũa Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, GPBS 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 283–97. Masenya argues that Job speaks more harshly to his mother than is necessary.

[184] A good death, burial, and funeral are part of achieving the life goal of becoming an ancestor. In Komba-Anufɔ tradition, a bad destiny and a bad death are the worst outcomes possible for an individual life. Yet, a bad destiny can be changed in a number of ways (Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 210–12).

[185] I used the term re-member in sections 3.2.3 and 3.6, quoting Gerald West's description of Isaiah Shembe's use of communal memory and his reordering of the biblical text. I use it here to describe the way people living with disabilities desire to be reincorporated as full *members* of their community.

[186] "The twelve named maled disciples are usually presented as a robust gang of young adults, called away from earning their various livings. What impairments did they live

it comes to disabilities, proud families from proud kinship groups, thinking from their own able-bodied points of view, wonder how someone like them could have produced someone with a physical disability. They are no worse than others who produced able-bodied children. Indeed, kinship groups may intentionally hide people living with disabilities to prevent people from seeing their collective shame. People with disabilities might lower the esteem of a family line or a kinship group in the estimation of others.

But people living with disabilities must think and theologize from their own perspectives, from the realities inside their own individual and social bodies. Some conclude God is the ultimate cause of disabilities, not the lack of human righteousness or the malevolent intervention of humans and spiritual powers. The conclusion of one group indicated that if God is the cause, then God must mean it for good. Others indicate that Job is right to blame God, because God had not done what was right for Job. A mediating possibility is that Satan's evil activity came between God's good intention and Job's experience of suffering.[187] It is important for this kind of dialogue to be heard, especially by Christian churches, mosques, pastors, and imams, who desire what is good, right, and healing for their members.

A key theme in versions of Job 3 as articulated by groups of people living with disabilities was that they did not attribute their suffering to another human being. This redirected the focus from other people who may have contributed to disabilities through "witchcraft" or cursing—to God.[188] Dominant theologies often assume that disabilities are caused by able-bodied people in the person with

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with? Fishing was a dangerous occupation then and now. How many fingers did Peter have? Living in an occupied territory was a dangerous business then and now. How many scars did Andrew have? Leaving your job was stressful then and now. How much stress did Matthew or Thomas have? If these people were living with impairments then the church does not present them that way." Janet Lees, "Enabling the Body," in *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, ed. Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper, SemeiaSt 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 162.

[187] "Among the Biblical symbols is Satan as a personification of evil. Around this symbol can be gathered diverse understandings of evil, which enable it to exert a powerful, dominant influence.… We must therefore examine the ways in which these symbols have altered African concepts of evil, and in particular the ways in which they have enabled two different perspective of evil to meet and to enrich each other." Richard Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 104.

[188] Kirby recounts a similar non-retributive action in an encounter with a man who may have had witchcraft problems in his house, but refused to accuse anyone, attributing his misfortunes to God, and indicating there was nothing he could do about his misfortune (Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 91). Attributing the issue to God, may also suggest there is a larger system of witchcraft at work on the regional or even state level. See also Jon P. Kirby, "Toward a Christian Response to Witchcraft in Northern Ghana," *IBMR* 39.1 (2015): 20–21.

disabilities' family, a person who has better fortune, who exhibits ambition, or who has uncommon creativity or skill. But remarkably the people living with disabilities did not express retaliation.

Here are some responses to question four, which asks, "What does Job 3 say to people *living* with disabilities?"

- Suffering is not only one person.
- I was somebody, but now I am not.
- If you lose hope, still take your time, and do not lose hope.
- Give your house people patience.

The response of one of the young men's groups was to "give your house people patience." I think this response was directed at able-bodied young men who, in their eagerness and ambition to achieve higher levels of social status and in their frustration at the lack of opportunities that the northern Ghanaian context offers them, find it easy to pin any lack of success or any misfortune on vulnerable people, especially vulnerable women in their homes. This perspective is especially important for those young men practicing a version of the health and wealth gospel. At the same time, this response offers the same grace to young men with their own struggles that are causing them real frustration. If we all give our house people patience, then we will not resort to scapegoating them and begin to find ways to help them address the spiritual-systemic causes of their frustrations.[189] The response could also have been directed at older men present in the group, who had only recently been disabled. These older men may have been tempted to blame vulnerable others as the cause of their disability when the reality is that all bodies are in the inevitable process of becoming disabled.

These responses to the logic of challenge are postcolonial, governed by the logic of liberation in a manner that does not reverse the terms of domination. They do not retranslate by imitating the logic of the translation-as-invasion paradigm, in which subgroups ascend to the top of the social hierarchy while suppressing others. Overall, these retranslations affirm life from the perspective of those at the bottom of the hierarchy simply by asserting their inherent dignity and necessary participation in multisectoral social dialogue.

4.3.6. Articulating a Postcolonial Vision of Social Progress with Job

Questions 4, 5, and 6 explored aspects of how people living with disabilities might retranslate to have a better life in the communities where they live and in the bodies that they inhabit. Their responses rework the logic of social progress.

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[189] René Girard, *Sacrifice*, trans. Matthew Pattillo and David Dawson, Breakthroughs in Mimetic Theory (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011).

Group responses revealed a profound grief expressed by people living with disabilities. They would not wish what they are experiencing on any other person. They expressed a desire for relief from their condition.[190] They reiterated that they do not blame anyone for their condition. They do not want this suffering to be passed on to others. They want harmonious relationships with their larger community, not one of mistrust. The older women's group expressed the desire that they be buried well as members of the community.

Consider the older women's group response to question 5, what is your version of Job 3? Their response reworks the colonial logics of challenge and progress.

> The suffering we are undergoing should not get to any other one, but we alone, so that when we die, other healthy people can bury us well. We don't attribute our cases to anyone, but God, and He knows why. (Older women's group)

A theme in versions of Job 3, as articulated by groups of people living with disabilities, was that they did not attribute their suffering to another human being. Compared to the "challenge" of dominant theologies that blame individuals, this response redirects the focus from other people who may have contributed to disabilities to God. However, their response does not explore God's reasoning.

The older women's group version of Job 3 reiterated the traditional story told at the beginning of the study about the farmer who hated his horse, but their version changes the narrative of that story. The narrative, as told at the beginning of the CBS by an able-bodied facilitator, suggested that some able-bodied people wanted to bury people living with disabilities prematurely out of hatred. The older women's narrative refuses to address other people's motives. And their narrative does not eschew being buried. As Job said, burial would be an end to suffering. What they desire from other people is a good burial. They desired to be buried by kin members and friends at the appropriate time in the burial of a kin member who would like to become an ancestor and bless his or her bodily and spiritual relatives as part of living in God's *kin-dom*.[191] If religious communities, as extended families, would bury these women well, it would be transformational.

The older women's retranslation moves from reworking the logic of challenge to reworking the logic of progress. They express a vision of social "progress" that people living with disabilities desire to achieve in their communities. The social vision is expressed in terms of the contemporary context. Job's narrative weaves in and out of the visions of the groups, as well as an adjusted narrative of the farmer and the horse.

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[190] What condition do they want relief from? Is it their bodily condition or is it the way people are treating them? Their articulations quoted in this chapter indicate the latter.
[191] Rather than using the metaphor of a ritual kingdom, the metaphor of the kin-dom of God is based on the ethnically ambiguous kinship group discussed in chapter 1.

4.3.7. Retranslating for Concrete Action

Question 7 moves the participants toward the final phase of the See-Judge-Act process. "How can you share your version of Job 3 with your church, mosque, and community? (Be creative.)." Some of the responses included:

- We will tell friends, and both churches and mosque about Job's test.
- Job had many temptations, even his wife asked him to end his life.
- We will ask for permissions to share in churches and mosques.

The responses were more measured in this question than in the previous question. In their own versions of Job 3, the participants focused on their own experiences more than on Job's experience. Yet in response to the action question, written immediately above, when participants were thinking how to craft their articulations for church, mosque, and community, they focused more on Job's experiences. It could be that one of the most strategic things they can do is to tell their religious communities about Job, knowing that the distance between themselves and Job has been bridged.[192]

4.3.8. Entanglements of Retranslators Living with Disabilities

How do participants bridge the time and space between themselves and the characters of Job and Job's wife? I return to the notions of entangled heterotopias, introduced in section 4.1.5.2 above.

If the safe and sacred space cultivated in CBS becomes a heterotopic space, then such a space is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.[193] If the African time of being is entangled, as Mbembe argues, and if slices of time are also entangled in space, what Foucault calls heterochronies and heterotopies, then both time and space can be bridged in particular ways inside the space and time of CBS. People living with disabilities were able to bridge the time and space between themselves and Job such that they

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[192] The language in the Bible offers poor and marginalized groups an additional language of infrapolitics, a coded or metaphoric form of speech, which offers them a measure of protection. James Scott argues, "Infrapolitics is, to be sure, real politics. In many respects it is conducted in more earnest, for higher stakes, and against greater odds than political life in liberal democracies" (Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 200).

[193] The juxtaposition of incompatible sites includes the way CBS reworks hierarchical liturgical sites, such as in a church building, to be more egalitarian. Furthermore, the biblical text and its various contexts of production and reception can be brought together during CBS (West, "Biblical Text as a Heterotopic Intercultural Site," 244).

understand themselves as participating with Job.[194] This would not be possible for the facilitators in the same way. The facilitators are entangled differently—with Job's friends or Job's wife. If people living with disabilities in communities in northern Ghana can articulate a vision in which they speak across time and space in a manner such that they are entangled with Job, and if it is possible for others in the community to hear this discourse and understand it, then there is a potential for social transformation.

4.3.9. Participating with Job in Response to the Prosperity Gospel

CBS participants experimented with participating with biblical characters in the biblical narrative across time and space. In some of the articulations expressed above, narrative and historical distance is bridged. But the best example of participating with Job was articulated in a follow-up study we did with people living with disabilities.

This follow-up study took place several months after the initial study. It focused more on the dialogue between Job's lament theology and the dominant theology of Job's friends. It engaged the popular health and wealth gospel, which gained popularity in the megachurches of Ghana and spread to rural communities like Gbintiri. This study was adapted from one of the Ujamaa Centre's study with people living with HIV and took the following shape:

> Review memories from the last study.
>> 1. What is the book of Job about? (What do you remember from our last study?)
> Read Job 42:7.
>> 2. In what ways has Job spoken rightly about God and in what ways have the friends spoken wrongly?
> Read what Job's friend says in Job 4:8.
> Read what God says about Job in Job 1:1 and Job 1:8.
> Read Job 42:7–8.
>> 3. Why do you think God deals with the friends publicly requiring them to perform public and communal acts?
> Read Job 16:7.
> Read Job 29:1–11.
>> 4. Why do people withdraw from those they think God is punishing?

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[194] Drawing on an important aspect of William Wadé Harris's hermeneutics which David Shank characterized as "participation," Kwame Bediako argued that Harris's hermeneutics were not "a question of what Moses saw, or what Elijah did, or the words or works of Jesus as reported in the Bible"; it was more "a question of involvement—as with the ancestors, the living dead—with Moses, with Elijah, with the Archangel Gabriel, and supremely with Jesus Christ" (Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 1995, 104; Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 170).

      5. Does this happen in the church or mosque?
Read Job 42:9–11.
      6. How and in what ways is Job restored to the community?
      7. What resources does Job 42 provide in making the church/mosque a bet-
         ter place for people living with disabilities?
      8. What will you do to use these resources in your church/mosque?

The responses to these questions by people living with disabilities revealed that the dominant theology in religious communities is that God is punishing people living with disabilities. From the dominant perspective their bodily condition is a sign of their spiritual lack. Moreover, people with physical disabilities are isolated from their larger community because people are afraid somehow that they will be infected or dirtied by contact with them.

I am intrigued by the responses to question five because they suggest aspects of entanglement across time and space. Question five asked, "How was Job restored to the community?" Group responses included the following:

- People received him back and they say this our Job, our father, our brother, our sister, our Job is back. And they gave him gifts.
- Visiting him and greeting him.
- They gave him gifts.
- They gathered and ate together, mingled together, and sat with him.

The first group's retranslation provided the kind of language that reflects an entanglement between CBS participants and Job. There is a participation between the participants and Job, a fusion of hermeneutical horizons. Most importantly, the language expresses a vision of social progress that is life-giving not only for people living with disabilities but for all the Jobs of the world, and not only those who were once powerful men in their communities.[195] The people living with disabilities may not be claiming the office of prophet, like William Harris or Isaiah Shembe, but they are retranslating and reinterpreting like the prophets did by crossing time and space to participate with biblical characters.

4.3.10. CBS as an Offer

The values of CBS indicate that people living with disabilities must be the agents of their own liberation. CBS avoids the twin colonial strategies of invasion and isolation. The case studies in this chapter avoid isolating rural communities in northern Ghana by engaging with people living with disabilities in the market towns of Gbintiri and Nasuan. These communities are already dealing with the

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[195] Elsa Tamez, "A Letter to Job," in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, ed. J. S. Pobee and Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1986), 50–52.

dominant theologies of the health and wealth gospel and the developmentalist gospel, both of which operate significantly within the translation-as-invasion paradigm. Accordingly, these case studies could risk falling into the colonial trap of cultural invasion.

Sithembiso Zwane, the director of the Ujamaa Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, offers language that helps explain the ways that CBS can be used to structure space with marginalized groups. Working at the intersection of development studies and theology, Zwane has mapped a continuum of the ways space is constructed in relation to marginalized groups engaged in development from *invited* spaces to *invigorated* spaces to *invented* spaces.[196] Zwane's continuum correlates nicely with Katz's continuum of interpretative resilience, reworking, and resistance, which is discussed in section 2.5. Drawing on Andrea Cornwall's language, Zwane argues that invited spaces engage poor and marginalized communities in an entrenched, dehumanizing political and economic system.[197] "Invited spaces, characterized by exclusion or at best supervised participation, deprive the community of the ability to participate in development processes."[198] Invigorated spaces are locations where community groups partially control the discourse and activities. Invented spaces are locations where local community groups are substantially in control. Invigorated spaces contend with invited spaces, and they can lead to invented spaces.

Using Zwane's language, I would argue that the people living with disabilities referred to in this section experienced the space and time of these CBS's as moving from an invited space to an invigorated space. For example, reading Job 3 together injected a sacred energy into the room. Many of the comments were candid and open. As a constructed and collaborative space operating in communities, CBS seeks to construct invigorated spaces where community groups partially control the discourse. Hopefully, the invigorated spaces encourage marginalized groups to draw upon CBS resources in their own invented spaces.

These CBS experiences were a start, an experiential offer for the groups living with disabilities in these northern Ghanaian communities. Facilitators need to be content to offer CBS's emancipatory potential and then wait for an invitation from organized groups that want to use CBS as part of their praxis for achieving a better, more dignified life in their religiocultural and sociopolitical contexts. In this way, CBS will function as an invigorated/invented space rather than an invited/invigorated space in the local contexts where it takes place.

In the concluding section of this chapter, I want to argue that CBS, as a form of postcolonial retranslation for liberation, can function as an invented space in

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[196] Gerald O. West and Sithembiso Zwane, "Re-reading 1 Kings 21:1–16 between Community-Based Activism and University-Based Pedagogy," *JIBS* 2.1 (2020): 179–207.

[197] Andrea Cornwall, "Introduction: New Democratic Spaces? The Politics and Dynamics of Institutionalised Participation," *IDS Bulletin* 35.2 (2004): 1, 6.

[198] West and Zwane, "Re-reading 1 Kings 21:1–16," 187.

the realm of theological and political discourse. But rather than using the language of invented space, I will draw upon the language of irruption.

When CBS processes occur in an invigorated/invented space where organized marginalized groups foreground themselves as agents, then CBS has the potential to contribute to a transformational irruption within dominant and oppressive theologies and translational practices, such as the health and wealth gospel and the developmentalist gospel, both of which are entangled with neoliberal political and economic principalities and powers.

4.4. Conclusion

Postcolonial translation theology, introduced in section 4.1 above, argues that the church cannot fully understand the gospel until all vernacular-speaking voices (and sign systems) have spoken.[199] The missionary-colonial project of the nineteenth century did not recognize the logic of translation "in-corporated" African languages and cultures into the articulation of the gospel.[200] Postcolonial translation theology argues that prior versions of the Bible in other languages have had their opportunity to speak, and now it is time to hear from other communities and languages so that collectively, we, as communities of faith, can discern what the gospel is. Even the original languages cannot contain all the meaning of the Bible; thus, translation and retranslation are required.

About a century later, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) articulated a related theological position to the EuroAmerican theological world. EATWOT argued that the dire situation in third-world countries required embracing a theological method that privileges the praxis of the poor in communities and churches. In the third EATWOT conference, Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres described EATWOT's theological method as producing an "emergent gospel."[201] Fabella and Torres' language of an emergent gospel is similar to that of Sanneh, Bediako, and others as articulated in postcolonial African translation theology.[202]

Postcolonial African translation theology in dialogue with South African Black theology, as discussed in section 4.1 above, suggests combining the focus

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[199] West, *Stolen Bible*, 241–43.

[200] West, "On the Necessity of Embodied Translation," 1.

[201] Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella, eds., *The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underside of History; Papers from the Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians, Dar Es Salaam, August 5–12, 1976* (Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978).

[202] Gillian Mary Bediako, Benhardt Y. Quarshie, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *Seeing New Facets of the Diamond: Christianity as a Universal Faith—Essays in Honour of Kwame Bediako*, Theological Reflections from the South (Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana: Regnum Africa, 2014).

on facets of the gospel articulated by vernacular language communities with the emerging gospel articulated by EATWOT.

EATWOT articulated its contribution to be a change in theological method. Sergio Torres writes, "EATWOT has helped to develop a different method for theological discourse. We emphasize the role of the praxis of the poor as the starting point for reflection on the Christian faith. We read the Bible from the underside of history."[203]

Similarly, contextual Bible study (CBS) offers a method of postcolonial retranslation for liberation that embraces the epistemological privileging of poor and marginalized groups. CBS combines the religiocultural emphases of postcolonial African translation theology with the political, race, and class emphasis of South African Black theology and South African contextual theology, plus the gendered perspective of African women's theology, all in a paradigm of liberation hermeneutics that rereads and retranslates the Bible from the perspective of poor and marginalized communities whose lived reality is on the underside of power. In the process, marginalized groups in the present forge connections with communities from the underside of history embodied in the biblical text across time and space.[204]

In EATWOT's fifth conference, the theologians began describing their meetings and methods as participating in a larger movement they characterized as an "irruption" that "begins a new stage in human history that is evincing the resistance to, and decline of, the dominance of North Atlantic countries and of

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[203] Sergio Torres, "The Irruption of the Third World: A Challenge to Theology," in *Irruption of the Third World; Challenge to Theology: Papers from the Fifth International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, August 17–29, 1981, New Delhi, India*, ed. Virginia Fabella, and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 12.

[204] In dialogue with Itumeleng Mosala's and Robert Coote's redactional critical approach to reading biblical prophetic texts, Gerald West has argued that James Scott's notion of infrapolitics offers resources to recognize the presence of poor and marginalized people's voices in the redacted layers of prophetic material in the Old Testament. "The voices of the exploited classes are a real presence, even in redaction. Ideological analysis along the lines of Scott's is required to enable us to recognise this real presence." Gerald O. West, "Redaction Criticism as a Resource for the Bible as 'A Site of Struggle,'" *OTE* 30 (2017): 535. West goes on to argue that the presence of poor and marginalized groups is necessary in biblical redaction criticism. "So redactional critical work, if it is ideologically astute, on the final form of biblical books requires other classes besides the middle-class biblical scholar. Struggle-trained-eyes are necessary. But the tools they will take up with their ideologically attuned middle-class biblical scholar compatriots are the product of an ideologically attentive literary and redactional criticism" (West, 542. "Redaction Criticism as a Resource"). Collaboratively engaging in retranslating offers an accessible way to conceive of this task.

Western Civilization."[205] The emphasis is on knowledge generated through the praxis of poor and marginalized communities and their corresponding theological reflection that informs ongoing praxis.

The form of ideotheological retranslation described in this chapter contributes to the irruption in theological method that EATWOT initiated. This irruption in interpretational/translational method also has the potential to contribute to the irruption in the political and economic order that EATWOT anticipated.[206] As marginalized groups engage in the processes of postcolonial retranslation applied iteratively as a process of ongoing action and reflection, they have the potential to disrupt and resist the status quo supported by the translation-as-invasion paradigm described in chapter 2 and its contemporary entanglements with the three forms of Christianity described in chapter 3.

How does the case study illustrate an irruption in the protected domains of translation and theology?

By foregrounding the retransaltional logic of liberation using the CBS method, personnel in the Likɔɔnl Bible translation project engaged with people living with disabilities in their community by telling a traditional story. The story energized the group, initiating a different kind of Bible study in which they would read the Bible collaboratively with Bible translation project personnel, who positioned themselves on the side of people living with disabilities rather than using the Bible to tell them they were wrong. This marked the time and space of CBS as sacred and energized. The project personnel told the story of Job. The groups of people living with disabilities read Job's lament together in two translations. Prompted by CBS questions, they confronted the dominant theologies of their context by reinterpreting/retranslating portions of the narrative of Job from their bodily perspectives. They dialogued about Job's meaning from their different sectoral perspectives. They reworked missionary-colonial translation simply by articulating their perspectives in the protected domains of biblical translation and theology. Similarly, the translation project personnel reworked the translation-as-invasion paradigm by becoming facilitators of interpretation/translation with other sectors of their community.

One group responded to the challenge of health and wealth theology that blames them or their family members by telling a story that suggested God kindly made people with disabilities the way they are. The older women's group reimagined what the future might look like in their community by reworking the story

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[205] Virginia Fabella, "Preface," in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology: Papers from the Fifth International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, August 17–29, 1981, New Delhi, India*, ed. Virginia Fabella, and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), xii.

[206] For a detailed description of the irruption see EATWOT V's final statement (Fabella, and Torres, *Irruption of the Third World*, 195).

told at the beginning of the study. The older women hoped eventually to be given good burials as restored and respected members of their community.

The CBS method irrupts the protected domains of interpretation, translation, and theology. This irruption has the potential to support further political and economic irruption. I discuss this claim in section 5.2.3 as I discuss CBS's theory of change. Suffice it to say, CBS's theory of change argues that an irruption in theological and religious practice is necessary for social change to occur.[207]

What this means on the ground in northern Ghana is that as marginalized groups apply CBS's method of ideotheologically retranslating biblical texts from the perspective of poor and marginalized groups, they have the potential to irrupt and disrupt the logic that undergirds the alliance between the neocolonial/neoindigenous health and wealth gospel and the neoliberal elites who control the wealth generated by extraction in the Ghanaian and world economy.

Chapter 3 argued that the missionaries of the colonial gospel and the prophets of the prosperity neocolonial/neoindigenous gospel have articulated and modeled what they think "life more abundantly" looks like in Ghana and in the world.[208] For missionary-colonial theology, the ordinary person is to wait for enjoyment in heaven. For neocolonial/neoindigenous theology, the ordinary person is to trust the word of powerful prophets to destroy spiritual blockages that keep them from prosperity. For developmentalist ideology, people should reject enchanted African worldviews and mimic the socioeconomic development of secular nations. All of these ideotheologial positions support the social and economic status quo established by colonial invasion and supported by the translation-as-invasion paradigm.

Chapter 4 has argued that an irruption in the method of translating/interpreting biblical texts is necessary so that marginalized groups articulate what "life more abundantly" looks like in dialogue with their communities. When this irruption in theological and translational method is iteratively applied in marginalized African contexts where marginalized groups act as agents of their own projects of liberation, then the people's retranslations and theological articulations can make a prophetic contribution to social change.[209]

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[207] West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar," 142.

[208] Mbamalu, "Use of 'Abundant Life' in John 10:10."

[209] I am alluding to language in the South African *Kairos Document* that makes a distinction between "people's theology" and "prophetic theology," arguing that ordinary Christians articulate a people's theology and that professional theologians should be in dialogue with them to collaboratively produce prophetic theology. "The method that was used to produce the Kairos Document shows that theology is not the preserve of professional theologians, ministers and priests. Ordinary Christians can participate in theological reflection and should be encouraged to do so. When this people's theology is proclaimed to others to challenge and inspire them, it takes on the character of a prophetic theology." Kairos, *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*, rev. 2nd ed. (Braamfontein: Skotaville, 1986), 34–35.

Chapter 5 will continue to engage the prosperity gospel as it relates to African women's theologies. Ghanaian theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye characterized African women's theologies as "the irruption within the irruption."[210] Chapter 5 will explore postcolonial retranslations articulated by marginalized groups of African women as part of a theological response to Ghana's neopatrimonial system writ large in the African state, and writ small in the communities of rural northern Ghana.

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[210] Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective," 247.

5.
We Are (Re)translating Wo/men

In the last chapter, I discussed the way African bodies are being translated by their communities, especially focusing on their religious communities. All religious communities, African, Christian, and Muslim are living with disabilities. No group or person is exempt, not even the new healing churches. Even the powerful prophets will one day be disabled.

The most influential religious translator of bodies in present-day Ghana and across sub-Saharan Africa is the new Christianity which preaches a health and wealth gospel. This gospel is a virulent combination of the American gospel of wealth, making peace with African spirituality, but separating spirituality from the economic and political. The result is an unholy alliance between the new gospel, the African state, and neoliberal African elites allied with neocolonial interests.

Another historic and powerful religious translator of African bodies is the Eurocentric developmentalist paradigm which suggests the enchanted worldview must be eliminated before genuine progress can be made. They argue that African bodies need to embrace the secular paradigm before Africa can join the modern world.

In contrast to these approaches, I argue that African bodies need to become active retranslators of biblical texts through the entangled space and time of the contextual Bible study (CBS) method. CBS foregrounds an emancipatory purpose and uses an emancipatory process to govern the logic of retranslating. An emancipatory purpose and process enables retranslators to begin reworking the logics that colonial assertions have made on their bodies and in their communities in a manner that allows for exploration and discovery. CBS's emancipatory translation process brings translation's traditional sites of reception and production into a reciprocal ideotheological dialogue, allowing for a process of communal exploration. The retranslations of people living with disabilities have prophetic potential to cause a transformational irruption in the status quo in both secular and religious spheres of their world and beyond.

In this chapter, I continue the discussion of agency in postcolonial translation by foregrounding African women as ideotheological (re)translators. I begin with a discussion on gender in precolonial African cultures, moving into the influence of missionary-colonial Bible translation, asking how the translated Bible has contributed to remaking African theologies and gender practices. Continuing the

chapter's focus on agency, I discuss CBS as activist retranslation. The case study explores how the practice of women's agency is being reconfigured by the realities of neoliberalism and its key theological doctrine, the prosperity gospel. Using CBS as emancipatory postcolonial retranslation, young women engage in reinterpreting/retranslating the book of Ruth. The case study is a postcolonial experiment exploring how and whether biblical retranslation for liberation can help young women respond to neoliberal Christianity's version of a better life, which is complicit with oppressive neopatrimonial economic and cultural structures.

5.1. Translating Precolonial Gendered Theologies: Invasion or Irruption

In 1.1.7, I introduced Ifi Amadiume's argument that most African societies have "matriarchal roots."[1] Even societies in northern Ghana, which have often been analyzed as patriarchal by colonial anthropologists, have been significantly misread.[2] Amadiume writes:

> The basic presence of the matricentric unit and its matriarchal principle in African social structures, I argue, means that even male-focused ancestor worship, although separate in its binary opposition to matriarchy, is not monolithically masculine, that is, consisting solely of male symbols and masculine principles and values.[3]

Amadiume continues:

> If we exclude mother-focused ideas/philosophy, we miss the dialectic of gender, and consequently fail to understand the system of checks and balances in these societies. Ancestor worship cannot be understood outside the religious and philosophical system as a whole. The structure of father is not autonomous as that of mother.[4]

While precolonial African cultures may not have been egalitarian, matriarchy was an autonomous system of organization that coexisted alongside patriarchy. Amadiume makes this case in her native Igboland in Nigeria, but also shows its remnants among groups like the Tallensi in northern Ghana. The autonomous

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[1] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 29–51.
[2] Amadiume reinterprets Meyer Fortes's analysis of the Tallensi kinship groups of northern Ghana, discerning matriarchal themes that Fortes misinterprets in his reading of Tallensi ritual practices. The soog kinship phenomenon refers to kinship through uterine descent (Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 32–35). For the Tallensi's relationship to the Mamprusi kingdom, see Drucker-Brown, *Ritual Aspects of the Mamprusi Kingship*, 9, 35–36, 71, 94.
[3] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 36.
[4] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 37.

space of matriarchy was damaged by colonial rule and missionary Christianity.[5] Amadiume is critical of Eurocentric analysis, which is preoccupied with colonial rule such that it fails to recognize patriarchal and masculine imperialism.[6] Amadiume argues that the discussion on precolonial myth as history must be reopened. The violent invasion of patriarchal cultural practices upon matriarchal cultural practices, coopting, and subordinating matriarchal practices correspond to precolonial invasions and cultural conquests.[7] The value systems of matriarchy have been subjugated in African rituals by patriarchal value systems.[8] Therefore, scholars must add a gendered analysis to their historical interpretation of contemporary ritual practice.

5.1.1. Translating the Gendered Names of African Deities

Since anthropologists have missed the presence of subordinated matrilineal cultural systems in their cultural analyses, it follows that translation practices that are influenced by anthropology might have made similar omissions. What impact might the patricentric biases implicit in missionary-colonial Bible translation have had on indigenous religiocultural systems, and what ongoing impact do they have on native languages themselves?

 To address these questions, I return to African translation theology.[9] Lamin Sanneh describes missionary translation in the nineteenth century as a practice of

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[5] Ivor Wilks explored the way women in the precolonial Asante kingdom went through gendered stages. Her case study of Akyawaa Yikwan confirms that postmenopausal women could become "ritual men" and become elders, occupying chiefly offices (Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, 329–57). However, colonial rule led to a masculinization of the Asante public realm. After the advent of indirect rule, female elders and their courts were not recognized. Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, *"I Will Not Eat Stone:" A Women's History of Colonial Asante* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 24–25. Furthermore, Stephen Miescher writes, "Yet in the course of the twentieth century, women's status has decreased. Social structures and local institutions that once guaranteed senior Akan women access to decision-making processes and resources have lost their relevance. Mission churches, which originated as patriarchal institutions, marginalized and subordinated women, leaving limited spaces for female leadership" ("Becoming an Ɔpanyin," 264–65; see also 253–69).

[6] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 48.

[7] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 46.

[8] "Euro-patrifocal methodology imposed on African Studies can only result in suppressed and fragmented information in the data which suggest a missing matriarchal system. Rather than simply treating social competition and conflict as occurring only between generations and between men and women, a gender analysis that makes visible the paradigmatic gender oppositions enables us also to see competition and conflict between structural value systems in which the different generations and women and men all share and participate" (Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 51–52).

[9] See 3.5 and 4.1.

linguistic communication that was theologically driven and had religious, social, and cultural implications. For Sanneh, the starting point was with God, "God was not so disdainful of Africans as to be incommunicable in their languages."[10] God was not a foreign concept in Africa but preceded the missionary in the local culture. Sanneh points out that, theologically, the Judeo-Christian view of God was far too narrow for Africans.[11] The Judeo-Christian God was capricious and judgmental and gendered as male. African notions of God, though diverse, were inclusive. Sanneh claims Africans naturally understood God on their own terms. For Sanneh, the crucial move that missionary-colonial practice made was to use African names for God in their translations.[12] Given the cultural denigration that had already taken place because of colonization, the choice of local divine names opened the possibility of revitalizing African religions.

What would a gender-critical analysis of Sanneh's argument as applied to Bible translation suggest? Musa Dube writes, "A number of studies have been carried out to highlight how the translation of the biblical text into African languages was also the translation of gender-inclusive spiritual and social spheres into androcentric structures."[13] Dube references Aloo Mojola's work among the Iraqw of Tanzania.

In a subsequent article, Mojola, a senior translation consultant with the United Bible Societies, offers contemporary Bible translation examples regarding gender and translating local deity names. One of the first issues of translation is what name to use for divinity—a foreign name, or a local name. Either way, the name will be Christianized by the larger narrative of the Bible. Still, the choice is important, especially given Sanneh's argument that translation revitalizes African religious sensibilities. Mojola was invited to be part of the translation work among the Iraqw people of northern Tanzania. The Iraqw case example is important because they understood the divine being as female, namely, Mother Looa.

> The God that the Iraqw people have known across time, the God who appears in their folktales and myths, in their daily talk and conversations, in their traditional and cultural prayers, in their imaginations and thought systems and world views. They have for ages understood the creator of the universe to be Mother Looa. She is the provider and sustainer, the protector and loving mother of all humanity. She is the one to whom everyone runs or calls when they are in trouble. She represents all that is good, pure, beautiful and true. Evil and calamity, suffering and pain are however attributed to *Neetlanqw*, the male principle. Neetlanqw,

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[10] Sanneh, "The Horizontal and the Vertical in Mission," 166.

[11] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 160, 170–72.

[12] Sanneh, 170–72, 196; See also Lamin O. Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 10

[13] Musa W. Dube, "Gender and the Bible in African Christianity," in *Anthology of African Christianity*, ed. Isabel Apawo Phiri et al., Regnum Studies in Global Christianity (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2016), 151.

interestingly represents chaos, destruction and evil. He is the very antithesis of Mother Looa, the female principle. The Iraqw language refers to Mother Looa using a female pronoun and to Neetlanqw using a masculine pronoun.[14]

The translation team, the majority of whom were female, and the majority of language speakers used Mother Looa for the divine name. The early translations made that choice. However, a minority group of theologians overruled the translators and the majority opinion. They argued for the use of the name of God in the dominant Kiswahili lingua franca, that is, Mungu. Technically, Mungu is neither male nor female but gendered as human, at least in its grammatical form. However, Mungu "was interpreted through the Judeo-Christian masculine lens and understood ontologically and not simply grammatically."[15] In this way, not only was the Iraqw indigenous position *invaded* by the dominant lingua franca so also was a matriarchal concept invaded by a patriarchal concept. This double invasion became entextualized through the act of translation and publication. And while the indigenous concept will continue to hover, there is no doubt that a powerful gendered and ideological shift has taken place.

Mojola offers a similar example from the Kihehe Bible Translation project in southern Tanzania. Among the Kihehe, the name for God is Inguluve. Mojola explains that there are no gendered pronouns in African Bantu languages like he or she in English. Bantu languages have semantic classes. In Kihehe, Inguluve falls into the classification of things, not people. However, the translators made an interesting decision. Rather than using Inguluve (God as belonging to the class of nonhuman beings) in the Kihehe Bible, they inscribed the name of God to be Nguluve (God as belonging to the class of humans.)[16] In the translation, God is now understood to be personal rather than nonpersonal.

Mojola offers two other examples where the name of a feminine deity in the local religion was a potential choice for God's name, but because of the translators' Judeo-Christian lens, they felt compelled to make a change. Rather than using a borrowed word for God in the Kenyan Ateso Bible project, "the translation team has with much difficulty transformed Nakasuban (a feminine God) into Lokasuban (a masculine God), with the accompanying use of male pronouns present in the language."[17] In other words, the translation team changed the grammatical category of the commonly used name for God from feminine to masculine. They coined a novel word. Other translation projects in related languages have made similar choices.

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[14] Aloo O. Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender, Challenges and Opportunities—with Specific Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39.1 (2018), 4.
[15] Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender," 5.
[16] Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender," 5.
[17] Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender," 5.

Even though the Bible is replete with feminine metaphors or figures for the divine, and in particular for the biblical God, it is the masculine metaphors that are preferred and given prominence. God is clearly not a woman or female, yet an impression is given by translators and exegetes that God is masculine or in the image of the male human being.[18]

Mojola argues that a shift is made from viewing this language as metaphor to asserting that the male imagery has ontological status, that it communicates something of an objective reality about God.[19] Citing Susan Ackerman's assessment of the Hebrew Bible as mainly a man's text, Mojola affirms that the biblical language and worldview are mainly androcentric.[20] The Bible, taken as a whole, gives the impression that the male is the privileged representative of all human beings. Mojola's linguistic evidence suggests African languages are not like this. But Bible translation practices are changing African semantic structures to refer to God androcentrically. Furthermore, according to Mercy Amba Oduyoye, just as African languages are not androcentric in their construction, neither are African theologies androcentric. Oduyoye argues that in African religious thought:

Attributes said to be feminine and others said to be masculine are all applied to God. While there is specifically male and specifically female imagery of the Source Being to be found in Africa, under the influence of Christianity and Islam a patriarchal God has been enthroned, in whose name women who pray to God as 'God our mother' are victimized.[21]

Mojola asks what can be done about the invisibility and silencing of women in translations.[22] What can be done to address patriarchy as the elephant in the room?[23] Mojola argues that these translation decisions contribute to contemporary

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[18] Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender," 5.

[19] Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender," 5.

[20] Susan Ackerman, "Women in Ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible" (Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies, Caroline Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations, 2016), 1. Quoted in Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender," 6.

[21] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, Introductions in Feminist Theology 6 (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 43.

[22] "We take it so much for granted, it is the norm! Should we continue to be complicit in perpetuating this injustice" (Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender," 6)?

[23] Mojola cites Allan G. Johnson's extensive definitions of patriarchy. In sum, "society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being *male dominated, male identified*, and *male centered*. It is also organized around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women." Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, rev. and updated ed (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 5. Quoted in Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender," 7.

practices of patriarchy that are harmful for women and society.[24] How can we get to a postpatriarchal world for the benefit of women, men, creatures, and the earth itself?[25]

To address these questions, I will examine women's theological discourse in Africa and then discuss directions suggested by feminist translation studies.

5.1.2. African Women's Theologies: The Irruption within the Irruption

African women's theologies and their interpretative approaches to the Bible are the third ideotheological approach to emerge within the historical development of postcolonial African theologies.[26] In chapter 4, I mentioned the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and the way they characterized their challenge to theology as the irruption of the third world.[27] Reflecting on the fifth EATWOT conference in New Delhi in 1981, Mercy Amba Oduyoye describes African women's theologies emerging as "the irruption within the irruption."[28]

Oduyoye writes of the irruption, "The outburst came not because women were being treated as mere spectators at the meeting, but because the language of the meeting ignored our presence and therefore alienated some of the women present."[29] Women urged that greater care should be taken in the theological use of language about God and before God. Oduyoye writes:

> It was the irruption within the irruption, trumpeting the existence of some other hurts, spotlighting women's marginalization from the theological enterprise and indeed from decision making in the churches.
>
> EATWOT had come face to face with the fact that the community of women and men, even in the church and among "liberation theologians," is not as liberating as it could be.[30]

In Africa that initial Third World irruption within the irruption resulted in the founding of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter the

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[24] Julie Chinwe Ababa's research in Nigeria indicates that the cultural practice of patriarchy has deleterious consequences for women and society. See "Inequality and Discrimination in Nigeria, Tradition and Religion as Negative Factors Affecting Gender." (The Federation of International Human Rights Museums, 2012), 8.

[25] Paula M. Cooey, William R. Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel, eds., *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World Religions*, Faith Meets Faith (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), xii. Cited in Mojola, "Bible Translation and Gender," 8.

[26] West, "African Biblical Scholarship as Post-colonial," 251.

[27] Fabella, and Torres, *Irruption of the Third World*.

[28] Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective," 247.

[29] Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective," 248.

[30] Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective," 247.

Circle) by Oduyoye in 1989.[31] The Circle was organized because women were realizing that religious traditions were being used to legitimize the exclusion and disempowerment of women. To counteract this, the Circle organized branches in many contexts of Africa to encourage each other and engage in theological discourse and writing. Dube indicates that the Circle is organized in regional and national chapters. In 2016 Dube reported that the Circle had "a continent-wide membership of about five hundred women who have produced at least a hundred books."[32] Beverley Haddad includes the historical development and ongoing influence of the Circle in her overview of South African women's theological project, noting that African women's theologies have critiqued culture and patriarchy. The Circle has been at the forefront of confronting the HIV crisis.[33] Haddad also registers concerns regarding the Circle's preference to engage gender injustice without linking those critiques to a wider socio-political analysis and the hesitancy to engage in theoretical discourse outside the African continent.[34]

5.2. Activist Translation and CBS

In chapter 4, I introduced contextual Bible study (CBS) as retranslation with an emancipatory purpose and process. Within translation studies, I highlighted Skopos theory and its understanding of translation as an intentional act to change things in the world. I reworked Skopos theory's focus on the positionality of translation participants for postcolonial contexts. After exploring the logics of retranslation used in EuroAmerican translation studies, I argued that CBS could be used in Skopos theory terms to press an emancipatory purpose for retranslating in postcolonial contexts. Additionally, CBS employs an emancipatory process where groups overlooked by colonizing processes can be incorporated into the community dialogue by becoming retranslators. Not only does CBS resist colonial logics, but it also reworks those logics for a better life from the perspective of marginalized communities who become translating agents.

To deepen the analysis of CBS as postcolonial retranslation, I discuss CBS in relation to what translation studies scholars call activist approaches to translation or committed approaches to translation.

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[31] Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Rachel Angogo Kanyoro, eds., *Talitha, Qumi!: Convocation of African Women Theologians: Papers* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1990).

[32] Dube, "Gender and the Bible in African Christianity," 147.

[33] Haddad, "The South African Women's Theological Project," 50–56.

[34] Haddad, "The South African Women's Theological Project," 57–58. Haddad notes that Dube has made similar observations. See Dube, Musa W. Dube, "HIV and AIDS Research and Writing in the Circle of African Women Theologians 2002–2006," in *Compassionate Circles: African Women Theologians Facing HIV*, ed. Ezra Chitando and Nontando M Hadebe (Geneva: WCC, 2009), 173–236.

Tymoczko discusses activist approaches to translation as approaches that emphasize agency.[35] Tymoczko highlights two metaphors that are used to describe activist translation. The first is resistance. Tymoczko indicates the metaphor was popularized in European languages for activities that opposed fascist governments in Word War II. Tymoczko finds the metaphor lacking because it characterizes agency and activism as reactive rather than proactive.[36] Tymoczko also claims that there is no single antagonist in today's world. There are colonialism, neoliberalism, capitalism, the United States, patriarchy, oppression of sexual minorities, and more. Tymoczko calls for specifically naming precisely which faces of oppression one is resisting.[37] It might also be important to group these adversaries together. It is also worth recognizing that resisting multiple oppressions can be exhausting. Resisting is not as compelling as constructing something worth fighting for. In terms of translation strategy, Tymoczko emphasizes it is a mistake to label one style of translating as resistive apart from a specific context of struggle in relation to a specific set of oppressions.[38]

The second metaphor Tymoczko explores for activist translation is engagement.[39] Other terms include "commitment, participation, mutual pledges and promises, making guarantees, assuming obligations, exposing oneself to risk, entering into conflict, becoming interlocked or enmeshed, and action undertaken by more than one person."[40] What Tymoczko calls "engaged" approaches have also been described as "committed" approaches to translation.[41] Tymoczko suggests the metaphor of engagement is more useful than resistance as a foundation for activist translation because it involves taking initiative.[42] But Tymoczko cautions that engaged activism should be conceived differently than littérature engagée as promoted by Jean Paul Sarte and others. Tymoczko worries that literature aimed at changing the attitudes of a small group of avant-garde elites is short-sighted, given that many of said elites in the twentieth century were purged in multiple contexts. The paramount question should be the effectiveness of literature in achieving social change. How do translations function in the world as speech acts to "rouse, inspire, witness, mobilize, and incite rebellion."[43] Moreover,

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[35] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 209–16.

[36] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 210.

[37] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 211.

[38] For example, Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, Translation Studies (London: Routledge, 1995).

[39] "The term derives from words meaning 'to be under a pledge' from the Old French *gage*, 'pledge'" (Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 212).

[40] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 212.

[41] Siobhan Brownlie, "Descriptive vs Committed Approaches," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, 2nd ed (London: Routledge, 2009), 77–81.

[42] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 212.

[43] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 213.

historically, activist translators who have been successful in postcolonial contexts have often joined with others for joint actions and coordinated programs. A group of activist translators might agree to a set of goals and values. Tymoczko notes that activist translators use multiple strategies to respond to differing ideological and cultural contexts.[44] Activist translators subordinate the text to ideology, as colonizing translators do.[45]

Mona Baker discusses groups of translators who have banded together in order to promote cultural narratives that expose or subvert the dominant cultural narratives that "conceal patterns of domination and submission."[46] Baker argues that if scholars wish to make assertions about what activist translation actually looks like, they would need to make a systematic analysis of the kinds of decisions such activist groups actually make.[47] Again, the specific issues one is resisting, and the specific contextual factors are relevant.

5.2.1. Feminist Approaches to Bible Translation

An influential form of activist translation is feminist translation. Sherry Simon's analysis of the Bible being translated in a feminist frame suggests there is not one set of translation decisions that can be called feminist. First-wave feminism, characterized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, judged the translated English Bible according to the Enlightenment paradigm and accordingly judged the English Bible to be sexist. Second-wave feminists, like Phyllis Trible, took an approach to

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[44] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 215.

[45] Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 216. Tymoczko notes that translators whose primary commitment is to the texts themselves often find the radical subordination of text to ideology problematic.

[46] Mona Baker, "Translation and Activism: Emerging Patterns of Narrative Community," in *Translation, Resistance, Activism*, ed. Maria Tymoczko (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 30. Drawing on Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm Baker discusses the activist translation group Babels www.babels.org and contrasts their approach to Translators Without Borders.

[47] "What types of texts do members of such activist communities select for translation? Do they embellish certain narratives in order to give voice to those whose voices are suppressed and marginalized a better chance of being heard? Do they frame narratives with which they disagree strongly, such as the Project of the New American Century, in specific ways in order to undermine and expose their underlying assumptions? Do they omit or add material within the body of the text, or do they rely on paratexts to guide the readers interpretation of each narrative? Do the interpreters reveal their own narrative location through such factors as tone of voice, pitch, or loudness" (Baker, "Translation and Activism," 34–35)?

depatriarchalize specific biblical texts.[48] Third-wave feminists have returned to understanding the Bible as being intrinsically patriarchal. This creates more translational options. Some scholars argue for translations that will restore hidden women's voices. Others call for an opposite tack—translators should amplify the patriarchal voices that one finds in the Bible so that hearers become more aware of its implicit androcentrism.[49] Simon notes that feminists have been wary of embarking on full-scale Bible translations because of the intense questioning that is going on in the present.[50] On the other hand, Simon notes the publication of *An Inclusive Language Lectionary: Years A, B, and C* and various perspectives on it.[51] The ideotheological commitment to women's equality and the gender-critical lenses translators employ sociohistorically, literarily, or semiotically have the potential for particular translation decisions in particular contexts.[52]

5.2.2. CBS as Activist Retranslation

CBS as emancipatory postcolonial retranslation has a relationship to activist translation. Like activist translation, CBS emphasizes the agency of the translator. The difference inserted by CBS as emancipatory postcolonial retranslation is that activist postcolonial translators are themselves implicated in the systems of oppression in the translation-as-invasion paradigm, which includes theories of knowledge as disseminated in systems of missionary-secular-colonial education. To engage groups who are less implicated in the colonial system, translators must

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[48] Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Overtures to Biblical Theology 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 78–79. Gerald West's analysis of Trible's work indicates that Trible sees "a depatriarchialising principle at work in the Bible itself…. The depatriarchialising principle works through themes that implicitly disavow sexism, and through careful exegesis of passages concerned with female and male" (West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 152). Trible distinguishes between translating themes in the biblical text and making new appropriations of biblical texts along feminist lines.

[49] Simon notes Joanna Dewey as one arguing for translating women's hidden voices and Hutaff, Schaberg, Phyllis Bird, and Clarice J. Martin arguing for amping up the negative ideology in the text. See Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996), 125.

[50] Simon, *Gender in Translation*, 121.

[51] *An Inclusive Language Lectionary* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983). Simon, *Gender in Translation*, 125. See also Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds., *Women's Bible Commentary*, exp. ed (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

[52] Gerald West's analysis of the feminist hermeneutic approaches of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests they are both interested in recovering women's presence in patriarchal texts. Schüssler Fiorenza prefers to use a socio-historical approach, which West characterizes as behind-the-text, whereas Ruether prefers literary analysis on-the-text. These approaches are complementary and not competitive (West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 117).

become facilitators who work with groups in communities that systems of oppression have disenfranchised. For activist translation to be transformational in a way that does not become what de Wit labels a "flat activism," those groups, those bodies, those *others*, must become retranslators.[53]

5.2.3. CBS and Its Theory of Change

In chapter 4's discussion of the values of CBS, the value of change indicated that CBS is not interested in reading (or translating) the Bible for its own sake. CBS is committed to changing systems that marginalize people. CBS retranslates biblical texts using a different logic, an emancipatory logic that contributes to systemic change. CBS is like activist translation in this regard. However, CBS changes the role of the activist translator. CBS practitioners assign a less leading role to the professional or semiprofessional activist translator in its theory of change.[54]

Accordingly, CBS argues that systemic change must be led by those communities, groups, and individuals most affected by harmful social, economic, political, and theological systems. Those groups are essential agents of change. Using CBS as activist translation requires marginalized groups to be involved as agents who retranslate biblical texts themselves. The role of the activist translator, while still important, becomes more facilitatory.[55]

The foundational tenet of CBS's theory of change is the epistemological privilege of poor and marginalized communities, discussed in section 4.2.2.1 above. The bodily presence of the poor is necessary for genuine transformation. CBS prefers to work with organized groups who have developed a shared language regarding their oppression and have secured spaces where they can express that language. The group's resources include their knowledge of religion and the Bible, assets they can deploy in their projects of social transformation.[56]

Chapter 3 illustrates how African independent churches used their African religious knowledge to transform the impact of the translated Bible from causing

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[53] De Wit, ""It Should Be Burned and Forgotten!," 45.

[54] CBS works with thin conceptions of hegemony. See Gerald O. West, "Locating 'Contextual Bible Study' within Biblical Liberation Hermeneutics and Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics," *HvTSt* 70.1 (2014), 4; West, "Liberation Hermeneutics," 508.

[55] Haddad identifies three contributions the activist-intellectual makes to communities of struggle. She can help secure a safe space with her presence. She contributes "a range of critical resources for engaging the Biblical tradition and which challenge traditional understandings of oppression." And she is a "boundary-crosser." Beverley G. Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development" (PhD diss., Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2000), 382. See also West, *Academy of the Poor*, 111.

[56] West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar," 136–37.

harm so that it could bring social healing.[57] Their interpretative strategies circum-scribed the culturally derogatory meanings encoded in translated Bibles and turned the Bible into a resource for African communities.[58] To accomplish this innovation, Africans had to exit missionary-controlled spaces to be free to use the Bible in an African theological, spiritual, and social manner.[59]

James Scott's notion of the hidden transcript helps explain why Africans be-ing in their own space is so important. Scott argues that poor and marginalized groups desire to form their own spaces separate from public venues where they can speak using their own modes of speech, their hidden transcripts, which negate the public transcript of domination.[60] Scott's analysis privileges space, recogniz-ing the importance of the social control of space. From that point of view, the question is not whether the subaltern can speak, as Gayatri Spivak famously posed it; the question is *where* can the subaltern speak?[61] West states, "*How* the subal-tern speaks depends almost entirely on local 'sectoral' control of space."[62]

According to Michael Cronin, "translation brings control to the fore in a way that is not confined to any period of history."[63] Despite translation generally being part of an expanding imperial or national culture, Cronin avers, "there is no in-trinsic reason why translation should not be of benefit to minority languages."[64] But for that possibility to be realized, speakers and translators from minority lan-guage communities must control not only what and when texts are translated, but also "*how* texts might be translated in and out of their languages."[65] Drawing on Scott's distinction between public and hidden transcripts, how texts are translated will depend upon which sector of a minority language society controls the space where (re)translation takes place.

Scott argues, "The social sites of the hidden transcript are those locations in which the unspoken riposte, stifled anger, and bitten tongues created by relations of domination find a vehement, full-throated expression."[66] These locations are

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[57] Dube, "Consuming the Colonial Cultural Bomb."

[58] Sanneh highlights that Christianity's practice of translation relativizes source cultures and languages and destigmatizes host cultures and languages. "This action to destigmatize complemented the other action to relativize" (Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1).

[59] Kalu, "Ethiopianism in African Christianity," 231. Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Fem-inist Interpretation of the Bible*, 192.

[60] "This work of negation, as I call it, can take quite simple or quite elaborate forms. An example of an elaborate negation is the reworking by slaves of Christian doctrine to answer their own experiences and desires." Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 108.

[61] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" See also West, "Not So Silent Citizen," 23; West, "Biblical Text as a Heterotopic Intercultural Site," 241.

[62] West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar," 137.

[63] Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 20.

[64] Cronin, *Translation and Globalization*, 167.

[65] Cronin, *Translation and Globalization*, 167.

[66] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 120.

private locations, not public locations. Thus, the full-throated expression is protected from the blowback of force that dominant sectors of society may employ to protect their power. What this means for Scott is that poor and marginalized groups are "less constrained at the level of thought and ideology, since they can in secluded settings speak with comparative safety and more constrained at the level of political action and struggle, where the daily exercise of power sharply limits the options available to them."[67]

CBS attempts to secure public space, like the space of churches and schools, for poor and marginalized groups to practice articulating their hidden transcripts in relative safety. The translated Bible is a resource Africans have recruited before and can recruit again to help them struggle for life. The Bible is a familiar resource to many, and it offers a familiar and powerful language.

But the Bible, even the translated Bible, is not a neutral asset. It is not always clear whether the Bible is on the side of the poor in their struggle for social change. As argued in chapter 3, neocolonial versions of Christianity use the Bible to isolate and blame poor and marginalized groups. As argued in chapter 4, the Bible itself is intrinsically contested at its sites of production and reception.[68] This includes its ancient sites of production and reception and its contemporary sites of reproduction and reception.

Scott indicates that dominant discourse is a "plastic idiom or dialect that is capable of carrying an enormous variety of meanings."[69] In contexts where the Bible is a respected resource used by dominant and subordinate sectors of society, the meanings dominant groups intend with the Bible can be subverted by subordinate groups. The AIC's use of the translated Bible is a great example.[70] They were able to retranslate, reinterpret, and redeploy the Bible for the purpose of indigenous social healing to rebuild their community with the help of biblical ancestors. This happened in their own "safe and sequestered" spaces.[71]

West argues that faith-based sites that are controlled by marginalized groups, such as women's groups in churches, are important because women have secured

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[67] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 91.

[68] Itumeleng Mosala's analysis of the book of Micah concludes the book of Micah is a ruling class document. There is too much going on in Micah for it to be read straightforwardly. "Tthere are enough contradictions within the book to enable eyes that are hermeneutically trained in the struggle for liberation today to observe the kin struggles of the oppressed and the exploited in the biblical communities in the very absence of those struggles in the text" (Mosala, "Use of the Bible in Black Theology," 196).

[69] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 102–3.

[70] Even when missionary intentions were encoded in the translated Bible, they were only partially effective. In translation, particular meanings can never be fully controlled. Colonized audiences scatter and randomize colonial intentions. Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 21.

[71] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 120.

these sites in the face of patriarchy. Women have developed religious rituals and symbols at their disposal in these sites. These resources can be recruited for social transformation. According to CBS's theory of social change, CBS works best in locations where socially engaged scholars are invited to collaborate by those who control such sites.[72]

Within the safety of their own sites, marginalized groups can practice their hidden transcripts "offstage" to prepare them for the time when the transcript gets revealed in public.[73] Scott argues that the hidden and public transcripts are usually not in direct contact, but there are times when what has been hidden gets unveiled in public.[74] The hidden transcript is practiced in sequestered sites until it can be articulately expressed in public at the right time. The nature of domination in the public transcript creates conditions where many subordinate people have similar experiences. Therefore, when the public transcript is breached, and the truth of the hidden transcript is publicly expressed, a "crystallization" can occur.[75] People recognize their experiences in the "close relatives" of other people's hidden transcripts. When people hear other people articulately and openly respond to their experiences of domination, and when they recognize that they share similar experiences that they have been forced to hide, they experience an energizing connection. It is as if they connect to "a single power grid."[76] Astonishingly quickly, this can result in mass defiance.

5.2.4. Offering CBS as a Resource for Change in Northern Ghana

Scott's theory helps show how teachers, literacy workers, translators, pastors, and imams in northern Ghana might offer CBS in way that is useful for poor and marginalized groups in their communities. Unfortunately, in northern Ghana CBS is unknown. The Komba Literacy and Bible Translation Project (KOLIIBITRAP), a group introduced in chapter 4, may be as well-positioned as any group for experimenting with CBS in their communities.[77]

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[72] "CBS work only takes place in such sites when and if the Ujamaa Centre is invited by those who control particular sites invite us to enter their site and to collaborate with them" (West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar," 137).

[73] "First, the hidden transcript is a social product and hence a result of power relations among subordinates. Second, like folk culture, the hidden transcript has no reality as pure thought; it exists only to the extent it is practiced, articulated, enacted, and disseminated within these offstage social sites. Third, the social spaces where the hidden transcript grows are themselves an achievement of resistance; they are won and defended in the teeth of power" (Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 119).

[74] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 202–27.

[75] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 223.

[76] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 224.

[77] KOLIBITRAP works in literacy and Bible translation in the Likɔɔnl speech varieties. Likɔɔnl is also referred to as Komba.

In 2014 I started studying the CBS methodology and shared it with my KOLIBITRAP colleagues. Together, we adapted CBS for the northern Ghanaian context. If marginalized groups experience CBS in a way that invigorates them, CBS may serve as a catalyst to spark their collective imagination and energy, illustrating that the Bible can be a part of social change. In fact, CBS's theory of change argues that there can be no social change without religious change![78]

The Ujamaa Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the group that has forged the CBS methodology, has found that one of the best ways to inspire religious change is by rereading the Bible with poor and marginalized groups, offering critical resources from biblical studies. Critical biblical scholarship demonstrates that the Bible does not speak with a singular voice.[79] Contemporary scholars, theologians, and artists demonstrate great skill, translating what the Bible is saying in today's contexts. The diversity of voices at the Bible's sites of production and its sites of reception calls for critical analysis. And this is especially true for groups involved in social struggles.

South African scholar of Black theology, Itumeleng Mosala has warned against naïve readings of the Bible saying, "unstructural understanding of the Bible may simply reinforce and confirm unstructural understanding of the present."[80] Christopher Rowland cites Walter Benjamin who makes an argument like Mosala's. Rowland paraphrases, "cultural monuments celebrated by history could not be understood outside the context of their origins, a context of oppression and exploitation. Just as the cultural object itself will never be free from barbarity, 'so neither is the process of handing down by which it is passed from one to the next.'"[81] In other words, Bible translation has been and remains contested at its sites of production and reception.

CBS's theory of change argues that those on the front lines of social struggle need to be the architects of their own projects of liberation. And given the importance of religion, especially in Africa, they must be involved in critical reflection about how the Bible's stories have been passed on to them, what the Bible means, and how to translate its theologies to life. Those on the front lines will be well served by biblical scholars and activists who use the tools of biblical scholarship and offer those tools to those on the front lines so they can translate/interpret from their own perspective.

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[78] West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar," 142.

[79] Biblical scholars use sociohistorical analysis, literary analysis, and semiotic analysis in sophisticated and sometimes beautiful ways.

[80] Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*, 32.

[81] Christopher Rowland, "Social, Political, and Ideological Criticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 669. Citing Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 257.

Emancipatory retranslation provides communities of poor and marginalized people an opportunity to engage in participatory hermeneutics as they reenter translation processes, reentering the biblical narratives, and reworking some of the translational decisions that have been made for them.

As CBS becomes known in a few of the communities of northern Ghana, marginalized groups may recognize CBS as an additional resource that energizes their desire for social and religious change. They may or may not recruit CBS into their own agendas for social change. As a cultural outsider, I offer CBS to colleagues and to marginalized groups, leaving space for community members to make CBS their own, or to set it aside for the time being.

The case study in chapter 4 highlighted an organized group of people living with disabilities in the communities surrounding Gbintiri in northern Ghana. Using CBS as emancipatory retranslation, people with disabilities engaged with and retranslated some of the discourses in Job. Using CBS they reworked the logics of retranslation in a manner that was life-giving for them. They crossed entangled space and time to participate with Job in retranslating for a better life, articulating glimpses of their visions for social progress in their retranslations. Borrowing the language of Sithembiso Zwane, we are waiting for people living with disabilities to make that invigorated time and space into a time and space of their own invention.[82] When that happens, people living with disabilities will invite CBS facilitators into their spaces to collaborate with them in their project for social transformation. When that happens the power dynamics between facilitators and participants will be on more equal footing.

In the case study in this chapter, gender is highlighted as a key component to the entangled oppressions in the postcolonial northern Ghanaian context. My colleagues and I engaged with a series of groups of women, offering CBS to invigorate their experience with the Bible. We offered CBS as a way to rework the process of Bible translation, recalling the language of Cindi Katz explored in section 2.5. Eventually, CBS may become a pathway to what the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians described as an irruption of religious and social change.

By introducing CBS to a new context, I am attempting to negotiate the twin neocolonial dangers of isolation and invasion. Women in northern Ghanaian communities are not aware of the resource of CBS. By offering the CBS experience to groups of women, I hope it will become a useful tool for them in the collective process, not just a novel experience. By offering CBS with an open hand, I hope to walk the line between cultural isolation and invasion.[83]

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[82] West and Zwane, "Re-reading 1 Kings 21:1–16."

[83] Michael Cronin attempts to chart a pathway for translation between what François Furet calls a totalitarian pathology of difference and a totalitarian pathology of the universal. I am attempting to articulate something similar here. Cronin, *Across the Lines*, 89. See also

5.3. Retranslating Ruth(s) in the Context of Sugar Daddies

In a series of contextual Bible studies, my colleagues and I from KOLIBITRAP joined with young women in the local context to explore sexuality in agrarian contexts of limited economic resources. We adapted a contextual Bible study on the book of Ruth developed in South Africa in the context of HIV infections, which considers the possibility of Boaz as a "sugar daddy."[84] We engaged in this study with three groups of women: young women in school, young women in vocational training, and young and mature women in churches. The facilitators were men, and some men were present as participants in two of the studies.[85]

CBS prompts ordinary young women and men to read a biblical text with additional disruptive resources from biblical studies offered in the form of questions. Additional encouragement is offered by facilitators who use their authority and experience in Bible translation to help young women secure spaces like church buildings where they are usually welcome to listen to the interpretation of sacred texts but are not normally welcome to interpret sacred texts themselves. Those who are pastors, teachers, and translators become CBS facilitators. As facilitators, they encourage young women and men to reinterpret/retranslate the biblical text from their own lived realities.

Translators know that translating can be a liberating activity. This is especially so for groups in postcolonial settings who have historic experience with oppression. For them retranslating is a postcolonial response to being translated by missionary-colonial projects. Why should translation as a postcolonial African response stop with the perspectives of project translators when the liberating experience of postcolonial translation can be shared with all sectors of people?

To experience translation as liberating, human beings must translate from their own sectoral perspectives. Retranslating in this mode is a necessary and ongoing act of human liberation! Admittedly, using CBS to retranslate is partial and

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François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 29.

[84] Gerald O. West and Beverley G. Haddad, "Boaz as 'Sugar-Daddy': Re-reading Ruth in the Context of HIV," *JTSA* 155 (2016): 137–56.

[85] At the beginning of the study, as part of my commitment to ethical engagement I was careful to make sure that participants consented to participating in CBS. I emphasized that any individual or group could leave at any time if they felt uncomfortable. I outlined what we would be doing in the study. We would be asking them questions about their life and about the Bible, and they would be responding as groups with spokespersons. They would not be responding as individuals. We would write the group responses on paper. I indicated that I might want to use some of their written statements in a book I was writing for my university professors about the Bible and how communities can use the Bible to change the world according to God's vision for the world. I would be careful not share anyone's identity, and if anything gets written on paper that I should not include in my writing, they should tell me or another colleague, and we would be careful to keep that comment private.

perspectival. It is more piecemeal in its scope compared to institutional Bible translation, which is subject to various regimes of publishing. But this mode of retranslating for liberation has the power to resonate across social sectors in a community as it practices agency in the face of multiple oppressions.[86]

Rather than thinking about translating men and women as objects that need to be transformed by preconceived visions of social liberation, translation can be practiced intransitively.[87] Women and men translate. As people translate and retranslate, all the translation participants are transformed, including the translators, the materials used, and the narrative itself. This multiparticipatory transformation avoids translating with a flat activism. The Bible itself becomes viewed as something more than text.[88] Drawing on the notion of participation with the biblical ancestors as practiced by the West African prophet William Wadé Harris, CBS participants participate with communities embodied in the biblical text across time and space.

As I describe the processes of CBS, I will highlight the ways using CBS reworks the normal pathways of (Bible) translation. My colleagues and I were not fully aware ahead of time of everything that we were doing. We believed the experience of young women in school in the context of sugar daddies cried out to be addressed by the God of life, but we did not fully understand our own entanglements with the issues we were confronting. We trusted the CBS process, engaging in the See-Judge-Act movement, and in cycles of action followed by reflection. We listened to the participants. As we went along we improved our understanding of the entangled issues and our strategies for addressing them. This book is part of the process of action and reflection.

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[86] John Holloway, "Dignity's Revolt," in *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*, ed. John Holloway and Elíona Peláez (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 177.

[87] Translation studies scholar Michael Cronin argues that we should think about translation using an intransitive notion of human production. Cronin is drawing upon anthropologist Tim Ingold (Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, 50–51). See Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London: Routledge, 2011), 6.

[88] "Translatability allows us to think of the Scriptures as more than merely text. For it is possible to also think of Scriptures as a context, a context that the reader (or hearer) may enter and so actually participate in their world of meaning and experience.… But translatability and the impact of the translated Scriptures also ensure that the 'world of experience' can be expanded in the other direction, leading occasionally to startling and novel ways of participating in the Scriptures, shaped, in such situations by the cultural world of experience of the reader or hearer.… Harris seems to operate on the assumption that the spiritual universe of the African primal world offered valid perspectives for participating in the world of the Scriptures." Bediako, "Biblical Exegesis in the African Context," 18.

5.3.1. See: The Importance of Social Analysis in Retranslation

One of CBS's contributions to biblical translation is foregrounding systemic analysis. Bible translators are not used to thinking about the systems we participate in. CBS's See-Judge-Act framework suggests that to *see* a problem, participants need to analyze it critically using all the critical tools available to them, but especially their own critical thinking.

The initial social problem the male Bible translators perceived was that young women in their communities, churches, and families were getting pregnant in school, causing them to drop out of school. The CBS process encouraged us to think about the systems in play in a young woman's life: school systems, economic systems, family systems, marriage systems, religious systems, and health systems. We asked ourselves why this problem keeps happening repeatedly. Which systems work together to contribute to this repetitive problem?

5.3.1.1. Socioeconomics, Patriarchy, Culture, and Health

What we discovered was that while pregnancy is a problem, a systemic analysis that privileges the point of view of young women frames the problem differently. We engaged in dialogue with groups of young women in school, young and mature women in sewing apprenticeships, and young and mature women in church. The groups of young women indicated that economic vulnerability is the key problem they face in northern Ghana.

In Ghana, young people typically attend schools or apprenticeships in larger and more economically prosperous towns than the towns where they are raised. The economic context of northern Ghana is such that there is little excess money in rural communities. The cultural context is one of patriarchy, where most men view their daughters as resources that will ultimately benefit another kinship group and not their own, so they invest the limited resources they have in the educational and vocational development of their sons. Sometimes, mothers also invest in their sons to protect themselves as they get older and face increasing marginalization in the kinship group and community. Wealthy sons offer protection for their mothers.

Students are maturing sexually, and at the same time, they are experiencing increased economic needs and heightened social pressures in an unfamiliar environment. Expenses emerging from their school environment include paying for book costs, photocopy costs, and extra fees for tutoring. Expenses emerging from their new social environment include the social pressure to spend resources on appearance, apparel, and material items like phones.[89]

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[89] Leclerc-Madlala, "Transactional Sex and the Pursuit of Modernity." Leclerc-Madlala has called these designer goods the "new needs" of modernity.

In a rural market town like Gbintiri, a few individuals (mostly men) have achieved greater wealth than subsistence farmers, who make up the majority of the population. These individuals have acquired positions that generate wealth by force, exceptional ability, technological knowledge, political skill, or economic entrepreneurship. They may hold positions such as chief, craftsman, trader, malam (or imam), pastor, teacher, clerk, politician, soldier, and police officer.[90] Generally, more mature men hold these positions. The individuals in these positions have a greater share of wealth than those working as farmers in the kinship-based system. Agriculture operates in the subsistence economy, and a few farmers have acquired wealth and achieved status through farming.

Many young women willingly enter age-disparate sexual relationships, expecting material benefits in appreciation for sex.[91] The common term for this kind of relationship is a sugar daddy relationship. Stereotypically, sugar daddies are older, wealthier men who give young women gifts in exchange for sex for an unspecified period of time. Young women often call them daddy or uncle rather than boyfriend. The technical term for describing this phenomenon is age-disparate transactional sex. Unfortunately, age-disparate transactional sex is the leading driver of new HIV infections and other sexually transmitted diseases.[92]

In Ghana, as in other African contexts, it should be noted that sugar-daddy relationships are not exclusively motivated by poverty. For instance, a young woman may be befriended by her father's friend in a sexual relationship of which her family may be unaware. In Southern Africa, in addition to material benefits, research has shown that young women perceive that older men as sexual partners provide psycho-social support. Among agrarian kinship-based societies in West Africa, there are also long-standing, traditionally rooted motivations for intergenerational sexual relationships.[93] Haddad indicates that the term age-disparate sex is contested.[94] Stobenau et al. have reviewed the literature in sub-Saharan Africa and identified three paradigms related to age-disparate sex in the literature: sex

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[90] Kirby, *Gods, Shrines, and Problem-Solving*, 81–93.

[91] In sub-Saharan Africa, since material exchanges are a normal part of all types of sexual relationships, these women would not consider themselves sex workers or prostitutes as understood in Western countries. Nevertheless, community based critical reflection on sexual relationships and their deeply rooted motivations are urgently necessary. See Suzanne M Leclerc-Madlala, "Transactional Sex, HIV and Young African Women: Are We There Yet?," *Future Virology* 8.11 (2013): 1042. See also Augustine Ankomah, "Sex, Love, Money and AIDS: The Dynamics of Premarital Sexual Relationships in Ghana," *Sexualities* 2.3 (1999): 291.

[92] West and Haddad, "Boaz as 'Sugar-Daddy,'" 137–47; Amo-Adjei, "Age Differences and Protected First Heterosexual Intercourse in Ghana."

[93] Tait, *Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 94–99. In the 1950s, Tait observed that men would marry around age forty, while women around eighteen.

[94] Beverley G. Haddad, "'Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting': HIV, Transactional Sex, and #Blessed, in the Context of Neo-Liberal Christianity," *JTSA* 161 (2018): 9–12.

for basic needs, sex for social status, and sex and material expression of love.[95] But there is great fluidity between each of these paradigms.[96]

While there are both positive and negative views of sugar daddy relationships among women and men, research confirms the greater the age disparity between sexual partners the less likely contraception will be employed and the more likely unplanned pregnancy and infections will result.[97] Pregnancy is frowned upon by the Ghana Education Service policy for young women in school, so a young girl must drop out for a time if she becomes pregnant.[98] If the young woman cannot get support from her partner, she may find it difficult to get support at her natal home because there is a stigma attached to giving birth at your father's house rather than at the partner's home. Among agrarian kinship groups in northern Ghana and elsewhere on the African frontier, this would not have been a problem in the past. A young woman pregnant from her lover was not rejected by her betrothed husband, even though another man impregnated her.[99] In chapter 1, I discussed the time when kinship groups were struggling to survive in the African frontier. Kinship groups were trying to attract people because every farmer could produce enough for himself plus a small excess. The more people a kinship group had, the more excess it could produce. In the precolonial context, there was an internal motivation to acquire people and less concern about expenses associated with supporting group members.

Farming has changed, marriage betrothals have changed, and people's economic realities have changed. The demand for schooling and the expenses associated with school and vocational training make it less desirable for kinship

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[95] Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala, "Transactional Sex and the Pursuit of Modernity," *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 29.2 (2003): 213–33; Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala, "Age-Disparate and Intergenerational Sex in Southern Africa: The Dynamics of Hypervulnerability," *AIDS* 22, Sup. 4 (2008): S17–25. Citing several studies, Leclerc-Madlala identifies several factors beyond economic that contribute to positive perceptions around age disparate transactional sex from both men's and women's perspective. These positive perceptions outweigh potential negative outcomes. In the context of the United States, from a masculine point of view, a similar psychosocial motivation for intergenerational sex may be at work where men commonly seek intimacy with women "young enough to be their daughters." See bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 145.

[96] Kirsten Stobenau et al., "Revisiting the Understanding of 'Transactional Sex' in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Synthesis of the Literature," *Social Science & Medicine* 168 (2016): 192.

[97] Joshua Amo-Adjei, "Age Differences and Protected First Heterosexual Intercourse in Ghana," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 16.4 (2012): 58–67. Amo-Adjei's research suggests that as age disparity between partners increases, so does the likelihood of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

[98] This research was conducted between 2016–2019.

[99] Tait, *Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 99.

groups to add members. If a man does not want a child for his kinship group, a woman's natal kinship group is not as likely to want to raise that child. Abortion is another alternative young women consider, but it has social stigma and danger attached to it. While it may be legal in the health care system, some women prefer local abortion practitioners, while others try to do it themselves.

While economic factors are drivers of the phenomenon, entangled sociocultural factors complicate the analysis. The risk of HIV highlights that this is an issue of women's survival. Accordingly, theological analysis must address issues of women's survival.[100]

5.3.1.2. Theological Analysis

Beverley Haddad offers an overview of the social-scientific research but also adds a theological analysis of age-disparate transactional sex. The popular understanding of sugar daddies took a theological turn in South Africa when *#Blessed* appeared on social media sites in 2015. A *blesser* is an extension of the term sugar daddy, which moves the sexual relationship into the realm of theology. A blesser is someone who provides a woman with the opulent wealth of consumer capitalism in exchange for an on-demand sexual relationship. The woman exchanges sex in order to consume the goods which, according to the prosperity gospel, God has promised is the right of every believer.[101] Haddad observes that while the notion of blessing in Gen 12:2 includes material blessing, it is a blessing meant to be passed on to others. It is communal, not individual.[102]

Social scientific literature indicates that women who engage in sugar daddy relationships and those who engage in blesser relationships choose these relationships as an act of agency. For some in impoverished areas, it is a matter of survival. In the extreme form of blesser relationships, women use their bodies to access consumer goods they would otherwise not be able to attain. In so doing, Haddad asserts, they use their agency in a manner that questions all the major assumptions of African women's theologies.

Haddad describes African women's theologies as resting on three assumptions. First, women seek to be in egalitarian relationships with men. Second, women assert their agency to achieve this goal, and in so doing, they bring health and healing to both women and men. Third, women assert their agency in solidarity with other women.[103] Haddad is concerned that in contexts influenced by globalized neoliberal capitalism, with structures of gendered economic inequality

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[100] Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival," 384–89. Haddad argues that women's survival theologies need to be part of church theologizing, the academy, development, and the African women's theological project itself.
[101] Haddad, "Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting," 13–16.
[102] Haddad, "Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting," 13.
[103] Haddad, "Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting," 16.

in place, these three pillars are under attack by women themselves who are using their agency as young, desirable women to engage in "opulent lifestyles and consumption." The theological strategies (not so much interpretative strategies) of ordinary women are only liberating in a hyper-individualized sense. Women are using their agency to achieve personal emancipation with little regard for the potential of their own HIV infection. Neither do they challenge the inequality built into the economic structures entangled with patriarchy. By choosing the label #Blessed, they are using the tools of prosperity theology to spiritually sanction their actions.[104]

Haddad's theological and biblical analyses are important to assess in northern Ghana despite the large disparity between these socioeconomic contexts and the large distance that separates these contexts. As argued in chapter 3, neo-Pentecostal Christianity is the dominant force in the Ghanaian context. The new Christianity has influenced the AICs and the mainline churches. The new Christianity strongly influences the communities I focus on in northern Ghana. Therefore, the theological terrain is already prepared for the blesser phenomenon with one exception: the young women we work with in rural northern Ghana do not have access to men with excessive capital resources. More work must be done on the conceptual and theological relationships between blessers and sugar daddies across urban and rural contexts.

Systemic social analysis has helped my translation colleagues and me see the social problem more clearly. Much is still unclear. Still, we can say that for young women in northern Ghana, the issues of education, sex, sugar daddies, pregnancy, marriage, consumer goods, and STDs are linked to economic vulnerability. Furthermore, the logic of the prosperity gospel may be playing a role in sanctioning sugar daddy relationships.

According to the See-Judge-Act method, facilitators attempted to see the problem by engaging in dialogue with young women and by engaging with critical social scientific scholarship. Groups of young women began to see their situation through these discussions. The see phase of CBS continues when the study questions connect critical social analysis to the participants' prior understanding of the biblical text. The study moves into the judge phase when facilitators ask the young women questions that prompt them to apply semiotic, literary, historical, and cultural tools to study the Bible. Ultimately, the judge phase is theological as young women consider whether their lived reality aligns with God's desire for young women in society as discerned through their careful reinterpretation/retranslation of a biblical text.

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[104] Haddad, "Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting," 15.

5.3.2. Judge: Including Other Bodies in Making Social Judgements

As the CBS process moves into the judge phase, facilitators may be tempted to make religious judgments based on the translation-as-invasion paradigm. In that paradigm, judgments are frequently made by religious leaders in an authoritative fashion without the benefit of cross-sectoral dialogue. Religious judgments are often based on scriptural interpretations.[105] Yet, how are those interpretations arrived at? Bible translators translate and interpret biblical texts based on their own embodied points of view and their own entanglements as translators, pastors, exegetical advisors, and consultants.[106] In CBS, Bible translators function as facilitators. They must incorporate people in their community who are differently entangled into the process of reinterpreting/retranslating biblical texts.

The commitment to community, discussed in section 4.2.2.1, leads us to question the EuroAmerican individualist influence in society, including the individual and moralizing influence of American evangelicalism on theology and biblical interpretation. The individual and moralizing influences of evangelical theology may tempt translators to interpret/translate the Bible as a tool to tell young women and men that they are making poor individual choices that violate God's moral law. Indeed, some biblical theologies lend themselves to these kinds of moralizing judgments. For example, the entanglements of typical translation teams might influence them to read a holy seed theology derived from the book of Ezra into the book of Ruth. A holy seed theology interprets sexual relations with those outside of ethnic and religious Israel as leading to moral decline. How might young women, who may be entangled with the character of Ruth through their shared economic vulnerability in agrarian economies, and men who may be entangled with the character of Boaz or the young workers in the field, actively reinterpret and retranslate this text foregrounding their social entanglements? If translators can listen to these differently entangled retranslations and reinterpretations, how might they hear Ruth differently, perhaps hearing the voice of Ruth for the first time?

In this subsection on the judge movement within CBS, I explore CBS as retranslating governed by the logic of liberation just as I did in chapter 4. In section 4.1.4 I summarized Deborah Shadd's presentation of the logics of retranslation in

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[105] The term *scripture* often refers to a written biblical canon. The term is often used to refer to the canon in an authoritative way. Scripture can also refer to sacred texts in any religious tradition. The Islamic tradition of scripture is an important dialogue partner in northern Ghana.

[106] Some Bible translation projects include team members of different ages, genders, and dialect groups. Still, the nature of the discourse changes based on the purpose of the discourse and which sectoral controls the space where the discourse occurs (West, "Recovering the Biblical Story of Tamar," 137).

translation studies.[107] Drawing on Sharon Deane-Cox's notion of retranslation, which suggests retranslation is motivated by an alternative logic, Shadd presents the logic of progress and the logic of challenge as the alternative logics that translation studies scholars have identified as motivating retranslation.[108] Shadd adds the logic of dialogue as a third motivating logic for retranslation. Gerald West takes up Shadd's discourse and suggests a fourth motivating logic for retranslation: the logic of liberation. West argues that in postcolonial contexts, resisting colonial translation is a necessity.

In the rest of this chapter, I continue to explore CBS as a method of retranslation governed by the logic of liberation. I explore how CBS reworks the other logics of retranslation in a way that helps a community articulate its desire for a better life. I ask, how do the groups dialogue with each other? What are they confronting? What are their social visions? Do their retranslations follow the prosperity theology pathway of individual emancipation at the expense of collective emancipation despite the risks to health and the sacrifice of egalitarian relationships? Are they confronting the matrix of patriarchy and the economy? How is their discourse changing the ideotheological landscape in their locales? What are the next frontiers for them? Will it include retranslating for a better life?

5.3.2.1. Retranslating Ruth Governed by a Logic of Liberation

The emancipatory purpose for retranslating Ruth with young women was set when my colleagues identified young women's educational and vocational development in contexts of limited economic resources as the theme of the study. A theme can also be a burning issue that the community is experiencing. This theme guided our selection of the biblical text of Ruth. We hypothesized that Ruth offers young women resources to help them resist the system of economic and social oppression. This theme also provided a specific hermeneutical clue to help us find our way into the text of Ruth.[109] Gender and economic vulnerability clued us into the details in the text about land, harvest, ethnicity, fertility, and death. This was the first step in the process of retranslating governed by the logic of liberation.

The second way we prioritized the logic of liberation was by respecting the resources already present in the local context. We recognized the presence of the Bible among the community before CBS ever began. We offered the resources of CBS as a guest to a host community.[110] CBS makes an offer of additional critical detail to the knowledge local groups already possess. CBS offers an opportunity to retranslate the already present translations. The translations that are already present included written translations which we used during the study. But there

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[107] Shadd, "Response to Carolyn J. Sharp."
[108] Deane-Cox, *Retranslation*, 2–3.
[109] Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 23.
[110] Maxey, "Hostile Hosts and Unruly Guests."

was also a locally produced picture translation that two of the facilitators had
helped produce as a tool for women's literacy.

In the 1980s and 90s, the Lutheran mission in northern Ghana engaged in
church planting and development. Development activities included well digging,
tree planting, animal husbandry, soil care, farming techniques, health clinics, and
literacy. Literacy classes were active in the 1990s. By the mid-2000s those literacy
classes had run their course. In 2006–2007 the Lutheran church had some remain-
ing funds available from a grant from Lutheran World Relief for women's literacy
in northern Ghana.[111] Since the Komba Literacy and Bible Translation Project
(KOLIBITRAP) had recently been formed in Gbintiri, Ghana, they applied for
and received a small grant. KOLIBITRAP's literacy strategy focused on literature
production as one of the keys to promoting a literature-rich environment, which
contributed to sustainable reading. The idea was that literacy classes and literacy
primers alone are not enough to generate ongoing interest in reading. The com-
munity needed interesting texts to read.

Building on the women who had already attended literacy classes,
KOLIBITRAP chose to produce a booklet on the story of Ruth with illustrations
drawn by a local artist. An artist was identified and commissioned. Yajim Amadu,
a member of the community and an artist, drew pictures illustrating the story. The
pictures are a semiotic form of communication, different from decoding a printed
text, which the women could interpret.[112] Even those who did not know how to
decode words could read the codification of the pictures.[113] In addition, simple
one sentence descriptions were printed below the pictures for the women to prac-
tice decoding written text. The booklets were distributed in certain communities
and workshops were offered for women to practice reading these booklets and
sharing them with others.

The CBS study began by referencing this picture book. The young women
read the book, focusing on the pictures and the printed text. One young woman
summarized what the story was about as follows: "Ruth laid at the feet of the man,

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[111] It is worth reflecting on the relation of excess to surplus as it relates to gleaning and
development.

[112] Image, speech, gesture, and writing are basic *modes* of social semiotic communication
(Kress, *Multimodality*, 84). Modes are socially constructed and formally analyzed using
social semiotic theory (Kress, *Multimodality*, 87). Images pose different kinds of questions
than printed text. Modes have different affordances (Kress, *Multimodality*, 76).

[113] Freire discusses the importance of codification and decodification as more than a pro-
cess of coding and decoding. "Codification refers alternatively to the imaging, or the image
itself, of some significant aspect of the learner's concrete reality (of a slum dwelling for
example). As such, it becomes both the object of the teacher-learner dialogue and the con-
text for the introduction of the generative word … decodification refers to a process or
description and interpretation, whether of printed words, pictures, or other "codifications."
As such, decodification and decodifying are distinct from the process of decoding, or word
recognition" (Freire, *Politics of Education*, 60, n. 14 and 15).

and that is why she gave birth." More recently, we have shifted to projecting the pictures on the wall, showing only the pictures, and telling the story without written text. It would be instructive to see if the pictures were shown without writing and without a corresponding story, what themes the participants would discern from the images alone. The following images were drawn by Yajim Amadu. After the images were viewed, from left to right and top to bottom, the first question of the CBS commenced.

Fig. 4. Thumbnails of pictures drawn by Yajim Amadu (used with permission)

The third way this CBS used an emancipatory logic was through the ideo-theological grain of the CBS questions. CBS consists of carefully constructed ide-otheological questions encouraging young women to explore potentially disruptive detail in a biblical text. The critical detail is offered as an additional resource for them in their struggle to foster resiliency in challenging situations, to rework the narratives that oppress them, and to foster spiritually inspired resistance to oppression. The slow community-directed movement from resilience to reworking to resistance has been described by Cindi Katz, summarized in section 2.5 above. Drawing upon Katz's analysis, Gerald West has begun to reflect on how the Ujamaa Centre uses contextual Bible study to offer disruptive detail in biblical texts to communities to facilitate resilience. For the Ujamaa Centre it is important that communities negotiate their own forms of resilience.[114]

As a reminder to the reader, Cindi Katz has identified a fine-grained process of resistance, which begins with communities building internal resilience so they can survive oppression. Resilience is a bit of an ambiguous term because sometimes practices of resilience end up reinforcing forms of oppression. Nevertheless, as communities negotiate resilience, it can feed into communities perceiving how systems oppress them. As they perceive the inner workings of oppression, communities can begin to rework the systems that oppress them. As communities rework the systems that oppress them, they can more easily choose acts of social resistance on the systemic level.[115] This process cannot be rushed; CBS is only one part of that larger process. Within that larger process, the CBS questions are offered to help participants see details in the text and in the pictures they might not have noticed. They might want to redraw the images on paper.[116] Or they might think about the space between the pictures differently. In theory, the CBS questions offer participants the opportunity to move from building resilience to reworking the logics of oppression to more overt forms of resistance, all in the same study. However, these phases are processes that cannot be put into a time-line. Groups move at their own pace.

The ideotheological grain of the CBS questions embraces the perspective of vulnerable young women struggling for economic survival and self-development in a patriarchal context. Beginning with the young women's perspective is a recognition of young women's dignity. Dignity can help young women build internal resilience. Further, beginning with the young women's perspective also reworks the inner logics of the translation-as-invasion paradigm that privileges the perspective of kings, chiefs, and princes. The questions we used in northern

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[114] Gerald O. West, "Facilitating Interpretive Resilience: The Joseph Story (Genesis 37–50) as a Site of Struggle," *AcTSup* 26.1 (2018): 17–37; West, "Contextual Bible Study and Resilience."

[115] Katz, "On the Grounds of Globalization"; Katz, *Growing up Global*, 243–57.

[116] Young women in sewing apprenticeships enjoyed the opportunity to draw. I noticed several of them tracing the picture of Boaz.

Ghana have taken the following form with some modifications depending on the group:

      1. What are some of the themes in this book?
Read Ruth 1:22 and 2:1–3.
      2. What was Ruth's plan upon arriving in Bethlehem?
Read 2:4–7. Dramatize the scene for them, acting it out in space.
      3. Re-read 2:7.
          a. In your culture, can someone ask to glean among the sheaves?
          b. Based on Ruth's request to glean among the sheaves, what might Ruth's dream be for economic survival for herself and her mother-in-law? [Optional: Read 4:3–4. Did this land somehow belong to Naomi?]
Read 2:8–16
      4. What does Boaz say to Ruth? Re-read 2:8–9, 14–16. What is his intention?
      5. What does Ruth do or say that shows her intention? 2:10, 2:13.
Read Ruth 2:17–3:18.
      6. What was Naomi's role in what happened? What was Naomi's intention?
      7. What were Ruth's hopes and fears as she approached the threshing floor?
      8. Is this a sugar daddy relationship?
      9. What is a sugar daddy in your context?
      10. What are the benefits and risks of a sugar daddy relationship?
      11. From your perspective, what systems need to change in your churches, mosques, communities, schools, and families to help young women?

5.3.2.2. Retranslating Ruth Using the Postcolonial Logic of Dialogue

Under the safety net of CBS's governing emancipatory purpose, which was established at the outset of the study and is signaled in the ideotheological grain of the questions and through the presence of a familiar Bible, participants explored the details of Ruth in dialogue with each other. Different reinterpretations were articulated and written on paper in front of the group. No one interpretation was given priority over the other.[117]

Question 3 was particularly important for us. It represents a development in this study that emerged from the agrarian context of northern Ghana. Question 3

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[117] The postcolonial logic of dialogue can usefully be reflected upon in relation to CBS's theory of change, especially as it relates to Scott's notion of hidden transcripts forming a "latent power grid." When the hidden transcript is shared by different individuals, Scott argues, "social electricity" moves through the grid. "Small differences in hidden transcript within a grid might be considered analogous to electrical resistance causing losses of current" (Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 224.) Beverley Haddad argues that losses of "social electricity" may be due to "internal differences" or "external constraints" (Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival," 372).

was developed after our first facilitation of this study, when a colleague, Elijah Matibin, began to spontaneously perform the act of gleaning as he was trying to motivate one set of young women to fully engage in the process. Matibin used his body and the space in the church where the study was being held to perform the gendered work of gleaning. By using his body in this way, Matibin signaled that it was okay for the young women to access their cultural knowledge of gleaning when interpreting this text. He also signaled an openness to a different embodied and sectoral perspective than his own. Matibin illustrated how a facilitator might signal an openness to being partially constituted by entanglements other than one's own.[118]

The result of Matibin's performance was an engagement between facilitators and young women that was more collegial, less serious, and more playful.[119] While the first group of young women we engaged with this study were not sure why Ruth would have asked to glean among the sheaves, subsequent studies have indicated several possibilities. I will discuss this more below in section 5.3.3.

The questions of CBS invite participants to pay attention to the detail of what the characters say and do, interpreting what is meant by specific statements and actions. Participants dialogue about a range of interpretations. This CBS brings out that the ancient text of Ruth walks a fine line between offering detail to the reader/hearer without explicitly interpreting what that detail means. Ruth is fantastically ambiguous. Ruth is suggestive without being explicit. Ruth masterfully illustrates what James Scott calls infrapolitics. Ruth is a coded text that a socially dominant group can interpret in a benign way; however, for those who have "ears to hear" to borrow a phrase from Jesus in the Gospels, the details in the text are suggestive and open to being reinterpreted.

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[118] Nathan Esala, "I Will Gather among the Sheaves! Facilitating Embodied and Emancipatory Translation of the Book of Ruth for Translational Dialogue," *JTSA* 160 (2018): 92. "Foucault argues that we can see a system of logic as a particular system and not as truth itself only when we are partially constituted by different systems of producing truth. We can transcend the blinders of our own social location, not through becoming objective, but by recognizing the differences by which we ourselves are constituted and, I would add to Foucault, by actively seeking to be partially constituted by work with different groups. Thus the condition of overcoming ideology is difference, a mutually challenging and mutually transformative pluralism." Sharon D. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 151.

[119] Sarojini Nadar argues, "the 'degrees of otherness'" between a scholar or facilitator and a community of subjects determines "the amount of trust the 'other' is willing to invest in us." Sarojini Nadar, "'Hermeneutics of Transformation?' A Critical Exploration of the Model of Social Engagement Between Biblical Scholars and Faith Communities," in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, ed. Musa W. Dube Shomanah, Andrew Mũtũa Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, GPBS 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 343.

In relation to interpreting Ruth and Boaz's interactions in the field, some groups of young women preferred a cautious interpretation of innuendo and romance. These interpretations would be acceptable in local churches and mosques. After being encouraged by Matibin's openness, illustrated by using his body to perform gleaning, many groups perceived Ruth and Boaz's interaction as the kind of sexual innuendo that exists in their contexts.[120] This moment marked the shift between articulating the detail governed by dominant religious interpretations of Ruth versus retranslating the linguistic detail governed by local contextual assumptions.

In the CBS that we facilitated with young women studying to be seamstresses, the young women's "madams" were also included as participants. A madam is a seamstress who has apprentices. Each study had at least one small group of mature women seamstresses. In one of the studies, there was a small group of male tailors who had female apprentices. The facilitators discovered that having different sectors of society present in the study and working in their own small groups helped stimulate dialogue about different positionalities in the text. It was useful to have small groups of young women answering questions about Ruth and then listening to how small groups of more mature women answered the same question and vice-versa. Adding the male tailors' perspectives but keeping them in small groups further increased the dialogism, especially as it related to discerning Boaz's intentions. The cross-sectoral dialogue opened additional power dynamics in the text and society that otherwise might have been missed or left unspoken. This illustrates the reality of different entanglements with the text across time and space and the importance of incorporating different sectors of society as retranslators as a starting point for collective postcolonial retranslational dialogue. (See section 4.1.4.3 above.)

5.3.2.3. Retranslating Ruth, a Postcolonial Riposte to the Logic of Challenge

When interpreting Boaz's actions in chapter 2, some male participants became aware of a dynamic of competition between Boaz and the younger men in Boaz's society. In 2:8, Boaz told Ruth, "Do not go to any other field." The men felt that Boaz wanted to keep Ruth's attention on him. The study exposed male competition as an issue in the text, and it raises the issue of male oppression within patriarchy. While women did not articulate this in the same way, the church women indicated we needed to return and do a study with the men in their churches. Accordingly, I have prepared a CBS study on Ruth and masculinities, which I offer below. (See section 5.3.5 below.)

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[120] It is important to recognize the variety in African cultures when it comes to sexual practices and notions of purity. Similarly, the Bible describes a greater variety of sexual practices in ancient Near Eastern cultures than is often assumed in Euro-American scholarship influenced by Victorian or American evangelical notions of sexual purity.

The unique entanglements of men may have contributed to the way they answered question 6, "What was Naomi's role in what happened, what was her intention?" Men wondered, what is the possibility that Naomi and Boaz had made a plan about Ruth, even though it is not mentioned in the text? Was the plan a kind of entrapment? How aware was Naomi of the possibility that Ruth and Boaz might have sex on the threshing floor?

These indecent or improper possibilities have been downplayed in mainstream translations and commentaries.[121] Improper here means simply outside the ideal. Improper interpretations may appear as inappropriate or naughty, but not offensive.[122] Indecent means going beyond improper into what is sexually transgressive and offensive to dominant sexual mores.[123] Charles Halton identifies a poor translation choice in 3:8, arguing the word וילפת which has been translated as "twisted" or turned," is more naturally translated as "groped" or "reached." Similarly, in 3:11, the phrase חיל אשת normally translated "righteous or noble woman" is better translated "industrious or strong woman."[124]

Despite the limitations in our contemporary translations, we found that alternative retranslations can be achieved simply by engaging in dialogue about the narrative in sectoral small groups and reporting back to one another. Even without access to the Hebrew text, women could use their cultural knowledge to achieve similar interpretations as scholars who build their arguments linguistically, focusing on the ancient sociocultural world. Retranslations offer pathways for a postcolonial riposte to the challenge of colonial translation.

Another way that this study responded to the challenge of systemic patriarchy was by addressing the possibility of Boaz being a sugar daddy. In most studies, when the question, "Is this a sugar daddy relationship?" was asked, there was a time of silence. This suggests that the question itself was perceived as improper. Can you even ask this question about Bible characters? Can you ask if our spiritual ancestors would consider something improper that has been done and is being done in our contexts? The question made my colleagues uncomfortable, such that the first time we facilitated this CBS, they did not allow the young women to answer the question![125] In other words, answering the question might have been indecent!

It is worth pausing here to reflect on what happened at this point in our first CBS on Ruth and sugar daddies with young women in school. The young women

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[121] Charles Halton, "An Indecent Proposal: The Theological Core of the Book of Ruth," *SJOT* 26 (2012): 30–43.

[122] Gerald O. West, "Queering the 'Church and AIDS' Curriculum.," *JFSR* 34.1 (2018): 125–30.

[123] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[124] Halton, "Indecent Proposal," 32–34.

[125] Esala, "I Will Gather among the Sheaves," 94.

had begun to feel that the space was safe for them to interpret the biblical text from their own embodied perspectives. At this moment some of the facilitators must have begun to feel uncomfortable. They signaled to the young women that they were uncomfortable by not allowing them to answer the aforementioned question. At that moment, the space shifted from what Sithembiso Zwane calls an invigorated space to an invited space.[126] An invited space is a less egalitarian space where the rules of the public transcript govern the discussion. (See section 4.3.10 above.) Facilitators began engaging in unidirectional speeches, they asked unplanned follow-up questions, and the young women became less responsive.

After this first study, the facilitators critically reflected on what happened. We agreed that even though the question makes us uncomfortable, it is worth asking because if the groups decide that this is not a sugar daddy relationship, the discussion process is valuable.[127]

In subsequent studies, the question was allowed to stand. When we engaged women in churches, their responses to "Is this a sugar daddy relationship?" were dialogical. The women were not sure. Their responses appear to be a discussion of the possibilities. The first reluctantly agrees to the question. The second rephrases it. The third and fourth try to make sense of Boaz's actions.

- It seems so.
- This is not a sugar daddy relationship; it is a happiness relationship.
- The man was trying to satisfy the woman and the girl and was not tricking her.
- There was a trick, but it was not a harmful one since he was planning on marrying her and providing for her and not leaving her.

By asking the same question to small groups of male tailors, we discovered that not all men think sugar daddy relationships are good for men. Many men are marginalized because of sugar daddy relationships because it means the richest men have many women partners, while poorer men and younger men have difficulty attracting a partner. Some women reported that young men in their town engage in concerted acts of gender violence perpetrated against young women as soon as they arrive in town. How might this competitive assertion of sectoral power resonate with the dynamics between the young male overseer, Ruth, and Boaz in Ruth 2:5–7?

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[126] West and Zwane, "Re-reading 1 Kings 21:1–16."

[127] Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, a religious scholar at the University of Ghana who is also from northern Ghana, pointed out that Ruth, as a widow, would have gone through certain rites in her marriage to Mahlon, which young women, who are those prototypically involved in sugar daddy relationships, have not yet experienced. Amenga-Etego's point is well taken; nevertheless, Ruth had not yet given birth, and that matters. Further, there are details in Boaz and Ruth's relationship that are like contemporary sugar daddy relationships and thus make the comparative discussion of contemporary and ancient types of sexual relationships valuable, if not conclusive.

5.3.3. Act: Retranslating the Logic of Social Progress for Social Action

After women and men began to see the problem through critical systemic analysis, then women and men judged the problem by reinterpreting and retranslating narrative detail in the book of Ruth. The final movement of CBS is to "en-Act" the text.[128]

Gerald West asks, "What is re-translation to do? More specifically, what will Bible re-translation change in our globalised neo-colonial neo-liberal capitalist world?"[129] West's language reminds me of how Skopos theory describes translation as an intentional action to change the world.

The last question moves the group towards social action. However, social action depends upon social imagination. Can young women imagine a world without sugar daddies? In such a world, how would young women receive the economic support they need to develop themselves into mature women who can contribute to society and family systems in dignified ways?

Viewed from the postcolonial logics of retranslation, CBS asks the young women to articulate a vision of social progress. The last question asks, "From your perspective, what systems need to change in your churches, mosques, communities, schools, and families to help young women develop?"[130]

This is a tough question. For some young women, sugar daddy relationships are the only way they know of that gets them economic resources for self-development or even survival. Given the reality that age-disparate sex is the largest driver of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, it is worth asking whether this strategy is likely to succeed. Further, as Haddad's theological analysis points out, if women choose sugar daddy or blesser relationships, are they giving up on the dream of egalitarian relationships with men? Are they trading individual emancipation for collective survival?

I return to our question three, parts a and b to discuss how textual detail might stimulate women to think about a world where sugar daddies are not necessary.

3a. In your culture, can someone ask to glean among the sheaves? (As Ruth allegedly did in 2:7)
3b. Based on Ruth's request to glean among the sheaves, what might Ruth's dream be for economic survival for herself and her mother-in-law?

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[128] West, "Reading the Bible with the Marginalised," 244.

[129] West, "On the Necessity of Re-translation," 14.

[130] Earlier iterations of the study phrased the question this way, "Is there any better way to address this issue in churches, schools, and mosques? From your perspective what needs to change?" The answers the latter question elicited tended to focus on the morality of young women's actions rather than on the collective and systemic dimensions of sugar daddies. I do not think isolating the morality of the situation is possible apart from the economic and patriarchal components.

Among a group of women churchgoers, they laughed when they first heard question 3a. One group answered:

> • One cannot enter to glean behind the harvesters unless one has express permission to do so. If you enter, before he has gone through the field twice, you are harvesting his grain.

Insightful comments like this support Justin Ukpong's claim that all scholarly readings "originate from and contain elements of ordinary readings."[131] What was Ruth doing by asking the question in this way? Did she need special permission to glean behind the reapers as Tamara Cohn Eskenazi's scholarly reading asserts?[132] Is Ruth questioning how custom supports patriarchy?[133]

Was Ruth as a Moabite judge asking for a share of the sheaves?[134] It may be that Ruth was asking for an exchange so she could be included in the harvest of Boaz's field. It may also be that Ruth was dreaming that some of the grain in the patriarchal system would be allocated to her and her mother-in-law.[135] According to Boaz's statement in 4:3–4, Naomi owned a field.[136] What is the implication of this detail? If Naomi owned a field, why did they have no food to eat?[137] Did Naomi and Elimelech lose their ancestral farm land to those who "join house to house and field to field" as Isa 5:8 recalls. Perhaps Ruth had these issues in mind. Viewing Ruth in this way may help young women imagine what must be changed in the present so vulnerable young women and vulnerable older women have more

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[131] Justin S. Ukpong, "Bible Reading with a Community of Ordinary Readers," in *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa*, ed. Mary N. Getui, Samuel Tinyiko Maluleke, and Justin S. Ukpong, African Christianity Series (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2001), 190.

[132] Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky, eds., *Ruth: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, The JPS Bible Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2011), 33.

[133] Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 188–89, 278–81.

[134] "The problem with Ruth and Naomi's story lies with the assumption that an excess of femininity is the only erotic strategy. Thus, Ruth is not a Moabite judge who challenges the judicial system to her advantage; the result of the triumph by excess of femininity is not always a happy one. Bread is exchanged for bitter intimacy. That excess of femininity relies on an excess of hetero-masculinity too; in this context, erotic excess is decent. Otherwise (as in surplus), it may be indecent" (Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 169).

[135] Gerald O. West, "Doing Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation @home: Ten Years of (South) African Ambivalence," *Neot* 42.1 (2008): 161–62.

[136] Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 39.

[137] Among most northern Ghanaian cultures women cannot own land (Amenga-Etego, *Mending the Broken Pieces*, 167).

access to the resources they need reducing the necessity of engaging in sex work.[138]

By encouraging young women to focus on the systemic, we hope to encourage them to develop group solidarity, rather than focusing on navigating sugar daddy systems as isolated individuals.[139] To give into the logic of individualism does not question the logic of the sugar daddy system.[140] The same applies to discussions including men in the community. The cross-sectoral dialogue may facilitate more creative thinking when it comes to articulating solutions that have the potential to succeed. (See section 5.3.5 below.) Cross-sectoral dialogue may help forge trans-sectoral solidarity. (See section 6.3.4 below.)

5.3.4. Reflect

What was described above is a result of a series of See-Judge-Act engagements. Each of these engagements was followed by a time of critical reflection. The CBS process has been described as an ongoing cycle of action and reflection. Thus, after each CBS, facilitators reflected upon what happened, and considered adapting the CBS or creating new ones for our next engagement or set of engagements. Academic writing is part of the process of ongoing critical reflection.

In each of these CBS engagements, facilitators engaged with groups of young women. First, we engaged groups of young women in school. In those studies, the participants were young women, whereas the facilitators were men. I mentioned how in one case, an embodied performance of gleaning by a male facilitator helped invigorate the CBS space in a way that encouraged young women to interpret the story from their own embodied perspective. In that same study, however, there was a point where male facilitators became uncomfortable with the dialogue and did not allow women to discuss the possibility of Boaz being a sugar daddy. The energy of the study changed at that point. The space was no longer invigorated but became more like a typical classroom space

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[138] Avaren Ipsen, *Sex Working and the Bible*, Bible World (London: Equinox, 2009). How does a community's stigmatization of sex work only further entrench the problem?

[139] Building social solidarity requires building a safe site. Beverley Haddad's research with subjugated women's theologies took place over a two-and-a-half-year period. Haddad indicates that building a safe site proceeded in two phases from an ambiguous space into the women's own safe and organized site (Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival," 304–13).

[140] The term "blesser" has shifted transactional sex to include the elaborate wealth of neoliberal capitalism in the context of neoliberal Christianity, which has theologically valorized the consumption of luxury items. This is a form of women's agency that fits into a capitalist system and uses the language and theology of neoliberal forms of prosperity gospel-based Christianity (Haddad, "Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting," 16–17).

where teachers speak and students listen in a one-way anti-dialogical environment. It became an invited space.[141]

Second, facilitators engaged women in the churches surrounding the market town of Nasuan. We invited one young woman and one older woman from all the churches in that area. That study had energetic and interesting dialogue. It was during that study that the women encouraged us to come back and do a study with the men of their churches and communities. That invitation could lead toward invigorating study spaces for men in that community.

Third, facilitators engaged young women in sewing apprenticeships and their madams. This allowed us to collaborate with mature women seamstresses and younger women apprentices together in their own organized groups. We found these spaces were difficult to invigorate. The energy in the room was often a bit muted. The power dynamics between the seamstresses and their apprentices was difficult to rework. Nevertheless, the cross-sectoral dialogue was helpful. The most invigorated times occurred in a study where a group of male tailors were also present in their own small groups.

The relationships between young women in school and young women in apprenticeships cannot be characterized by the word solidarity. There are power dynamics between young women that are not easy to crack. The sugar daddy system feeds competition and individualism. It is a system that encourages young women to marginalize each other. Some older women may be involved in the sugar daddy agreements. Nevertheless, the studies with young women in school showed signs of invigoration. There were moments of increased energy and honesty. Individuals forged small-scale solidarities with each other.

In the study with women in apprenticeships, the energy between younger women and older women, Ruths and Naomis, was not as productive as we had hoped.[142] The energy and camaraderie were less strained between women of different ages in the churches. Perhaps this is because these women were not as economically intertwined. The perspective of younger male tailors was analogous to male workers in the fields from Ruth 2:5. The perspective of mature male tailors was analogous to Boaz. The latter sector on one occasion took the energy out of the room when it came to making action plans.

The male facilitators were raised as organic members of the community.[143] They have become engaged in paid Bible translation and language development

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[141] West and Zwane, "Re-reading 1 Kings 21:1–16."

[142] For South African research on the difficult relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law see Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), "'Ngwetši' (Bride): The Naomi-Ruth Story from an African-South African Woman's Perspective," *JFSR* 14.2 (1998): 81–90. See also Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival," 234–37.

[143] In some studies, certain facilitators were careful to recognize that they came from a different community and kinship group that was distinct and outside from the tiŋ or 'earth shrine neighborhood' where most of the study participants lived.

work and are partially entangled in neoliberal economic systems. The author is a biblical scholar and translator who makes a living outside the community, but who lived and worked in the local area for ten years. Each facilitator's positionality comes into play in the studies. The participatory hermeneutics entangle everyone with the narrative. When study participants start participating in the narrative in ways that are novel and potentially uncomfortable, it can be difficult for facilitators to remain facilitators. See section 5.3.2.3 above. The presence of struggle in the participatory hermeneutics of CBS indicates to me as a biblical scholar the likelihood of struggle in the circulation history of the narrative.[144]

Because women are under male surveillance, it would help to have women facilitators who are regularly present and who develop CBS into a regular site that is safe for women organized by women.[145] To return to Katz's framework, women need time to develop internal resilience that helps them survive. Women also engage in surveillance of each other. It takes time to develop solidarity with each other and a common hidden transcript. As they develop survival theologies, given enough time, they may begin to rework dominant biblical interpretations. Given enough time to rework dominant biblical interpretations and the ideotheologies that contribute to their oppression, they may develop practices of overt resistance that manifest as articulations of the hidden transcript in public.

Articulations of overt resistance in public space are potentially dangerous, and that is why marginalized groups are so careful about overt resistance. Retranslations may offer marginalized groups ways of using biblical language as a form of infrapolitics.[146] The language of infrapolitics is a shielded or coded form of speech that offers speakers a chance to critique dominant structures in a way that is not fully open. Haddad argues that infrapolitics was the primary way the women she was working with developed survival theologies.[147] This study revealed that the coded and disguised language of infrapolitics is an important mode of dialogue between women of different ages whose economic relations are intertwined.

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[144] The Masoretic text (MT) of Ruth 2:5–7 is quite difficult. To me this suggests struggle in the formation and textual history of the MT. One can also view the Septuagint, the Targums, the Peshitta, and the Vulgate as further circulations of the narrative (Briggs, "Contested Mobilities"). A careful observation of the translation decisions in these different versions reveals instances of contestation in the translation history of this circulated narrative. My preliminary analysis of these ancient translations in Ruth 2:5–7 indicates that translators tried to clarify and close down the problematic interpretative options that stem from the MT but in so doing, they open new options that audiences can explore.

[145] "As our group sessions increasingly became a safe and sequestered social site, the women began to refer to it as 'our organisation'" (Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival," 310).

[146] "Infrapolitics is, to be sure, real politics. In many respects it is conducted in more earnest, for higher stakes, and against greater odds than political life in liberal democracies. Real ground is lost and gained" (Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 200).

[147] Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival," 389.

5.3.5. Ruth and Masculinities?

Before concluding this chapter, I offer a piece of critical reflection from the studies. The male tailors indicated that sugar daddy relationships do not benefit all men. Also, we heard from women in churches that it would be useful to facilitate a study for church men. Women are calling for men to retranslate as well. Accordingly, facilitators might consider doing a CBS on Ruth and masculinities. The Ujamaa Centre has done several studies on masculinities.[148] I am also going to offer another study on masculinities in chapter 6. The study offered here has not been tested yet. It does emerge from the studies in this chapter in that it engages with male themes of competition in the book of Ruth.

> Tell the story using the picture booklet projected on a screen up to chapter 3:18.
> 1. What is this story about?
> Read 2:1–7. (Show pictures.)
> Then reread Ruth 2:6–7.
> 2. What do you think the young man wants with Ruth as he reports to Boaz?
> Read 2:8–16. Reread 2:15–16. (Show the associated picture.)
> 3. How does Boaz respond to the young men regarding Ruth? Based on what he says and what he does, what do you think is Boaz's intention regarding Ruth?
> Read 2:17–3:18.
> 4. What was Naomi's plan?
> 5. Did Boaz know about it?
> Reread 3:9 again.
> 6. What is Ruth requesting from Boaz?
> 7. Considering the situation of women and men, what needs to change in our society and culture so men (young and old) can successfully manage the situation? Advise men about what needs to change. (Creative idea—make a song or proverb.)
> 8. What is your action plan (short term and long term)?

After completing a study on Ruth with women and a study on Ruth with men, it may be possible for men's and women's groups to report back to each other. Could part of their action plan be to discuss what they learned with the other group? These two studies on Ruth may be useful for women and men open to the experimental practice of (re)constructing more egalitarian relationships.

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[148] The Ujamaa Centre, "Redemptive Masculinity," Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research, 22 September 2022, http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/Redemptive_masculinity_A_series_of_Ujam.sflb.ashx.

5.3.6. Summary

I concluded section 5.3.1 above with the poignant theological analysis offered by Haddad regarding the way that the #Blessed phenomenon is evidence that young women in South Africa have recruited the prosperity gospel to spiritually sanction the way they have turned their bodies into a sexual commodity in exchange for the riches of the neoliberal economy. In so doing, they have asserted their own agency for individual emancipation according to the tenets of the prosperity gospel. However, they do not challenge the patriarchal structures that prevent truly egalitarian relationships, nor do they challenge the inequality of the economic systems. There is no act of emancipatory solidarity with other women but a prioritization of attaining personal wealth and comfort at the expense of a larger emancipatory agenda for all African women.[149] Haddad sees this as a popular theological development within neoliberal Christianity that challenges the core assumptions of the African women's theological project.

The situation in northern Ghana is not as economically developed as the situation in South Africa.[150] Still, neoliberal Christianity is active in northern Ghana through the influx of the prosperity gospel in urban and rural environments. Chapter 3 argued that the new Christian churches and their prosperity gospel work in tacit agreement with neoliberal elites who control the African state. The agreement involves the new churches focusing on individualized and spiritualized morality but not addressing systemic morality. The separation of the collective and political from the individual and the moral while focusing the individual on the spiritual causes of individual poverty constitutes neoliberal African Christianity. The sugar daddy system in rural northern Ghana, while not as developed economically as the blesser system in urban South Africa, works hand-in-glove with the assumptions of neoliberal Christianity's individualized prosperity gospel.

Ghana's system of rule is governed by what Gifford calls neopatrimonialism.[151] In the current economy, neopatrimonialism produces excess wealth in a few male individuals. Given that situation, women will continue pursuing sugar daddy relationships and blesser relationships. In sparse economic contexts, sugar daddy relationships are a risky form of survival. Within neoliberal

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[149] Haddad, "Taking the Wanting Out of the Waiting," 16.

[150] There is an intentional irony in this statement!

[151] Neopatrimonialism is a form of patriarchy applied metaphorically to the African state which operates within the neoliberal political economy. It "is based on the kind of authority a father has over his children. Here, those lower in the hierarchy, are not subordinate officials with defined powers and functions of their own, but retainers whose position depend on a leader to whom they owe allegiance. The system is held together by loyalty or kinship ties rather than by a hierarchy of administrative grades and functions." It includes "ethnic clientelism" as part of its structure (Gifford, *African Christianity*, 5). See also Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 7–14.

Christianity, men and women have found a way to spiritually sanction such relationships despite the risks.

Young women in northern Ghana are currently in a position where sugar daddy relationships appear to some of them to be the most promising pathway to a better life, notwithstanding the risk of STDs and pregnancy. The CBS engagements in this chapter question the wisdom of the risks young women are taking, but the studies have not offered a concrete alternative for them.

What is a realistic and safe pathway to a better life for young women in northern Ghana? I would like young women to question the prosperity gospel paradigm with its focus on individual prosperity and its jettisoning of collective approaches that promote a better life for different sectors of women. What kind of practices of alternative solidarity can they construct? Haddad's earlier research may be instructive in being realistic about what patient experimental practice looks like for women in the difficult circumstances they navigate.

Haddad, an Episcopal priest, collaborated with South African women in her parish and in her parish's community in the 1990's just after South African independence. Haddad engaged the established women's group of the Mother's Union and introduced CBS as an additional site to help uncover what Haddad calls theologies of survival.[152] Over two-and-a-half years, Haddad met with women weekly and engaged in CBS. Haddad concluded that women's survival theologies exist in these locations and can be recovered. CBS was particularly useful in the recovery process. Over the two-and-a-half years, Haddad indicates that the group showed signs of "embryonic organization."[153] Because women are under surveillance, it took a long time for them to practice sharing their hidden transcripts with each other. As group solidarity developed, they began articulating emerging survival theologies. The slow and steady solidarity they developed created a cohesiveness that has the potential for overt resistance when the time is right. Haddad's identity as a woman priest was helpful in the process of facilitating a safe space for women to practice their hidden transcripts. Haddad contributed critical biblical and theological resources, which added to the women's resources. Reciprocally, Haddad took the emphasis and perspectives on survival theologies into church and academic discourses.

Applying Haddad's research to the Ghanaian context suggests that activist scholars and activist facilitators should have modest expectations for what a few CBS engagements can accomplish. Patient CBS facilitators who are convinced of the value of CBS will keep exploring ways to be catalysts for emancipatory postcolonial responses to neoliberal Christianity in its two dominant versions: the prosperity gospel and the developmentalist secular gospel. To this we might add a third, the neocolonial version of translation theology. Using CBS with patience and time, local groups of women can develop greater cohesiveness and solidarity.

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[152] Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival."
[153] Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival," 379.

The critical resources of biblical studies articulated in CBS offer women resources to build resilience as they rework the dominant interpretations and ideotheologies that oppress them. Women may initially be cautious in front of CBS facilitators to discern whether the facilitators are genuinely on their side. Haddad found in her work in South Africa that women worked primarily in the realm of infrapolitics, winning and losing ground in the art of shielded speech.

5.4. Conclusion

Chapter 5 continues to build the case for using CBS as a contextually appropriate emancipatory and postcolonial method of biblical retranslation. This method of retranslating draws upon entangled emancipatory strands of translation from other eras. CBS as emancipatory retranslation, draws upon multisectoral dialogism in indigenous/precolonial African translation, as described in chapter 1. It draws upon the African independent churches' spiritual and participatory hermeneutics as described in chapter 3. CBS as postcolonial emancipatory retranslation, responds to translation in other entangled eras by refusing to separate what African worldviews keep together. For example, CBS responds to missionary-colonial translation by refusing to separate the spiritual from the material. CBS responds to neocolonial translation by refusing to separate individual morality from collective, political, and economic morality.

Chapter 4 argues for privileging the positionality and agency of bodies of Africans living with disabilities as they retranslate selected portions in the book of Job using an emancipatory purpose and an emancipatory process. The CBS method irrupts the protected domains of interpretation, translation, and theology in two ways. First, CBS recognizes with postcolonial translation theology that African languages and cultures have already irrupted the protected domains of exegesis and theology. Second, CBS privileges the perspectives of marginalized sectors within African communities in the process of translation/interpretation. In the case study, people living with disabilities dialogically reinterpret/retranslate portions of Job, combining their cultural and linguistic resources with the resources of critical scholarship offered to them in the CBS questions. Their retranslations articulately respond to challenges posed to them by the developmental gospel of secular NGOs and the neocolonial health and wealth gospel of the new Christianity. Their retranslations assert the dignity inherent in their bodies as they are and articulate a future social vision of burial in a restored community. By contrast, the dominant gospels treat people living with disabilities as objects rather than agents.

Chapter 5 further develops an emerging emancipatory postcolonial practice of retranslation. It emphasizes embodiment, positionality, and agency, honing in on gender in activist Bible translation. CBS, as emancipatory retranslation, picks up and extends EATWOT's claim that people from the third world (or majority world) must enter into and disrupt the protected domains of theology, translation,

and interpretation. When African women enter into theological discourse via translation, their perspectives constitute an irruption within the irruption. The CBS method embodies this irruption within the irruption by privileging the perspectives of marginalized groups within marginalized communities in the process of biblical (re)translation.

Chapter 5 explores EATWOT's claim that an irruption in theology can also cause a chain reaction, irruptions in politics and economics. CBS's theory of change argues that social change requires religious change. CBS pursues religious and social transformation through experimental practice as marginalized groups explore reinterpreting/retransalting biblical texts from their perspectives for social liberation.

The case study in chapter 5 simultaneously underlines and questions the assumption that women entering theological discourse changes society for the better. Across Africa, young women are exploring new forms of agency, using their bodies and sexuality in the neoliberal economy to survive. In wealthy urban contexts, some women are using their sexuality in pursuit of consumer goods at the expense of risking their health and at the expense of the collective pursuit of egalitarian relationships with men. These emerging forms of individualist agency are being sanctioned by the prosperity gospel's alliance with Ghana's neopatrimonial economy.

What does biblical retranslation for liberation offer in this context when agency and theology are already being reconfigured to support a neoliberal vision of a better life?

In rural northern Ghana, a group of professional Bible translators from KOLIBITRAP engaged with young women and facilitated a process of emancipatory postcolonial retranslation using the CBS method. The CBS method encourages groups of women to experiment with a participatory hermeneutic and to actively interpret/translate a biblical text from their own embodied and cultural perspectives. Young women retranslated details in the book of Ruth, interpreting Ruth's, Boaz's, and Naomi's relationship in a way that foregrounds the sugar daddy system at work in Ghana. Using a process of action and reflection, the KOLIBITRAP facilitators kept adapting their strategy in pursuit of social change. In subsequent studies, they engaged younger women, mature women, younger men, and mature men in the process of retranslating the book of Ruth.

CBS as an emancipatory practice of retranslation asks women (and men) to dialogue with each other as they consider retranslating from their different sectoral lived experiences by reinterpreting translated images, stories, and written text. Retranslational dialogue across sectoral groups of women (and men) may help groups develop survival theologies amid adverse economic circumstances. As women cross over time and space to participate with biblical characters, they develop a biblical language of infrapolitics. A biblical language of infrapolitics uses biblical language as coded speech that critiques the current situation without risking backlash or direct conflict.

The results of this chapter argue that the patient and consistent use of CBS with marginalized groups can help those groups build resilience. It is a modest claim that has not yet been achieved in northern Ghana. In addition to offering women resources that support individual and collective resilience, CBS as emancipatory retranslation can potentially disrupt the alliance between the individualist emphasis of the prosperity gospel, traditional patriarchy, and Ghana's neopatrimonial economic and political system. The social engagement will continue in northern Ghana because the women in churches have invited CBS facilitators to intentionally engage their men in a similar process of retranslating/reinterpreting Ruth from their perspectives. A preliminary CBS on Ruth and masculinities has been prepared. When this occurs, the CBS engagement could move from being an invited/invigorated space to being an invigorated/invented space. In other words, the issue this chapter addresses is not yet complete.

Chapter 6 continues to address the alliance between translation, gender, and the neopatrimonial system of governance and economics at work in (northern) Ghana. It focuses on how ethnicity has been and continues to be translated by the missionary-colonial translation-as-invasion paradigm. Ethnicity has become a tool of manipulation used by male elites to foster interethnic and intraethnic conflict as they pursue extractive economic gain on the local level in cooperation with the (inter)national neopatrimonial economy. The case study explores the potential for ordinary women and men to retranslate ethnicity in biblical texts in ways that use religious language and power to resist extractive systems that harm women's bodies, harm the environment, and disadvantage the community.

6.
Retranslating for Transsectoral Resistance

In the last chapter, I discussed the way young African women in southern Africa living in the neoliberal economy supported by neoliberal Christianity are questioning the core assumptions of African women's theologies. I explored the economically poorer rural context of northern Ghana to see how similarly, or differently young African women are responding to the economic and theological influences of neoliberalism in their context. The case study explored how contextual Bible study can be leveraged as an alternative space for women to explore how they might use their agency to dialogically retranslate the narrative of Ruth as they imagine constructing a social and theological vision which works towards liberation for all sectors of society, beginning with vulnerable young women struggling to survive.

In this chapter I link individual and community survival to translations of gender and ethnicity in neocolonial/postcolonial northern Ghana. I trace the roots of several interethnic and intraethnic conflicts in northern Ghana, pinpointing elite males' competitive desire to consolidate and accumulate power in the realms of business, chieftaincy, and politics. I explore the potential of religious retranslations of ordinary women and men to disrupt the ways elites manipulate ethnic conflicts for wealth accumulation at the expense of women's bodies, the land, and community.

Ethnicity is closely tied to language and translation.[1] As I argued in chapter 1, constructions of kinship and their associated language and translation practices in indigenous/precolonial time were more diverse than most people think. Matrifocal practices were linked to precolonial constructions of kinship and translation. In chapter 2, I described how colonial translation translated notions of tribe and ethnicity from African kinship practices in ways that fit European preconceptions

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[1] Ethnicity first appeared in Oxford English Dictionary in 1972. The term ethnic is much older. There was a shift in scholarly literature from using the word tribe to using ethnic group in the 1970s (Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 4, 11). I use the word tribe following Mahmood Mamdani to refer to the word's colonially inscribed political and territorial meaning. See the introduction, nn. 5 and 26 above.

and aided colonial overrule by establishing a system of ranked ethnicity and establishing alliances between colonizers and chiefly patrilines. In this chapter I explore how the translation of ethnicity often involves the translation of gender, strengthening patrifocal practices and weakening matrifocal practices. Furthermore, there is competition between tribes and between patrilines within tribes to acquire enough wealth to participate in national and international economies. This competition to acquire is contributing to interethnic and intraethnic conflicts in northern Ghana. The bodies of women, the collective wealth of the community, and the land itself suffer as a result.

It may be useful to review the argument of chapter 2. Colonial translation established a system of ranked ethnicity.[2] I mentioned ranked ethnicity in section 2.4.3, but I will describe it in greater detail in the next section. While ranked ethnicity had roots in the precolonial era, the colonial translation of the invasion narrative was the basis upon which customary law was built. Over time, the application of customary law enforced ranked ethnicity.

Colonial administrators called for and funded translators who translated raiding narratives embedded in lunsi praise poetry. Translation transformed a poetic genre of oral performance into the narrative form of written historiography. The colonial translation of lunsi into an invasion narrative strengthened the cultural power of the perspective and claims embedded in lunsi, making precolonial acts of raiding and the occasional conquest of certain kinship groups appear like the absolute conquest of all independent kinship groups and their lands.

Customary law was built upon the invasion narrative. Customary law translated the social perspective of chiefly patrilines on social practice into law backed by colonial powers of enforcement. This strengthened the perception that precolonial invasion and conquest justified the practice of ranked ethnicity and colonial overrule. So-called state societies believed themselves to be superior to so-called stateless or headless societies.

Colonial translation transformed diverse precolonial kinship groups into a ranked caste system based on the colonial version of tribe/ethnicity.[3] Simultaneously, colonial translation strengthened the patriarchal system by strengthening the cultural memory of precolonial patrifocal practices while weakening the memory of matrifocal practices. These colonial translations prepared the way for future neocolonial alliances in the postcolonial state.

In the first section of this chapter (6.1), I describe the ranked ethnic system produced by the colonial making of tribe. I relate the ranked ethnic system to

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[2] Colonial translation drew on practices analogous to missionary translation as discussed in section 3.1.1.

[3] The ranked caste system established in northern Ghana under indirect rule has a similar logic to the well-established caste system in India. In northern Ghana, the ranked system was being constructed based on tribe, and was not as integrated into the indigenous religious system.

northern Ghana's intertribal conflicts. I argue that ranked ethnicity was a patriarchal caste system supported by the colonial translation of the invasion narrative and the systematization of customary law. I pick up the historical story from chapter 2 as I recount how decentralized and independent ethnic groups began to organize ethnically as a riposte to their subordinate status under the tribal caste system of indirect rule. In the independent postcolonial era, students attending boarding schools who came from independent kinship groups were characterized as belonging to lower ethnic groups by the ranked ethnic system inherited from colonial indirect rule. Those students from diverse but interrelated kinship groups were discriminated against in similar ways. Based in part upon their shared marginalization, they began to think of themselves and organize themselves based on a shared sense of tribe. The students' collective experience of ethnic marginalization in school formed the basis of a larger notion of tribal identity. When some of those students became teachers, they formed the Konkomba Youth Association. The teachers who had experienced discrimination and commonality based on tribe when they were students promoted the value of a larger tribal identity as teachers in their home communities in creative ways.

At roughly the same time, in postindependent northern Ghana, missionary-initiated Bible translation and African language literacy were offered to rural communities in the Konkomba language. The student initiative and the missionary initiative shared a larger notion of ethnolinguistic/tribal identity and a desire to promote a larger conception of shared identity between disparate but loosely allied kinship groups. The missionary-colonial initiative included a theological component through its translation of the Bible that implicitly affirmed the political vision of the teacher-student organizers. At that time, the two initiatives, both with an expansive notion of Konkomba identity, became entangled.

Supported by theological translation that destigmatized them and relativized higher ranking based on ethnolinguistic/tribal identity, Konkomba activists drew on three systems of power operating in postcolonial northern Ghana to help them gain legal rights to the land they had been living on and farming: financial, political representation, and chieftaincy.[4] The 1979 and 1992 Constitutions reaffirmed the land rights of paramount chiefs (also referred to as kings) and the system of ranked ethnicity. The 1981 and 1994 northern conflicts resulted from these complex dynamics. Local language Bible translation and literacy could not help but play a role in the conflicts around the ranked ethnic system and land rights.

In the twenty-first century, the ranked ethnic system continues to operate through the paramount chieftaincy system, a system that remains significant because of its legal connection to allodial land rights.[5] In the twenty-first century,

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[4] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1.

[5] "In the official view of land tenure today, the chief holds allodial (sovereign) rights; all other members of the community, including lesser chiefs, have only usufructuary rights,

political boundaries are being realigned to more closely match the boundaries of the four main kingdoms (Mamprusi, Dagomba, Nanumba, and Gonja) established by processes of colonial translation.[6]

The second section of this chapter (6.2) branches from discussing intertribal conflicts to intratribal conflicts.[7] Intratribal conflict is a result of the substructure of indirect rule and the ranked ethnic system, that is, the patriarchal royal class system. The Dagbon crisis, which is the largest intratribal conflict in the north, is centered on competing patrilines for chieftaincy. Within the Dagbon crisis the competition centers around which patriline controls the tribe. The colonial-patrilineal order within the concept of tribe is unstable. Its contradictions are being challenged, but the rights granted by the colonial-patrilineal construction of tribe are not being deconstructed. The Dagbon crisis is inextricably linked to competing patriline's control of land rent, especially in the city of Tamale, one of the fastest growing cities in West Africa.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, whenever the Dagbon conflict died down, other intraethnic conflicts were stirred. There have been long-standing kinship group related conflicts internal to both the Komba and Bimoba societies. I refer to these as intraethnic conflicts because they involve ethnically ambiguous groups who have not historically conformed well to the colonial translation of tribe. The actors in these intraethnic conflicts are elite men who aspire to tribal power.[8] They aggravate intraethnic conflicts as they seek to consolidate power in the political economy. They desire to control natural resources, such as trees, sand, and minerals in the local environment. In the process forests are cut down, soil is depleted, and water is drying up. People's lives are hurt as elites fuel conflict for their political advantage or exploit the land for their economic advantage.

The end of the section poses questions to traditional Bible translation elicited by intratribal and intraethnic conflicts in a patriarchal class system in a neopatrimonial political economy.

In the third part of the chapter (6.3), I pick up where I left off at the end of chapter 5 by turning to religion as a potential source of resistance to ethnic conflict, whether intertribal, intratribal, or intraethnic. I recall two sources of

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which may be abrogated by the chief at will" (MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 168).

[6] For example, the boundary of the newly inaugurated North East Region (2019) is similar to the 1908 boundary of the Gambaga Province of the North East District of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast.

[7] Intratribal conflicts stem from the political and territorial implications associated with the concept tribe initiated by translational interaction between British authorities and local agents in the colonial era and then enshrined as law under indirect rule with the help of textual colonial translation.

[8] Occasionally, a woman politician or a businesswoman may gain power in the neopatrimonial system.

precolonial indigenous religious power that contended with colonial masculine power: African prophets like William Wadé Harris and matrifocal morality. Post-colonial African appropriations of the translated Bible are a third source of entangled religious power that communities can draw from. These three sources of religious power are brought together by offering a contextual Bible study that has the potential to invigorate transsectoral resistance to the patriarchal class systems that manipulate ethnic conflict and do violence to women's bodies so they can use up the earth's collective resources for their own profit and power. The study is offered in the hope that sectors of women and men from different tribes/ethnic groups experiment with retranslations that resist being coopted and manipulated by what Paul Gifford calls Ghana's neopatrimonial system.[9] (See section 6.1.5.2 below.) In the process of resisting manipulation, transsectoral groups may also begin the process of social healing.

6.1. Ranked Ethnicity as a Patriarchal Ranked Ethnic Caste System

According to Donald Horowitz, ranked ethnic systems place one ethnic group as a higher caste than others.[10] Horowitz argues that this is usually achieved through conquest. If a conquest did not happen or is not acknowledged there is likely to be no cultural or historical basis for asserting the ranked hierarchy of one ethnic group or tribe over another. Chapter 2 argued that the translation of the invasion narrative from oral tradition into historiography transformed a chiefly praise chant used for praising ancestors' feats of raiding into a written history of the founding of Dagbon, one of the three kingdoms of the Dagbamba, the one centered in Yendi under the paramount chief or king, the Ya Na.[11]

The foundation of invasion and conquest was built upon the reification of customary law. In other words, in indigenous/precolonial time there was a diversity in oral tradition, as argued in chapter 1. Oral tradition includes narratives and rhetoric that describe custom. Custom is analogous to law. Under colonization the high chiefs and princes collaborated with British officials to make their versions of custom into a binding customary law without recourse to broader social dialogue. They took what was a diverse custom and homogenized it so that they could narrow it down, control its interpretation, and turn it into a whip useful for punishment and extraction.[12] The customary court system is well known among ethnic

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[9] For a definition of neopatrimonialism see chapter 5, n. 151 above.

[10] Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 29.

[11] The three or four Dagbamba kingdoms are: Mamprugu centered in Nalerigu under Nayiri, Dagbon centered in Yendi under Ya Na, and Nanuŋ centered in Bimbilla under the Bimbilla Na. The Mossi kingdom centered in Ouagadougou is also a relation to Nayiri and Mamprugu. The Gonja kingdom centered in Yagbum is also referred to as a royal relative of the Mamprusi.

[12] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 184.

groups like Konkomba, Bimoba, Nawuri, and Chumburung to be a system that extracted large sums of money and cattle from their people for what appeared to them to be arbitrary reasons.[13] The system appeared quite hypocritical and contradictory to them. Those who won and lost in court was a function of proximity to or favor with customary (and colonial) power.

The precolonial system of nam, a system of kings and subchiefs, was supposed to be a precolonial structure undefiled by British intervention. Drucker-Brown's analysis of the Komba-Bimoba conflict in the colonial period indicates that this was not the case.[14] Wyatt MacGaffey provides ample evidence of British meddling in the history of the skin of the Ya Na.[15] The system of chieftaincy was a powerful patriarchal method of governance based on loyalty to the paramount chief, the divisional chief, the chief, and the subchief. During the colonial period, British administrators began using their power to force new skins into the Dagbamba hierarchy of skins, thus changing the precolonial tradition.[16] Postcolonial Ghanaian governments have subsequently meddled with the hierarchy of skins in the north.[17]

Ranked ethnicity was enforced by a legalized system of indirect rule, ideologically buttressed by the justification of the invasion narrative. The patrimonial character of ranked ethnicity was manifest in the colonial system of chieftaincy. Under indirect rule, chiefs were shorn of local accountabilities and were given broad authority over everyone inside his container, that is, his chiefdom. Chiefdoms were nested inside one another building up to a paramount chief who ruled over the entire kingdom. In the north there were four paramount chiefs: Nayiri for Mamprugu, Ya Na for Dagbon, Bimbilla Na for Nanuŋ and Yabonwira for Gonja. Under colonial rule, the system of tindana or the neighborhood shrine steward was attenuated, at least in the eyes of the government. The power that the tindana had to check chiefs was reduced in this period. Still, the chief ruled best if he was in harmony with the tindana. Conflicts between these systems create tension.

But what about women in this system? Was there a bilateral system of rule? As discussed in chapter 1, Amadiume argues that there was another system that the patriarchal system was in dialogue with, that is, the system of females and

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[13] "The people call themselves /kyòŋbòròŋ àwùyè/ 'Chumburung people', and the language /kyòŋboroŋ-nò/ 'in Chumburung.'" Keir Hansford and Gillian Hansford, "Borrowed Words in Chumburung," *African Languages and Cultures* 2.1 (1989): 39.

[14] Drucker-Brown, "Local Wars in Northern Ghana," 97–99. See also Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 169–70.

[15] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 58–68.

[16] A skin is like a stool in southern Ghana. It is analogous to the system of thrones in medieval Europe.

[17] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 59–65. See also Susan Drucker-Brown, "Communal Violence in Northern Ghana: Unaccepted War," in *War, a Cruel Necessity? The Bases of Institutionalized Violence*, ed. Robert A. Hinde and Helen Watson, Tauris Academic Studies (London: Tauris; New York St. Martin's Press, 1995), 39–40; 47–48.

maternal kin.[18] Amadiume makes this argument regarding the Tallensi, a collective of kinship-based societies sharing a similar language west of the Gambaga escarpment. Amadiume argues that the bilateral system is fundamental to African society and that scholars have misread rituals describing precolonial African history in a way that is biased by European patriarchy. Colonial translations have thus contributed to weakening African matrifocal practices.[19] Some additional evidence supports Amadiume's thesis. For example, in some of the shrines of Dagbon, a woman can be a tindana.[20] MacGaffey argues a tindana functions like a chief in many respects.[21] Even though matrifocal systems have been attenuated by the bolstering of patrifocal systems in the colonial and postcolonial periods, matrifocal systems persist, and in some contexts, the matrifocal aspects of rituals remain potential sources of religious resistance to excess imperial masculine force.[22] I will return to this argument in the third section of this chapter.

6.1.1. Ripostes to the Ranked Ethnic Caste System

In the immediate postindependence era, the patriarchal intertribal caste system was weakened by the government's centralizing policies, but it was allowed to persist. Eventually, as I will narrate, subsequent postcolonial governments reaffirmed the link between paramount chiefs and land rights. These decisions eventually led to the northern conflicts of 1981 and 1994. The substructure upon which the intertribal caste system and royal patriarchal class system were built is the colonial translation of the precolonial invasion narrative, which as MacGaffey pointed out, has not been significantly challenged by scholarship in the

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[18] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 32–33.

[19] I use the term matrifocal following Laura Grillo who is developing Amadiume's and Cheikh Anta Diop's arguments for matriarchy (Grillo, *An Intimate Rebuke*, 15). Amadiume uses the term matriarchy but unlike Diop she does not necessarily mean a system of African queens or matriarchal inheritance (Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 19).

[20] In Dagbon MacGaffey recounts three ways succession can occur for a tindana. Some shrines have a line of men and a line of women. Some are passed on from a tindana's oldest daughter's firstborn son. Some shrines only go to men of different gates, which are determined by divination (MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 93–94).

[21] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 69–108.

[22] One remnant of matrifocal systems in the Ghanaian political environment is the role of mangazia, or women's organizer. Amadiume would question whether the mangazia is a representative system, because such representative systems have been coopted by elite males in the Nigerian context (Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 177).

postcolonial era.[23] Similarly, Amadiume argues the masculine imperialist perspective in African scholarship persists in the way it reads the precolonial era.[24]

Several independent kinship-based societies mounted social ripostes to the system of ranked ethnicity through ethnic organizing in northern Ghana in the postcolonial era. An important riposte to the system of ranked ethnicity in the north was initiated by the Kusasi people in the town of Bawku in the 1960s.[25] The Kusasi riposte to the ranked ethnic system was not the only ethnic riposte in the early postcolonial era. However, the Kusasi-Mamprusi conflict set an ethnic precedent for subsequent conflicts. The issues of allodial land rights and paramount chieftaincy become increasingly entangled as the story continues.

In 1981 and 1994, the Konkomba mounted a social riposte that garnered national attention. The second of these conflicts, known as "The Guinea Fowl War," was on a larger scale geographically than most other ethnic conflicts in Ghana. The Konkomba allied with other similarly structured kinship-based societies: the Nawuri, Basaari, and Chumburung. All these loosely affiliated kinship-based societies were subordinated by the ranked system.

6.1.2. Factors that Contributed to the Konkomba Riposte to Ranked Ethnicity

There are at least ten interrelated factors that contributed to the Konkomba social riposte to ranked ethnicity in postcolonial northern Ghana. I present them briefly here.[26] First, the experience of oppression and tribal-based discrimination under customary law mobilized disparate and independent kinship groups through their shared experiences of oppression. Second, the rights of all citizens, as established in Ghana's constitutions, call ranked ethnicity into question. Third, Nkrumah's emphasis on detribalization and his weakening of the institution of chieftaincy in the immediate postindependence era bolstered the hopes of ethnic groups who had been disenfranchised and discriminated against by indirect rule. Fourth, students of the postcolonial education system who became teachers engaged in conscientizing disparate kinship-based societies about the benefits of a larger concept of

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[23] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 19.

[24] Amadiume judges Cheikh Anta Diop to be an exception to this claim. Amadiume applies a Diopan perspective to contemporary Nigeria (Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 161–82). Amadiume discusses the masculine imperialist invasion perpetuated in the postcolonial era by male elites. In Amadiume's view, male elites in the postcolonial African state have made the situation for grassroots women worse. She argues that this is largely true at the local governance level in Nigeria as well. The only way for women to engage is if the masculine imperialist system coopts them.

[25] Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 374–75.

[26] Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 375–81.

tribe based on similarities in language, culture, and oppression.[27] Fifth, rural Konkomba farmers began to migrate to southern locations for better farming of yams. Konkomba people migrated and eventually established themselves all along the trade route from north to south, all the way to the yam market in Accra.[28] Sixth, business-minded migrants sought not only to farm but also to control the yam market. This established significant resources for those traders, eventually resulting in a large amount of capital for a few businessmen. These businessmen utilized ethnicity as part of their business advantage. Seventh, the government constructed roads that facilitated business and trade for those from the north. Eighth, ethnic organizing in rural areas was bolstered by missionary Bible translation and African literacy, which was also engaging in ethnolinguistic organizing motivated by Christian mission connected to language development. The missionary translation of the Konkomba Bible and the literacy development program contributed to a larger sense of tribal identity, offering a tangible skill in the form of literacy to rural farmers. Ninth, ethnic organizing and a stronger economic base made the Konkomba people more active in voting. Voting in ethnic/tribal blocks facilitated getting some individuals affiliated with their ethnicity into government office.

These nine factors would merge around a tenth factor, the issue of paramount chieftaincy and its link to allodial land rights. These factors came to a head in the late 1970s and again in the early 1990s, contributing to the 1981 and 1994 intertribal conflicts.

6.1.3. Konkomba Conflicts and Land Rights

While there have been many ethnically related conflicts in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the intertribal conflict between Konkomba and the Dagbamba societies is the largest, most well-known, and most researched.[29] Drucker-Brown argues ethnic groups are normally able to manage the tensions between them. It takes a series of factors coming together to realize the potential for war.[30]

In the Konkomba case, a decisive factor was the government's opening of the issue of land ownership and their subsequent clarification regarding land

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[27] It seems to me that organizing similar kinship groups into a larger concept of tribe required drawing on the resources of matrilineal relations among structurally and linguistically similar groups. At the same time, it required rejecting matrilineal relations between other groups whom organizers judged too different based on language use and/or patrilineal notions of tribe.

[28] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 139, 156–59.

[29] Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 383–86.

[30] Drucker-Brown, "Local Wars in Northern Ghana," 101.

ownership and the paramount chiefs of the north in the 1979 and 1992 Constitutions.[31] In 1979, a government committee on land rights in the North argued that Ghana should continue the policy of ethnic privilege, citing that the Dagomba owned all land claimed by Konkomba "by right of conquest."[32] The committee invoked the right of conquest and the translated historiography of invasion, arrived at by colonial acts of translation as described in chapter 2. The 1979 Constitution divested the State from holding northern lands in trust and returned the land to their "original owners." The term original owner was not explicitly spelled out. But following the logic of the Committee, original owners was interpreted by the courts to mean the four paramount chieftaincies. Konkomba communities were being characterized as "chief less" and "landless" despite evidence to the contrary in both cases, but especially regarding land, since they inhabited it and were known as successful farmers throughout the country, specifically in the yam trade.[33]

Talton recounts the specific dynamics which contributed to the 1981 conflict in the area around Bimbilla. The Konkomba won the combat portion of the conflict. But at the end of the conflict, the situation returned to the status quo.[34]

After another coup and decade of military rule, Jerry Rawlings was elected President in 1992. A new constitution was penned in 1992 with similar wording to the 1979 constitution regarding land ownership. Only now the term "skin" was added which implied chief, but did not specify what level of chief.[35] Despite the lack of specificity, the 1992 Constitution has been interpreted as referring to the four paramount chiefs having allodial rights, whereas all other claimants, including smaller chiefs and tindamba only have usufructuary rights, that is, the right to

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[31] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 161.

[32] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 146–48. The Committee on Ownership of Land and Positions of Tenants in Northern and Upper Regions was also known as the Alhassan Committee. Dagomba is an anglicized version of Dagbamba. Dagomba refers to eastern Dagbon more often than western Dagbon. Western Dagbon is popularly referred to as Mamprugu, the term I am using in this book.

[33] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 150–51.

[34] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 161–69.

[35] "(3) For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby declared that all lands in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions of Ghana which immediately before the coming into force of this constitution were vested in the Government of Ghana are not public lands within the meaning of clauses (1) and (2) of this article. (4) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, all lands referred to in clause (3) of this article shall vest in any person who was the owner of the land before vesting, or in appropriate skin without further assurance than this clause." The Republic of Ghana, "Constitution of the Republic of Ghana" (1992), art. 257.

the farm produce of the land.[36] In many places land can be sold by paramount chiefs without any consultation with the villages or the caretaker chiefs.[37]

The 1994 conflict ensued in which more than 178,000 people were left homeless, 300 villages were destroyed, approximately 15,000 people were killed, "and tens of thousands of people were left wounded and emotionally scarred."[38]

The 1979 and 1992 Constitutions reiterated democratic notions of citizenship as applicable to everyone, including northerners, but at the same time the Constitutions implicitly reinforced ethnic hierarchies inherited from the despotic legacy of indirect rule by investing the four paramount chieftaincies as allodial owners of all northern land. The contradictory dual systems of belonging worked against each other. The conflict was increased by Konkomba gains in representative and economic power.[39] These democratic and economic forces rubbed against notions of ethnic hierarchy, or what I have been calling the ranked ethnic caste system.[40] It is no accident that conflicts ensued after the establishment of both constitutions.[41]

6.1.4. Language Development, Bible Translation, and Ethnic Organizing

After Ghana achieved political independence, missionary-initiated language development, literacy, and Bible translation resumed in northern Ghana in 1962. As the struggle for land rights ensued, these language and translation activities challenged the underlying logic of the ranked ethnic caste system.[42]

This phase of missionary translation often involved the study of linguistics. In linguistics, there was a shift from a European-centered analysis to an African-centered analysis through descriptive approaches to language.[43] Translation was

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[36] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 168.

[37] R. K. Kasanga, *The Role of Chiefs and Tendamba in Land Administration in Northern Ghana*, Our Common Estate (London: Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, 1996), 7.

[38] Kaye and Béland, "The Politics of Ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 184.

[39] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 145–46.

[40] Kirby identifies cultural factors that contributed to problems in managing the conflict. Konkomba seek to avoid agitating and interpret agitation as bullying and constraining others' freedom. For Dagomba, being weak is shameful. In addition, Kirby identifies the separation of spiritual from material power in the current political system as contributing to conflict, especially concerning the offices of tindana or priest and na or chief. See Jon P. Kirby, "Peace Building in Northern Ghana: Cultural Themes in Ethnic Conflict," in *Ghana's North: Research on Culture, Religion, and Politics of Societies in Transition*, ed. Franz Kröger and Barbara Meier (Frankfurt: Lang, 2003), 173–74.

[41] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 161.

[42] Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 387–91.

[43] Herman Batibo recounts that it was the influence of African linguists like Professor Gilbert Ansre of Ghana and Professor Ayo Bamgbose of Nigeria that caused him to study African linguistics rather than French Studies at the University of Sorbonne in Paris.

carried out using the approach laid out by Eugene Nida.[44] Nida's radical approach included grammatical transformation and dynamic equivalence. However, Nida's theoretical approach was often homogenizing, and its ideology has been judged to be covert.[45] Literacy in local languages was another prong of missionary-initiated activities. When sociopolitical circumstances aligned, missionary-initiated local literacy work that otherwise garnered low levels of interest could increase dramatically.[46] Neoindigenous efforts to organize marginalized ethnic groups into tribes occasionally coalesced with missionary-initiated literacy and translation work.[47]

In northern Ghana neoindigenous leadership advocated for a larger sense of tribal identity in their home communities and beyond, while missionary workers brought a sense of ethnolinguistic homogeneity to their language development work that was foreign to the indigenous communities.

"Herman Batibo, University of Botswana," October 7, 2018, https://linguistlist.org/studentportal/linguists/batibo.cfm.

[44] Anthony Pym explores three critics of Nida's approach, YC Whang, a Bible translator, Henri Meschonnic, a poet, and Lawrence Venuti, an academic (Pym, *On Translator Ethics*, 112–20). Pym urges a reconsideration of Nida's approach for three reasons. "First, his sovereign translator is empowered by allegiance to an external cause (faith), and that cause is able to provide uncommon agency. Second, that subjectivity is not positioned within any sending or receiving language, thus allowing it to occupy an interlingual position. Third, the success of a translation is not judged on the basis of the source text as such, but on the effects in the moment of reception—an assertion made by Nida in an era when most of linguistics and virtually all translation theory was focused exclusively on the moment of production" (Pym, *On Translator Ethics*, 111).

[45] Antonia Carcelen-Estrada, "Covert and Overt Ideologies in the Translation of the Bible into Huao Terero," in *Translation, Resistance, Activism*, ed. Maria Tymoczko (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 82–84, 86. "The white missionaries created a text from Huaorani stories to slowly shift the axiological elements of Huaorani sacred beliefs. From oral to written, from myths to Bible, Huaorani communities seem to have passively accepted Western cultural impositions. What we are witnessing is a severe case of miscommunication, where neither party is willing to engage in meaningful conversation, but where ethics and ideology are at stake" (Carcelen-Estrada, "Covert and Overt Ideologies," 86).

[46] Sue Ann Hasselbring, "Cross-Dialectal Acceptance of Written Standards: Two Ghanaian Case Studies" (PhD Thesis, Johannesburg, University of South Africa, 2006), 148–51.

[47] I use the term neoindigenous to refer to the Western educated leaders, who to a great extent are the bridge between indigenous communities and missionary-colonial mentalities. Talton does not use the term but describes it well when he writes, "Western educated leaders were the primary African product and response to the influences of missionaries and colonial officials. All three blurred the lines between tradition and modernity, reactionary and progressive and combined elements of African practices with European modernity" (Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 122).

6.1.5. Assessing the Konkomba Riposte to Ranked Ethnicity

Before I close section one of this chapter, I offer three assessments from different perspectives on the Konkomba riposte to ranked ethnicity. Each of these perspectives is looking for what scholars can learn moving forward, especially as it relates to translation. First, I will offer a sociopolitical assessment based on Mamdani's theorizing and Talton's historical work. Second, I will offer a metaphor of a three-legged stool as elites struggle to control three power components in Ghana's neopatrimonial political and economic system. Third, I will offer a theological assessment of what the Konkomba riposte to ranked ethnicity, and others like it, might mean from the perspective of postcolonial African translation theology.

6.1.5.1. Talton's Sociopolitical Assessment of Konkomba Organizing

Mamdani argues that the form of oppression determines the terms of the response. Tribalism was the form of colonial rule, as experienced under indirect rule.[48] Tribalism, also referred to as ethnicity, can be leveraged to signify revolt against colonial rule.[49] Tribal organizing has been criticized as parochial and regressive rather than supraethnic and progressive. However, as Lentz shows in her discussion of Youth Associations in northern Ghana, the supraethnic movements in the north tended to refer to the expanded boundaries of centralized chieftaincy under colonial rule.[50] Thus, supraethnic movements have tended to follow the assumptions of indirect rule and the practices of ranked ethnicity. So, rather than prejudging a movement as ethnic and parochial, Mamdani suggests it is better to look at its social base and objectives. In other words, a local ethnic-based stance can have democratic potential while also acknowledging the limitations of tribal organizing for thoroughgoing social change. In other words, detribalization cannot occur unless the infrastructures of tribalism are dismantled.

Concerning Mamdani's claim that the form of rule is replicated in its revolt, Talton shows that Konkomba leadership organized people at the grassroots level "around education, economic self-sufficiency, and political autonomy."[51] Konkomba activism did not fight the top-down assertion of tribal dominance through the assertion of their own invasion myth or counter history. Konkomba question the underlying logic of such narratives. On the other hand, Talton argues

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[48] "My point is that modern tribalism has to be understood not only as a historical phenomenon, but also as one that is contradictory. It signifies both the form of rule, and the reform of revolt against it. Whereas the former is oppressive, the latter *may be* emancipatory" (Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 183 [emphasis original]).

[49] I am following Mamdani's use of tribe. See the introduction, nn. 5 and 25, above.

[50] Carola Lentz, "Youth Associations and Ethnicity in Northern Ghana," in *Ethnicity, Conflicts, and Consensus in Ghana*, ed. Steve Tonah (Accra: Woeli, 2007), 58.

[51] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 184.

that Konkomba activism has not yet been able to overcome the prescriptions of the model that subjugated them. Konkomba leaders "fought for acceptance within the existing political framework."[52] They acquired greater political and economic power while staying within the strictures of the existing political model, a model that assumes hierarchical structures controlled by patrilineal chieftaincies.[53]

6.1.5.2. The Three-Legged Stool of Power in Ghana's Fused Social System

Based on Talton's historical survey of Konkomba social politics in a fused system that combines the ranked ethnic system with individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution in a neoliberal economy, I have visualized a metaphor for ethnic organizing for power as a three-legged stool. Since colonization used similar strategies in many locales, this metaphor may be useful in other locations. The first leg of the stool is acquiring power through the chieftaincy system. Though some argue chieftaincy is weakening to the point of irrelevancy, the pursuit of chieftaincy continues to be a significant factor in most contemporary Ghanaian conflicts because it is legally connected to allodial land rights. Chieftaincy controls other benefits, such as market taxation. Acquiring a skin can translate into profitable income.

The second leg of the stool is acquiring power through political office. To get into one of the elected or appointed positions of political office, individuals must associate themselves with one of Ghana's two major political parties. These parties continue the two traditions of populism and liberalism.[54] The other issue needed for achieving political power is people who will vote for you. Ethnicity seems to be one significant factor in local voting.[55]

The third leg of the stool, which was crucial in the Konkomba case is the development of an economic base of power. Konkomba businessmen were able to gain control of the yam market. Konkomba farmers migrated to areas where they could farm yams in the most fertile soil. Konkomba car owners and drivers transported yams. Konkomba businessmen were able to control the yam trade at markets in the south at a time when the export of yams increased.[56] By adding yam exports, the businessmen who were already profiting from the trade of yams

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[52] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 14.

[53] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 182.

[54] Jay Oelbaum, "Ethnicity Adjusted? Economic Reform, Elections, and Tribalism in Ghana's Fourth Republic," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 42.2 (2004): 245.

[55] Oelbaum argues that historically ethnicity was not as major a factor as people think in national voting in Ghana (Oelbaum, "Ethnicity Adjusted?," 268).

[56] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 167. By 2002 yam exports were valued over 8 million dollars. See Jay Oelbaum, *Spatial Poverty Traps and Ethnic Conflict Traps: Lessons from Northern Ghana's "Blood Yams"* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2010), 18.

in the south significantly increased their disposable income. They were able to enter Ghana's neopatrimonial system as wealthy elites. They had the economic capacity to back political candidates who were not from Dagbamba societies and who did not feel obligated to work as closely with the first leg of the stool dominated by Dagbamba nas.

The three legs of the stool operate within an economic and political context. The economic context is the world economy governed by the neoliberal policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Since the 1980s, Ghana, under the military government of Jerry Rawlings, has cooperated fully with the IMF policy of structural adjustment. Even those political parties who descended from the socialism of Nkrumah agreed on the necessity of promoting the private sector and the Structural Adjustment Program.[57]

Ghana has become a star of the Structural Adjustment Program. Despite Ghana's cooperation, Paul Gifford argues that structural adjustment policies have not worked in Ghana.[58] Ghana's underlying system of government is not based on a "rational-legal administrative framework" as in Western democracies, which utilize "hierarchies of administrative grades and functions."[59] Rather, Ghana's underlying system of government is neopatrimonialism, a system of loyalty based on real or fictive kinship ties, in which ethnic clientelism continues to reinforce ruling class interests.[60] Structural adjustment policies have only served to strengthen neopatrimonialism. Gifford argues that in Ghana there is a lack of independent transparent procedures. The building of institutions necessary for development has not proved possible. There is a lack of accountability. Wealth is flaunted.[61] This is the economic and political context of twenty-first-century Ghana. Increasingly, all public jobs are based on neopatrimonial loyalty to the ruling political party.[62] Even the private operation of banks and radio stations are linked to political affiliation.

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[57] Paul Nugent, "Living in the Past: Urban, Rural and Ethnic Themes in the 1992 and 1996 Elections in Ghana," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 37.2 (1999): 292.

[58] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 5–6.

[59] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 7.

[60] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 7. "The African state, from birth was essentially an agency for control and extraction. There was never any merging of state and society as common expressions of shared values" (Gifford, *African Christianity*, 4).

[61] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 12.

[62] In Mamprugu, intraethnic struggle for power is focused on control of political power. Paramount chief, Nayiri, and most of his followers in the Nalerigu and Gambaga constituencies have supported the National Patriotic Party (NPP), the ruling party from January 2001-2009, and again since January 2017. Mamprusi politicians struggle for power within the NPP. A politician may press his or her advantage in one of the other legs of power in a struggle to consolidate their hold on all three legs of power.

Oelbaum credited the growth of the international side of the yam market to the policies of structural adjustment.[63] Viewed from the angle of neo-patrimonialism, the Konkomba control of the yam market has produced a deeper entrenchment of neo-patrimonialism and ethnic clientelism in the rural areas of the north. And as Oelbaum's analysis indicates, the new economic growth of elite Konkomba businessmen and the new political participation of Konkomba votes and politicians have contributed to fueling ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict appears to be one of the results of structural adjustment in poor rural areas. And a significant result of ethnic conflict is loss of the economic gains enjoyed by the rural farmer due to the growth of the market.[64] Oelbaum calls this situation a poverty trap.[65]

Due to the ethnic organizing of Konkomba people, the growth of the yam market, the emergence of wealthy businessmen, and the emergence of Konkomba politicians, representatives of Konkomba people are participating and competing for control in two of the three legs of power. One leg, that of chieftaincy and the colonial legacy of indirect rule, is still largely under the sway of the ranked ethnic system. Still, Konkomba have made inroads into that first leg. Every Konkomba (and Komba) community now has a chief, who in most cases works in concert with the utindaan or tindana. But Konkomba chiefs, like the chiefs of all formerly kinship-based societies, remain on the lower levels of that system. Nevertheless, they are working to develop their own divisional chiefs and their own paramountcy.[66] This struggle is a major source of inter and intra tribal conflict.

Viewed more systemically in a way that also describes the Dagbamba struggle, two legs of the stool can be said to be transitioning from the patriarchal caste system towards the neopatrimonial class system. In contrast, one of the legs continues to perpetuate a colonial-influenced version of chieftaincy that remade precolonial history to support ranked ethnicity and the colonial patriarchal caste system. For example, government policy continues to privilege the office of chieftaincy over and against the office of tindana, investing one with land rights while divesting the other. MacGaffey argues that this is a significant divergence from past practices. MacGaffey's research reveals that colonial policies and the

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[63] Oelbaum, *Spatial Poverty Traps and Ethnic Conflict Traps*, 18. Nontraditional exports like yams were introduced into the international market. From the commercial farmer side of the equation, statist policies have had little to do with the growth of the yam market.

[64] Oelbaum, *Spatial Poverty Traps and Ethnic Conflict Traps*, 3.

[65] In ranked systems, market forces are likely to benefit some of those from subordinate groups who have been blocked from economic growth, however, in ranked systems that is likely to cause war, which in turn returns people into poverty (Oelbaum, *Spatial Poverty Traps and Ethnic Conflict Traps*, 22).

[66] These internal chieftaincy rivalries may be a sideshow to the real power struggle, but they have deleterious consequences for local communities (Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 130).

postcolonial perpetuation of those policies transform historical practices in Dagbon as much as they do in Konkomba communities.[67]

So, the contradictory system of dual belonging (democratic and customary) continues to persist. It has tangible effects on society as the government and businesses continue to commodify land.[68] In many places, land can be sold by paramount chiefs without any consultation with the villages or the caretaker chiefs.[69] In areas where land can be rented for a handsome profit, land can be sold more than once to the same buyer by different claimants to land ownership. MacGaffey writes,

> In rural areas where land is not greatly in demand for the kind of enterprise that generates rents, tindanas and village chiefs are still on the safe side of the expanding commercial frontier. Most of them seem unaware of their vulnerability, the likelihood of what they think of as their traditional patrimony will be taken from them by onrushing capitalism.[70]

6.1.5.3. Translation Theology and Postcolonial Konkomba Entanglements

A third approach to assessing the Konkomba response to the ethnic caste system, referred to as ranked ethnicity, is theological. As I have done in previous chapters, I draw on African translation theology to help assess Bible translation's theological contributions in the context of a riposte to a ranked ethnic system.

Sanneh argues that colonial-era Bible translation paid Africans "huge 'vernacular' complements" in relation to their standing in the modern world.[71] Konkomba people already had a proud and dignified standing, but in relation to the way the modern world viewed them and their subordinate ranked ethnic status, I judge Sanneh's claim to be right. Sanneh also argues that African literacy helped Africans become "modernizing agents."[72] The data from the research in this book indicate Sanneh is also correct in this respect. Konkomba people widely participated in vernacular literacy programs and connected literacy to acquiring power in the postcolonial system. However, Sanneh argues that somehow this vernacular

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[67] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 69–108; 109–33.

[68] "I cannot prescribe how these conflicts and tenure arrangements can be resolved. It is worth noting, however, that standard notions of private property do considerable violence to traditional tenure arrangements. Simultaneously, the statement that land reforms and titling schemes should respect tradition (e.g., Cord, 2007) is also deeply problematic, given the extent to which exclusion and violence are implicated in 'tradition'. As a first step, it will be necessary to have a more detailed study of how land is actually acquired in practice" (Oelbaum, *Spatial Poverty Traps and Ethnic Conflict Traps*, 22).

[69] Kasanga, *Role of Chiefs and Tendamba*, 7.

[70] MacGaffey, *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*, 171.

[71] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 172.

[72] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 173.

activity opened the entire system to equal access. The data from this book's research do not bear this out so clearly.

Gerald West argues that John and Jean Comaroff make a more nuanced argument in their explication of the dialectics of modernity.[73] The Comaroffs argue that the entangled dialectics of modernity are "always to be understood *at once*, as economic and cultural, political and symbolic, general and particular." Industrial capitalism could not have taken place without "the civilizing mission."[74] The Comaroffs claim Protestant mission and colonial capitalism were intertwined, but not necessarily sharing a common cause.[75] West, drawing on Mbembe, claims that "colonialism and post-colonialism are inherently entangled, and the Bible is a significant factor in their entanglement."[76]

How can the Bible be useful in the struggle if it is part of the entanglement? Is the postcolonial translated Bible on the side of equal access from an intertribal perspective?

Given that most languages in the north have a Bible in one of their speech varieties, this could be taken as an indication of an egalitarian impulse in translation.[77] Solomon Sule-Saa's assessment of Bible translation engages both a Dagomba and a Konkomba perspective. Using Sanneh's theology thesis, Sule-Saa argues that northern Christians practice a multiethnic acceptance of each other because of their supraethnic Christian faith.[78]

Sule-Saa's research recognizes the translation of the Bible occurs in many ethnic groups. After Africans appropriate Bible translation from postcolonial ideotheological perspectives and use literacy to challenge the ranked ethnic system,

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[73] Gerald O. West, "Accountable African Biblical Scholarship: Post-Colonial and Tri-Polar," *Canon & Culture*, 2016, 40.

[74] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2:409.

[75] "Nonetheless, there was also a profound resonance, over time, in the modes and consequences of their activities; the spiritual, financial, and civic ends that each pursued, in their own ways, were closely interdependent." Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2:409.

[76] West, "Accountable African Biblical Scholarship: Post-Colonial and Tri-Polar," 40.

[77] For example, most of the language groups referenced in this chapter have published a translated Bible. The Likpakpaaln Bible (Konkomba) was launched in 1997. The Mɔɔr Bible (Bimoba) was launched in 2004. The Dagbanli Bible was launched in 2007. The Likɔɔnl New Testament was launched in 2014.

[78] Sule-Saa cites a Dagomba Christian song translated into English to illustrate his claim. "If different ethnic groups are in communion, it is because of Jesus. If Dagomba are in communion, it is because of Jesus. If Konkomba are in communion, it is because of Jesus. If Akan are in communion, it is because of Jesus. If white people are in communion it is because of Jesus. We are all in communion with one another because of Jesus." Solomon S. Sule-Saa, "Owning the Christian Faith through Mother-Tongue Scriptures: A Case Study of the Dagomba and Konkomba of Northern Ghana," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 13.2 (2010): 52.

what is the ongoing theological and religious role in reconstructing society in a more equitable way for all parties? How far does the intertribal engagement initiated by missionary-colonial translation—that the postcolonial supraethnic paradigm responds to—extend?

Given the Bible's ambiguous content, and the fact that an intertribal perspective already cedes ground to missionary-colonial translation, is it possible to use the translated Bible, and retranslate it so that it becomes a more overtly emancipatory resource in the struggle that is occurring in entangled postcolonial times and spaces? For example, drawing on the language of Musa Dube's Semoya perspective, how might multiethnic "healing" extend to those outside the church without assuming conversion?[79]

Postcolonial retranslation needs to engage with the contradictory impulses in the Bible. What are the egalitarian messages inside the Bible? Where does one find these messages? What is to be done about the Bible's own traditions and messages of structural legitimation, hierarchy, and oppression?[80] How did/does the "making of the Bible" via missionary-colonial translation parallel the "making of ethnicity" via colonial translation?[81] If the making of the Bible uses the same logic as the making of ethnicity, what dangers are lurking for indigenous communities who appropriate translated Bibles? To ask the last question again, if the way the translated Bible was made used a similar logic that colonial administrators and native translators used in the making of ethnic groups, what ramifications will that have down the line at the intraethnic level?

Indeed, when one pushes beyond the high-profile intertribal conflicts, there are a number of intratribal conflicts, both large and small.[82] As the postcolonial era progressed, chieftaincy emerged as the symbol for corporate identity even for groups who historically did not practice chieftaincy.[83] Moreover, land ownership

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[79] "A Semoya framework, therefore, is a mode of reading that resists discrimination and articulates a reading of healing: healing of race and gender relations; of individuals, classes, and nations. It is an interpretative practice that seeks healing of relations by understanding the interconnectedness of things and people rather than their disconnectedness—and highlighting the need to keep the relationships affirming to all the involved parties" (Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 192).

[80] Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 4–5.

[81] "There is now a growing literature on the 'invention of tribalism in colonial Africa'— they understand tribalism as an effect of colonialism rather than the very form of colonial rule. Second, in understanding ethnicity exclusively as an artifact of colonial rule, they miss its other side, that ethnicity is also the form of the anticolonial revolt.… That is why, rather than conceiving of an ethnic identity as simply 'invented' by statecraft as 'imagined' by intellectuals, it would make more sense to speak of the 'making' of an ethnicity" (Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 185).

[82] Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 400–404.

[83] Drucker-Brown, "Communal Violence in Northern Ghana," 50.

has become associated with chieftaincy, such that the offices of tindamba or bitin-dam and the rights of first inhabitants have become disputed.[84] This creates a situation of competition for total control of resources.

Sometimes Bible translation contributes to the linguistic separation of ethnic groups who are partially intertwined. Upon close inspection, kinship groups are often not clearly separated from one another. Tribes are even less so. If one would look at precolonial realities, one would see similarity as well as difference. This is particularly true if one would look at the matrilineal or matrifocal elements of relations and culture.

The Bible itself has been translated and interpreted as if it shared the missionary-colonial conceptions of languages and ethnicities as distinct. But that does not have to be the case. What if the Bible can be retranslated in a way that reconstructs unranked notions of kinship that were practiced in the precolonial era? Where does the Bible reveal a more fluid conception of kinship and ethnicity? If this possibility were offered to communities with live histories of ethnic struggle, are there ways it might be perceived as liberating?

6.2. Patriarchal Class Systems

The patriarchal ranked ethnic system was built on a patriarchal royal class system. Ethnic ripostes to the ranked ethnic system still emulate the inner logic of the royal class system. How is the royal class system constituted within a tribe, and how does Bible translation contribute or not contribute to that construction?

To help me engage the patriarchal royal class system, I highlight three entangled issues—intratribal/intraethnic conflict, social class, and gender. I argue that the contemporary dynamics in northern Ghana produce a system of patriarchal intratribal/intraethnic class conflict and that Bible translation must recognize its participation in those entangled dynamics.

Mahmood Mamdani theorized that if the intraethnic nature of conflict is not addressed, Africa will not get past the legacy of indirect rule. "To understand the phenomenon known as tribalism, it is necessary to explore and connect both of its dimensions: the intra-ethnic and the interethnic, tribalism as internal civil war and as an external tension between tribes."[85]

Intratribal and intraethnic conflict are built upon the same foundation as intertribal conflict.[86] In tribes with a tradition of royalty, there is a ranking of royals

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[84] Drucker-Brown, "Communal Violence in Northern Ghana," 51.

[85] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 184.

[86] I distinguish intratribal conflict as conflict occurring within a group that has already embraced and benefited from the colonial translation of tribe but is now struggling with material consequences of patrilineal hierarchy. Intraethnic conflict is conflict occurring within and sometimes between kinship groups that are still struggling with the ongoing

above commoners. An example of this in northern Ghana is the Dagbon crisis, where two gates compete over the most powerful paramount chieftaincy in northern Ghana.[87]

Among ethnolinguistic groups who are still developing a tradition of chieftaincy, economic and political factors help foster an internal hierarchy analogous to social class. In northern Ghana, there is intense competition over access to royal patriarchal structures that are linked to chieftaincy because of the rights paramount chiefs have in the sale of the land and because of their rights to the material resources that the land produces, like trees, sand, and even oil. The most lucrative positions of chieftaincy in areas with high land rent, natural resources, or access to government and nongovernment resources may involve intense competition between different patrilines within the existing royal class that often leads to intratribal conflict. Among groups still developing a tradition of chieftaincy and with unranked kinship systems, the competition for power between individuals and their associated patrilines often leads to intraethnic conflict. An example of unranked kinship systems in competition is the Komba and Bimoba conflicts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.[88]

In addition to chieftaincy as a form of social power analogous to social class, there is also the issue of gender. According to Amadiume, women were traditionally the ones who engaged in marketing.[89] In northern Ghana, women continue to be crucial in trading but are no longer in control. The imposition of market taxation affected precolonial practice in favor of males from the chief's or tindana's house.

For a rural subsistence market embedded within a neoliberal capitalist economy, the inflated cost of paying to enter the Ghanaian economy and even higher costs of entering the world economy through business or education seem to require that individuals acquire more than their share of what is produced locally. If someone happens to get access to resources, they tend to create a social class mentality, sharing it with the sons of their choice. The systems filter resources to the boys (patrilineally or matrilineally) that they believe have the greatest potential.[90] To return to our last chapter, one can see how the logic of sugar daddies is one-way young women can gain access to economic resources.

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ramifications of their ethnic marginalization suffered under colonial rule based on the colonial hierarchy of tribe established in part through translation.

[87] Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 406–8.

[88] Esala, "Translation as Invasion," 408–10.

[89] Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 176–77.

[90] For a discussion about women's and men's access to the cash economy and their cultural obligations to share see section 1.6.2.

6.2.1. Spending Natural Land Resources to Level Up in the Economy

As stated above, the costs of entering the neoliberal economy are too high for subsistence farmers, especially when the price of raw foods is kept especially low. There is a temptation for an aspiring chief or one who is fortunate enough to have already secured that position to look upon the resources at hand and try to use them to produce a source of ongoing capital wealth. There is a temptation for a chief, and for a tindana, if he is powerful enough, to cut their trees for cash, to sell the sand in their rivers, to use and sell their land for whatever profit they can make to help their sons enter the contemporary economy at whatever level seems to be in reach. Every level-up is followed by another one, and each level-up requires capital. The justification for spending local resources is that this person or the new business will bring wealth back into the community, but at what cost to the fertility of the soil? At what cost to the water supply? Do the resources that come back in ever equal those that go out? Sustainability is not a productive concept for those interested in leveling up in the market.

6.2.2. Assessing Bible Translation and Literacy in the Context of Patriarchal Class Systems and Intraethnic Conflict

In section 6.1.5.3 above, I discussed the translation theology thesis in relation to Konkomba ethnic organizing and Bible translation in the late twentieth century. I discussed the optimistic claim that Bible translation opens the entire system to greater egalitarian access. In the twenty-first century, it is quite tempting for Bible translators to perceive themselves as opening the entire system to equal access. Given the proliferation of intratribal and intraethnic conflict, how does Bible translation contribute to equal access? Do the facts bear out the claim at the sites of a translation's reception and its sites of production?

In relation to sites of the translated Bible's reception, because of the power of the translation-as-invasion paradigm, it is likely that some Africans are using their Bibles to mimic the structures and behavior of the patriarchal royal class system. What are alternative ways for Africans to use their translated Bibles to rework systems that are producing intraethnic conflict? How will they use their Bibles to respond to those trying to consolidate power through acquiring control of chieftaincy so they can use the land and its resources to acquire wealth and power in the world economic system?

For African Bible translators at the translated Bible's sites of production, how might a translation project that is entangled with forms of translation-as-invasion unknowingly fuel class competition in their context? I have written elsewhere about how systemic approaches to written Bible translation prioritize consistency and standardization over the linguistic and dialectical diversity we see in oral

tradition.[91] Translation process that favor standardizing and consistency are baked into translation processes and software. And when those processes consistently favor one competing group over another, there is a danger written translation not only changes the language but also contributes to the perception of local hierarchies, potentially fueling sources of intratribal conflict.[92]

Alternatively, how might African Bible translators choose translation processes that mitigate the competitive class system and economy already at work in their contexts? How do translation projects incorporate women in decision-making processes at sites of production as well as reception? How does a proposed or active translation project deal with the realities of intratribal/intraethnic conflicts experienced in their communities? How might the presence of conflict affect word choices and dialect inclusion as they translate? Bible translation projects must also consider how they will manage the Bible's own internal ambiguities related to tribal hierarchy, patriarchy, and intraethnic violence. Which biblical texts offer details with the potential to subvert the patriarchal royal class system? I recognize these are tough questions to address directly. Nevertheless, they are realities in many contexts in Africa, given the systems that have long been at work.

In entangled postcolonial/neocolonial time, Bible translation continues to be practiced as if the Bible itself is neutral in relation to the harsh systemic realities African societies are facing. The translated Bible is a player in African political contexts where intertribal, intratribal, and intraethnic conflicts abound. In contexts where intraethnic social class is under construction, Bible translation plays a part. In other contexts, elites compete for ethnic foundations and royal thrones upon which they can consolidate tribal power. Bible translation is not neutral in such a situation. What purpose is the translated Bible serving in this context? What processes are being used to help transform the lived reality of intraethnic conflict into a situation that conforms to God's vision for African social life? How can the Bible be retranslated into a tool that does not confuse or subjugate African communities, but offers them resources to recreate dignified and life-giving community?

6.3. Retranslating for Resistance amidst Ethnic Manipulation

In section 6.1.5.2, I introduced the metaphor of a three-legged stool to describe the relationship between economic power, political power, and chieftaincy power. I suggested that elite men attempt to control each leg of that stool, each of those three forms of interconnected power, to consolidate their power in rural areas for

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[91] Esala, "Ideology and Bible Translation," 223.

[92] How are dialect variations included in published works? Bemile suggests blending dialects (Bemile, "Promotion of Ghanaian Languages," 220). Translating a large corpus like the Bible offers a range of inclusive possibilities when it comes to representing language diversity.

use in the neopatrimonial Ghanaian political economy. Achille Mbembe argues that it is often rural African locations where embedded economies of extraction operate in direct contact with world markets, sealed off from African national economies.[93] The pursuit of these three forms of power is causing havoc as elite groups try to control all three legs of the economy.

Ethnicity is being manipulated in each of these three forms of power within the neopatrimonial system. Bible translation is being carried out in competitive intraethnic contexts where ethnicity is being manipulated in order to consolidate power. Instead of leaving Bible translation practice as an ideologically neutral practice that lends itself to manipulation or contributes to social confusion, in the third section of this chapter, I explore an emancipatory postcolonial form of re-translation that resists ethnic manipulation. Emancipatory retranslation engages a fourth source of power: religious power. Drawing on historic practices, how have African people engaged religion to successfully struggle against the misuse of power and social manipulation?

6.3.1. Sources of Religious Power in the Struggle against Ethnic Conflict

In chapter 3, I discussed the early twentieth-century West African prophet, William Wadé Harris. Harris confronted the insatiable colonial economic system that refused to observe a Sabbath. Harris also confronted missionary-colonial religion that acquiesced to colonial governments' desire to use African bodies to fight European battles. Harris' religious teachings had political consequences! Because Harris was so influential, the political consequences of his teachings put him at odds with the economic and military agendas of colonial authorities.[94]

Shank highlights the unifying social power of Harris' movement. The social cohesion Harris' movement created among disparate African tribes further threatened colonial agendas.

> There was created a new indigenous lay religious movement covering a dozen ethnic groups and involving new patterns of unity in the midst of diversity: one God, one theocentric law (the Ten Commandments), one day (Sunday), one book (the Bible), one symbol (the cross), one baptism (break with "fetishes"), one place of worship, one institution (church leadership by "twelve apostles").[95]

Gerald West offers a related ethnic analysis of the social movement led by the South African prophet Isaiah Shembe. West argues that Shembe's primary purpose in appropriating the Bible was "to provide a religio-cultural (but resolutely non-ethnic) ethic that builds community among marginalised Africans." A second

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[93] Mbembe, "Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism," 5.
[94] Shank and Murray, *Prophet Harris, the 'Black Elijah' of West Africa*, 281.
[95] Shank, "Legacy of William Wadé Harris," 174.

purpose that depends upon and emanates from the primary purpose was "an external ethic over and against both the religio-cultural and political-economic systems of missionary-colonial-*khlowa* Christianity."[96]

These African Christian prophets in two very distant locales on the continent used the Bible and Christianity to construct supraethnic communities as part of their internal religious response and external political response to missionary Christianity and colonial politics, respectively. A second way Africans have used religion across ethnic lines has occurred in women's indigenous rituals that originated in precolonial times, and have been used in colonial, and postcolonial women's ritual protests. In chapter 1, I highlighted matrifocal morality as an organizing feature that helped migrating precolonial Africans construct kinship groups. Laura Grillo has identified matrifocal morality's embodied basis as rooted in postmenopausal women's ritual power in society. Grillo calls this "female genital power" or FGP, to provide a positive counter to the well-publicized acronym FGM, "female genital mutilation."

As the basis of FGP, Laura Grillo offers a "deep hermeneutical reading" of the Dipri ritual as practiced by a subset of allied Abidji and Adioukrou ethnic groups in the southern Lagoon region of Coté d'Ivoire.[97] The antecedent to that ritual is called Egbiki. Egbiki involves postmenopausal women exposing their nakedness in the dead of night to protect the upcoming Dipri ritual from malevolent sorcery.[98] Grillo observes that FGP appears broadly across West Africa.[99] In West Africa, postmenopausal women form another gender category in society, a category of people who are ritually powerful.[100] The source of elderly women's power is located in their genitals, and when they ritually expose their nakedness, they are powerful enough to catch the strongest malevolent sorcery.[101] In Grillo's reading of the Dipri ritual's ethnogenesis, FGP is also connected to the spirits of the river.[102] In precolonial time, FGP was a secret source of protective power that an

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[96] West, *Stolen Bible*, 316.

[97] Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 15, 21.

[98] Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 24–25.

[99] Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 2, 15, 128. See also Naminata Diabate, *Naked Agency: Genital Cursing and Biopolitics in Africa*, Theory in Forms (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

[100] "After menopause the female body not only outgrows its reproductive function, it also takes on a double-sexed aspect.… Thus the power of the Mothers resides in the capacity to *surpass* the biological function and social stage of maternity and to assume an equally consequential spiritual power, the secret and sacred locus of which is their sex" (Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 44).

[101] "Relating the details of the Egbiki rite in the Adioukrou village Yassap, the chef de terre emphasized that the mothers' capacity to dominate witches' evil designs relies on moral righteousness, they wear their nakedness like armor" (Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 46).

[102] Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 22–24, 142–43, 146–47. This puts postmenopausal women on par with the gods.

Abidji kinship group shared with an Adioukrou kinship group to cement their alliance, fusing cultural practices in the process. In other West African societies, an ethnic group's connection to the spirits of the river and the land is located in elderly women's bodies, whose bodies encompass both genders. Because of the sacredness of elderly women and their connection to water and land, all women are sacred.

The ritual use of female genital power is performed in the dead of night, but occasionally, it can be brought into the political arena and performed in the daytime. This power of naked postmenopausal women's bodies was used in colonial times to respond to the imperialist and masculinist disregard for women's agency and matrifocal morality.[103]

The postcolonial state has continued the colonial state's disregard for women as sacred moral centers of African society.[104] Grillo's analysis of Coté d'Ivoire's two civil wars, in 2003 and 2011, and the interwar period catalogs how women and children have suffered in these conflicts. The conflicts have ethnic components connected to land rights. Because of the intimate connection women's bodies have to land, home, and kinship, women's bodies are targeted for violence in ethnically motivated land conflicts. Doing violence to women's bodies disregards the sacredness of women, decreasing an opposing group's power and damaging the fabric that undergirds African society. Sexual violence has become a widespread weapon of war, carried out with impunity by male actors on all sides of the various conflicts.[105] Grillo recounts instances during this period when women recruited FGP as a ritual response to amoral and reprehensible postcolonial politics.[106]

These two sources of indigenous religious power, the African prophets' formation of supraethnic religious communities and women's FGP mirror the sources of translation theology, one source being indigenous African religion, the other being indigenous African Christian religion. A third source of power, the translated Bible, was appropriated by African prophets like Harris and Shembe and put to religious use in the struggle against imperialism. Sule-Saa argues for the multiethnic use of the translated Bible in northern Ghana.[107] All three of these sources are brought together as resources for resistance available to communities in the present. All three of these sources play a part in retranslating the translated Bible for liberation in a neopatrimonial system of power, in which elites compete for power. In neopatrimonial politics, human bodies and the body of the earth are

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[103] Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 88–89, 94–99.

[104] Women have continued to lose ground both materially and morally (Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 154).

[105] Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 175–85.

[106] Grillo, *Intimate Rebuke*, 185–97. This practice of masculine postcolonial politics is often fueled by neocolonial entanglements.

[107] Sule-Saa, "Owning the Christian Faith through Mother-Tongue Scriptures."

expendable as collateral damage in a zero-sum game.[108] Women's bodies are especially targeted, eroding the material and moral center of African society in the process.[109]

6.3.2. Why Retranslate the Ambiguous Bible?

The analysis in the first two parts of this chapter indicates that the struggle northern Ghanaians are facing is urgent. Internal competition in the neopatrimonial system lends itself to external exploitation. Following the logic of the current system to its end will result in scenarios that serve invasive neocolonial interests in Africa. In this third section of the chapter, I am arguing for the use of religious resources to resist political and economic forces that bring death to African peoples. The Bible is one such resource that can be reclaimed through emancipatory retranslation.

Engaging in Bible translation using colonial-era methods is not up to the task of postcolonial liberation. The analysis of the situation in northern Ghana suggests Bible translation has difficulty charting a way through the web of intraethnic and interethnic conflicts. Elites will continue to vie for control of the three sources of power: chieftaincy, political representation, and economic power. Ethnicity is a useful tool of manipulation in that struggle for power. Bible translation lends itself to ethnic manipulation and may even contribute to ethnic conflict and confusion. Bible translation, as it is currently practiced, is at best a contradictory tool for the suffering African masses in twenty-first century northern Ghana. At worst, Bible translation contributes to "confuse, frustrate, and even destroy our people."[110] Translators and theologians must reckon with the fact that the Bible is not only part of the solution in Africa, it is part of the problem. How can the translation of the Bible be recruited for thorough-going postcolonial liberation?

South African Black theologian Takatso Mofokeng argues that the Bible paradoxically is both part of the problem and part of the solution.[111] Mofokeng argues that suggesting that the problem is restricted to people who misuse the Bible is insufficient, as if "the Bible is essentially a book of liberation."[112] While it is true many people do use the Bible to support their racist and oppressive

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[108] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Duke University Press, 2019).

[109] "In many ways, the form of domination imposed during both the slave trade and colonialism in Africa could be called phallic…. Male domination derives in large measure from the power and the spectacle of the phallus—not so much from the threat to life during war as from the individual male's ability to demonstrate his virility at the expense of a woman and to obtain its validation from the subjugated woman herself" (Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 13).

[110] Mofokeng, "Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation," 40.

[111] Mofokeng, "Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation," 37.

[112] Mofokeng, "Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation," 37.

preconceptions, the problem is more profound because the Bible is internally am-biguous. There are texts in the Bible that lend themselves to "oppressive interpretations and oppressive uses because of their inherent oppressive nature." Mofokeng continues, "any attempt to 'save' or 'co-opt' these oppressive texts only serve the interests of the oppressors."[113]

Stephen Fowl has argued that it is a hermeneutical overstatement to say that texts have inherent ideologies.[114] Responding to Fowl, Gerald West engages 1 Tim 2:8–15, a "text of terror," probing the question whether texts have ideological grains, and if so, whether it is possible to read against an oppressive grain in a text of terror for liberation.[115] In other words, the Bible is part of the problem, but can it also be part of the solution?

Writing in South Africa in 1988, Mofokeng argues that black Africans have very few options. The Bible must be retained by the masses of black people, be-cause "no easily accessible ideological silo or a storeroom is being offered to the social classes of our people that are desperately in need of liberation."[116] Mofokeng argues Marxism is too far ahead of the African masses and African religions are too far behind. Mofokeng argues Black theologians "who are com-mitted to the struggle for liberation and are organically connected to the struggling Christian people" must "do their best to shape the Bible into a formidable weapon in the hands of the oppressed instead of leaving it to confuse, frustrate, and even destroy our people."[117]

The people in northern Ghana are in a different situation than South Africans were when Mofokeng was writing.[118] Northern Ghanaians have more than one ideological storeroom to draw from. African indigenous religions continue to of-fer valuable religious resources, such as matrifocal morality and FGP that have historically been used in the struggle against oppressive colonial and postcolo-nial/neocolonial forces. Indigenous African Christianity rooted in what Kwame Bediako calls the primal imagination of indigenous religion has also been useful in the struggle. African Christian prophets, such as William Harris, have struggled against oppression using religion holistically, combining the sacred and the secu-lar in their African Christian religious practice. African communities, like the

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[113] Mofokeng, "Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation," 38.

[114] Stephen Fowl, "Texts Don't Have Ideologies," *BibInt* 3.1 (1995): 15–34.

[115] West, "Taming Texts of Terror." See Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 1–5.

[116] Mofokeng, "Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation," 40.

[117] Mofokeng, "Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation," 40.

[118] The decolonial turn in South Africa after liberation has prompted reappropriations of indigenous religion in that context. See Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), "A Bosadi (Womanhood) Reading of Proverbs 31:10–31," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* (Atlanta; Society of Biblical Literature; Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 145–57. See also Hulisani Ramantswana, "Decolonising Biblical Hermeneutics in the (South) African Context," *AcT* 36 (2016): 178–203.

African prophets, have used the Bible as a tool for social healing. How can the Bible be retranslated using these ideological storerooms so that it becomes a powerful tool for resistance and liberation?

Contextual Bible study offers resources from critical biblical studies as an additional resource for African peoples to use in their struggle. CBS contributes biblical resources to the religious resources Africans already possess. CBS offers biblical resources that are calibrated for the struggle Africans face so that Africans can use their religious storerooms to retranslate the Bible for social change. In this way, CBS contributes to a collaborative process of ordinary Africans and African biblical scholars retranslating for a better African social life.

CBS offers the Bible as a resource to be reinterpreted/retranslated in a manner that does not confuse, frustrate, and destroy African communities. CBS uses the Bible in concert with Africans' collectivist orientation and in a manner that does not separate the sacred from the secular. Using CBS African theologians collaborating with ordinary Africans can rework the ideotheological constraints of individualist missionary-colonial Christianity and neocolonial Christianity entangled with neoindigenous Christianity. Together Africans can chart paths different from the developmentalist gospel and the prosperity gospel, both of which constrain the way the Bible communicates to African audiences.

Below, I offer a CBS that addresses the struggle for power in a neopatrimonial political economy. This study offers calibrated biblical resources to northern Ghanaian communities to encourage them to retranslate the Bible for religious resistance to manipulations of ethnicity and instigations of gender oppression that corrode Africa's moral fiber.

The biblical text of Judg 6–9 embodies struggles between kinship patriarchy, royal patriarchy, ethnicity, land, and gender. This prompt for retranslating Judg 6–9 may spark African indigenous resources for postcolonial resistance to the neopatrimonial politics that threaten African political, social, ecological, and economic life. This CBS is offered in the West African spirit of religious inclusion. Indigenous Christian, Muslim, and African religious practices are not the same, but they are united in their quest to construct better lives for the masses struggling under the weight of oppressive systems.

6.3.3. CBS on Power, Violence, and Oppression in Tribal Conflicts

This CBS is in the preparation stage. I offer it here as a potential for the kinds of resources that might be generated around the issue of intertribal conflict and gendered power.

This study focuses on the dynamics of intratribal and intraethnic conflict, patriarchy, and the destructive bent that masculine power can take for communities and especially for women and children. There are trajectories in the biblical text that show how intratribal conflict can be intertwined with intertribal conflicts, problematizing the clear lines between one tribe and another. This study touches

on the resources of prophetic power, as practiced by William Harris and Isaiah Shembe, and women's power as practiced by matrifocal morality. The character of Jotham gives a speech with elements of the prophetic cast in the discourse of oral tradition. Women's power to resist tribal conflict comes to the foreground at the end of the story.

Women's roles are often neglected due to precolonial practices of patrifocal power and the invasion of colonial imperial masculine power. Whether groups inherit matrilineally, patrilineally, or bilaterally, colonization has bolstered patrifocal masculine power to the detriment of West Africa's dual-sexed practices of social organization. This trajectory has been continued by African governments even after independence. The structures which enshrined and protected women's sacred power in traditional society have been eroded. Nevertheless, matrifocal morality continues to assert its moral influence through cultural traditions and through political protests against elite leaders whose politics of power are unconcerned about the suffering of poor people, women, and children or the degradation of the environment.

This CBS focuses on the sons of Gideon: Jether, Abimelech, and Jotham, and the issue of gender with a special emphasis on the way patriarchy and violent masculinity play into tribal conflict and gender oppression. The study is intended for both women and men.

This CBS spans three chapters. Most questions focus on chapter 9. This is more biblical text than is normally studied. The plot is also quite complicated. So, after reading the selected texts, I offer an optional extended plot summary. This is not a preferred CBS strategy because it intervenes between the participants and the biblical text. However, occasionally such a strategy can be used to help facilitate comprehension of a complicated narrative. Another option would be to develop a set of pictures that retell the story pictorially, as the Ruth study did.

Read Judges 6:1–4; 6:33–34; 7:1, 7:16–24; 8:10–12; 8:18–23, 8:28–32, 9:1–57.
　　1. What is this story about?
Optional: After recording responses, depending upon the group's comprehension of the relationships between characters in this narrative, consider offering this (or a similar) retelling of the plot as a summary to help the participants review this complex plot.

　　Gideon was one of the famous "judges" of Israel. A judge is not a necessarily a chief or a king, but a leader who emerges to rescue the people of Israel from oppression. Gideon was given the name "Jerub-Baal" which means "He struggles with Baal." (Baal means a god or a human lord or a headman). The people of Midian were oppressing the people of Israel. Whenever the people of Israel would plant food, the people of Midian would come and camp near them and destroy all the produce of the land. The people cried out to the Lord God because the land was being wasted. God raised up Gideon, and Gideon led the people of his clan against them, and he called other Israelite clans to help him. Gideon's clan with the help of some others chased the kings of

Midian (whose names were Zeba and Zalmunna). When he caught them, he told his son to kill them, but his eldest son was too afraid to kill them. So, Gideon killed them himself.

When some of the people of Israel asked Gideon to be a king over them. He refused. He said, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you" (Judg 8:23). Gideon returned to his hometown. Because of Gideon's work, the land of Israel had rest for forty years. Gideon received many gifts and Gideon had many wives. Gideon fathered seventy sons. One of Gideon's "concubines" or junior wives who was from the town of Shechem. She named her son, Abimelech, which means, "my father is king." Finally, Gideon died.

After Gideon died, Abimelech, one of the sons of Gideon, went to his mother's clan people in the town of Shechem. And he told them to ask the "headmen (or lords) of Shechem" whether it is better that seventy sons of Gideon rule over them or if it is better that one of his sons, one who is their own flesh and blood, should rule over them? The headmen of Shechem gave money to Abimelech from their idol's treasury. Abimelech used that money to hire men to help him kill all his father's brothers. But the youngest son remained alive because he hid himself. The youngest son was called Jotham.

The headmen of the towns of Shechem and Beth-millo made Abimelech their chief. When Jotham heard about it, he climbed up a nearby mountain, Mount Gerizim, and he shouted to the headmen of Shechem so they could hear him. Jotham told them a parable about the trees who wanted a ruler over them. The trees asked the olive tree to rule over them. But the olive tree refused because the olive tree was busy making olive fruits. The trees asked the fig tree to rule over them, but the fig tree refused because the fig tree had to make figs. Then the trees asked the vine to rule over them, but the vine refused because the vine had to make grapes for wine. Each of these trees preferred to continue to focus on making their good fruit for people to enjoy instead of spending their time ruling over the trees. Finally, the trees asked the thorn bush to rule over them. The thorn bush said, "Fine, come and enjoy my shade. If not, may the fire of the thorn bush come and consume the great trees of Lebanon." Then Jotham said, "If you have done what is right by father's family then enjoy Abimelech. If not, let fire come out from Abimelech and consume the lords of Shechem and Beth-millo." Then Jotham ran away to another town because he was afraid of his brother Abimelech.

Abimelech became ruler over Israel (not just Shechem) for three years. He put his officer Zebul to help him rule over Shechem. During that time, the Lord God caused confusion between Abimelech and the headmen of Shechem so that Abimelech could get no profit from Shechem. A man named Gaal moved into Shechem and the headmen of Shechem transferred their loyalty to Gaal rather than to Abimelech's servant Zebul.

When Zebul, the officer of Abimelech, heard what they were doing, he became angry, and he sent a messenger to Abimelech telling him to come that night so that in the morning Abimelech and his soldiers would come and attack Shechem. So Gaal and his people went out to fight Abimelech, but Abimelech won.

Abimelech's officer Zebul chased Gaal away so that he could no longer stay in Shechem.

The next day, Abimelech divided his warriors into three groups. And when the people of Shechem came out to their fields, two groups of Abimelech's warriors killed them. The third group led by Abimelech attacked the city gates and he fought the people inside the city for the full day. He destroyed the city. But there was a tower, which was a shrine for the town's people. The headmen of the city and their women and children entered that tower. Abimelech led his men up to a mountain where they all cut brushwood and they carried the brushwood back to the tower and they laid the brushwood against the tower. Abimelech set fire to that wood and burned the tower and killed all one thousand people who were inside.

The next day Abimelech went to another town called Thebez and camped next to it. He attacked the city and took it. There was another high tower in that city. All the men and women went into that tower and shut themselves in. They locked themselves and climbed to the top of the roof of that tower. Abimelech came to the tower, and fought against it, and came near to the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire. But a certain woman threw a grinding stone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull. Abimelech said to the young man who was helping him. "Take my sword and kill me so that it will not be said of me that a woman has killed him." So, the young man took the sword and thrust it through him. When the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they all went home.

Read 8:18–23.

    1. Gideon uses a strategy of making his son Jether into a man. Does it work? What do the people think about Gideon's sons?

Read 8:29–32.

    2. Who was Abimelech's mother among Gideon's wives? What details are given about her?

Read 9:1–6.

    3. Abimelech stokes a conflict between his mother's brothers and his father's sons to gain power.[119] What steps does Abimelech take to accomplish his goal of becoming a king?

Read 9:7–21.

    4. Jotham has a two-part speech (verses 7–15 and 16–21). What kinds of power does Jotham use and activate?

Read 9:22–31.

    5. Who are the characters in these verses? What are their alliances with each other? Optional: Draw a picture illustrating the characters and their relationships with each other. For example, verse 22 tells us Abimelech became a commander in Israel for three years. Verse 28 tells us that

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[119] In northern Ghana, kinship groups are constructed along patrilineal lines. In southern Ghana, kinship groups are constructed primarily along matrilineal lines. This study may result in different contextual applications given cultural differences in contexts.

Abimelech had made a man named Zebul to be a sub-chief for him in Shechem.

6. A series of three battles take place. Which groups does Abimelech fight in each of these battles and why?
    a. 30–41
    b. 42–45
    c. 46–49

Read 9:50–57.

7. Abimelech proceeds to attack another town, the town of Thebez, in the same way that he attacked Shechem, his mother's brothers' hometown.
    Part a is for women. Part b is for men.
    a. What does the text suggest about women's resources for stopping destructive masculinities in ethnic/tribal warfare?
    b. What resources/strategies does this text offer to men for dealing with destructive practices of ethnic/tribal warfare in our communities?

8. What resources does this text offer for addressing destructive masculinity in tribal warfare in our communities?

6.3.4. Towards Transsectoral Retranslations for Resistance

This CBS is meant to inspire transsectoral retranslations that resist manipulations of ethnicity and its associated (gender) violence in the neopatrimonial political and economic context of northern Ghana. The ambiguities of tribe, ethnicity, and kinship that are at work in Judg 6–9 make it a potential resource for the present day in northern Ghana. There are many potential "lines of connection" between the components contributing to ethnic conflict that are also at work in this text.[120] For example, ethnicity remains an important reality in Ghana. In this part of Judges, ethnicity has both positive and negative features. Crucially, the ethnic Israelite perspective, the viewpoint a reader naturally adopts, is problematized. The reasons' Israelite identity become problematic have internal intraethnic and external interethnic components. The boundaries between internal and external are ambiguous depending on whether one prefers to privilege matrilineal or patrilineal relations. There are economic and political factors in play. There is an emerging royal-class dynamic as Gideon and Abimelech consider royalty. Abimelech, whose name means "my father is king" is a particularly relevant character. In Abimelech's rule, the combination of patriarchy, royalty, and ethnic violence begins to run amok as Abimelech's desire for power and willingness to use violence get out of control. Entire kinship groups of men and women suffer in the narrative, but it is a woman who takes action to stop the violence. This is an especially important dynamic given the discussion above about rape as a weapon of war. Even though the woman uses violent means to stop the violence

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[120] Gottwald, *Hebrew Bible*, 225.

in the story, it will be interesting to see how marginalized communities retranslate that dynamic.

Rather than translating the Bible using a missionary-colonial method, this CBS charts a path that responds more actively to the systems that are at work in the northern Ghanaian context. The selection of groups and communities marginalized by (gender) violence and (ethnic) manipulation would be crucial to the success of these engagements. Sensitivity to the local dynamics of conflict will be needed to bring out the potential for transsectoral resistance. Facilitators will need to be careful to make sure this study is properly calibrated to local dynamics of conflict. Questions can be adjusted so as not to fan the flames of a local conflict. The intention is to problematize the way ethnicity, royalty, economic factors, and the use of violence are being combined to consolidate elite male power.

The quest to consolidate power is so competitive that it ends up destroying the actors involved. The competition for power is so violent that it destroys human life and the environment. The systems at work steal, rob, and destroy. And therefore, it is the systems that must be resisted. When groups from opposed sectors explore retranslating biblical texts for their collective life together, they contribute to the process of forging transsectoral solidarity, resistance, and transformation.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the way missionary-colonial translation sewed seeds of ranked ethnicity and royal patrilineal class competition in the northern Ghanaian context. These seeds are being manipulated in the competition for power in ways that produce intertribal, intratribal, and intraethnic conflicts. These conflicts frequently harm the bodies of women, the land, and the communities of the region. Conventional Bible translation practice continues to be limited in the way it contributes to constructing ethnicity by missionary-colonial translation's legacy. In the translation-as-invasion paradigm, the making of the translated Bible mirrors colonial translation's making of ethnicity in neocolonial/postcolonial time. Postcolonial practices of retranslation for liberation offer pathways for ordinary women and men to retranslate biblical texts, reworking colonially drawn ethnic and gender lines and developing transsectoral and transtemporal alliances of resistance. To survive the patriarchal competition for power in Ghana's neopatrimonial political economy, women and men must draw on the moral reservoirs of Africa's religious traditions as they retranslate sacred texts to resist destructive forces, reworking colonial constructions of tribe to serve life in interconnected communities and environments.

In the conclusion of this book, I will consider ways CBS as postcolonial retranslation for liberation might contribute to reworking practices of African Bible translation.

Conclusion: Beyond Invasion in African Bible Translation

These six chapters have taken a journey through time, centered in a local context, the geographical context south of the Gambaga escarpment in northern Ghana. Chapter 1 selected analytical tools designed to temporarily disentangle strands of indigenous/precolonial time. Each of these tools helps people in the present discern aspects of the distinctive material practices of the precolonial "life world."[1] Then when the strands are entwined again, in the present time of entanglement, people may be able to discern that precolonial time was full of possibilities with many potential trajectories. Chapter 1 illustrated the diversity of language and translation practices in precolonial time. The focus was on social survival in a difficult environment. Divination emerged as a spiritual-social practice that connected people to their environments, facilitating an iterative process of hermeneutical translation to help people interpret their problems socially and contextually. As precolonial trading and raiding started to transform the context, divination practices evolved as people experimented with the market-based value system. The diverse genres of oral tradition offered the chance for all sectors of society to be in poetic dialogue during funerals and other social events. As the raid and trade social economy grew, the material and moral place of women in society started to change. Women became the mobile element in society, and increasingly, they also became cultural translators in society. In sum, chapter 1 documents a variety of entangled translation practices in indigenous/precolonial time for a context in northern Ghana.

The colonial era was also full of possibilities. While chapter 2 focuses on the invasive intention and the invasive method of colonial-era translation, chapter 3 describes some of the unintended trajectories of colonial-era translation that prefigured postcolonial translation.

The colonial translation of precolonial raiding into an invasion narrative served as a cultural justification for internal and external political and economic domination in northern Ghana. The translation of invasion was a form of cultural invasion. The translation of the performance genre lunsi into a written historiography of indigenous invasion made an implicit argument that justified the rights

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[1] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15.

of foreign occupation in the short term. In the long term, it strengthened the cultural argument for royal elites to legally extract resources from the masses without the messy necessity of local accountability or local reinvestment. The translated invasion narratives served as the substructure that justified the enshrinement of royal viewpoints in customary law. The cultural power of invasion narratives continues into the postindependence era. All subsequent acts of translation must deal with the translation-as-invasion paradigm, a paradigm that establishes an elite point of view as the starting point for interpreting history, law, theology, literature, etc.

Chapter 3 focuses more broadly on Christian practices that started outside of northern Ghana but have subsequently become part of life in many parts of Africa, including northern Ghana. Chapter 3 turns to theological translation describing three versions of Christianity that have emerged: missionary-colonial Christianity, African independent Christianity, and the new Christianity. Studies of Bible translation comparing missionary-colonial Christianity and African independent Christianity show that the colonial era, like the precolonial era, was full of different potential trajectories. Missionary-colonial Christianity held firm doctrinal teachings, some of which differed from rationalist Enlightenment-era positions. Nevertheless, missionary Christianity's doctrinal teachings worked within Enlightenment notions of progress. As part of missionary-colonial Christianity's desire to communicate its doctrinal teachings, missionaries engaged in the vernacular translation of biblical texts with the assumption that the translated Bible would communicate the superiority of their doctrine. The superior ideotheological assumptions of missionary-colonial religion contributed to some Africans exiting from missionary-colonial control in favor of the theological assumptions of African religions, including African independent Christianity. The ideotheological assumptions of African religions helped independent Africans to "turn" the invasive intention of their translated Bibles into divination sets useful for social healing.[2]

In African independent Churches (AICs), the Bible was used as a religiocultural tool to help marginalized Africans reconstruct supraethnic communities. Reconstructing African community required engaging the Bible politically and economically. African independent prophets engaged in retranslating the Bible using participatory hermeneutics. In the Ibandla lamaNazaretha church in South Africa, community members contributed to rewriting the Bible, appropriating prophetically retranslated teachings for contemporary applications.

The neoliberal era birthed a new version of Christianity with new prophets who constructed an African Christianity that is spiritual and material in an individualist moral framework. This new Christianity is doctrinally fixed around the health and wealth gospel. The Bible is a key to its authority, but the details of

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[2] Some African languages use "turning over" to describe language translation. See chapter 1 n. 3.

biblical texts are only minimally read, so they can easily be made to fit in the new Christian ideotheological framework. The new Christianity has been spiritually and materially calibrated to work with neoindigenous Africans inside the neoliberal political and economic system. Accordingly, African elites working with a neopatrimonial system of governance welcome the new Christianity's focus on the moral and spiritual development of the individual, provided the leaders of the new Christianity do not engage in systemic and collective analysis of the spiritual-material morality of neoliberal political, economic, and social practices.

Chapters 4–6 engaged in "experimental practice" to develop a postcolonial approach to retranslating biblical texts in a context south of the Gambaga escarpment.[3] Chapter 4 focused on the notion of entanglement arguing that those groups who are marginalized within marginalized communities are entangled differently across time and space than pastors and teachers, those who are normally selected to be professional Bible translators. Contextual Bible study (CBS) was introduced as the method I would use in this book to construct an emancipatory postcolonial approach to retranslating biblical texts for community-led liberation. CBS reworks the logic of invasion by prioritizing an emancipatory process that is governed by an emancipatory purpose without predetermining an outcome.

The case study in chapter 4 explores how a Bible translation team learned to become facilitators of CBS, by collaborating with people living with disabilities in their communities. Facilitators engaged in a social analysis of biblical translation, foregrounding the perspectives of people living with disabilities. How do people living with disabilities experience biblical translation in their bodies? Facilitators learned that the bodies of people with disabilities are being translated by two dominant paradigms: the health and wealth gospel and the Eurocentric developmentalist model. The health and wealth gospel assumes individuals have disabilities because of their own sin, or the malevolent spiritual-material activity of a relative, or an ancestor, whereas the Eurocentric developmentalist paradigm dismisses African worldviews that perceive a spiritual-material connection to disabilities. As retranslating agents, people living with disabilities used the CBS method to rework the processes of translation as they started exploring language and articulating their embodied theologies by retranslating the discourse of Job. Their retranslations responded to the logic of invasion by using an alternative emancipatory logic, as they dialogically expressed visions for social healing for themselves and their fellow community members. People living with disabilities continue to be monitored by their families in northern Ghana and are still exploring how they want to move forward in their emancipatory social project. The values of CBS suggest facilitators should encourage the community of people living with disabilities to take greater leadership in future engagements.

Chapter 5 addressed the external invasion of European masculinist ideology in anthropological cultural translation that interprets the dual-sexed focus of

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[3] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:xii, 31.

precolonial ritual in patriarchal terms. It also explored an internal patriarchal pressure asserted through African Bible translation. Some church leaders prefer masculine references to the name of God in their Bibles. African translators, responding to the preferences of church leaders, are translating African deities that have both masculine and feminine characteristics in ways that indicate God is masculine, sometimes transforming the common feminine words for God by borrowing terms for God from other languages, or even creating grammatical neologisms in their language that lend themselves to patriarchal interpretations. African women's theology has resisted such patriarchal language, challenging theologians from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania to hear their voices as "the irruption within the irruption."[4] Feminist translation also employs strategies that resist patriarchal pressures.

African women's theologies have informed the social analysis that contributed to the formation of a CBS on Ruth in the context of sugar daddies in northern Ghana. Young women were the primary agents of retranslation in this CBS. At first, the groups of young women were cautious to broach the hidden transcript that admitted the reality of sugar daddies in their lives. Encouraged by the CBS questions and the embodied performance of a facilitator, some groups retranslated the signs they perceived in the translation of Ruth, understanding them to be sexual signals like those experienced in sugar daddy relationships. This invigorated the CBS environment, bringing laughter and playfulness into the dialogue. Engaging with older seamstresses (women) and a group of tailors (men) broadened the social dialogue, bringing occasional injections of energy into the discussions.

The prosperity gospel continues to produce and sanction sugar daddy relationships, dividing women from each other. There is much patient work to be done if African women's theologies are to gain ground. Modest steps are required for groups of women seeking to construct collective and inclusive theologies of survival. Dialogically rereading, retranslating, and reinterpreting the book of Ruth offers the additional resource of the language of biblical narrative to women as a language of infrapolitics, a religious and political language for women (and men) to play with as they try to gain ground without risking retribution, in patriarchal cultural and neoliberal economic contexts.

Chapter 6 branched from gender to ethnicity in political and religious translation. In the neocolonial/postcolonial era, ethnicity has been a source of conflict and instability that is tearing Africa's social body apart. The intertribal, intratribal, and intraethnic dynamics of recent ethnic conflicts were explored. Grillo's research reveals that women's bodies are being assaulted in ethnic conflicts, eroding the moral and material power African ethnic societies were founded upon. Contemporary Bible translation in northern Ghana (and elsewhere in Africa) is being practiced in this kind of ethnically charged and patriarchal context. Conventional Bible translation practice lends itself to being manipulated by elites who are

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[4] Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective," 247–48.

struggling for power in local contexts. In some cases, women's bodies, children, and the environment are being violated in ways that further erode African community. In response, a CBS was constructed, which makes ideotheological suggestions that have the potential to counter neopatrimonial manipulations of ethnicity and gender. The combination of African religious resources, biblical texts, and CBS questions as prompts for retranslation, may foster transsectoral resistance rather than acquiescence to the categories constructed by missionary-colonial translation.

Some Conclusions

These chapters indicate there are multiple trajectories in every era, and yet each era has distinctive material practices, a Zeitgeist, what Mbembe calls its "languages of life."[5] According to Mbembe's theory of entanglement, eras of time "interlock" with each other, "each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones."[6] A postcolonial practice cannot return to the precolonial era without engaging the colonial era. Hence, the title of this book suggests that postcolonial translation must deal with the colonial-era translation-as-invasion paradigm.

In northern Ghana, Bible translation approaches that attempt to sidestep the ideologies of writing by urging rural African communities to embrace their orality at the expense of writing can be difficult for marginalized language communities to accept.[7] Postcolonial practices must deal with the sociopolitical ramifications of the translation-as-invasion paradigm. That may be why African Bible translation has continued to embrace vernacular writing despite its ideological ambiguity.[8] However, standard written Bible translation practice, even when placed in a postcolonial translation theology frame, assumes the hierarchy of elite sectoral perspectives. Other sectoral postcolonial perspectives are largely "spoken for" through the processes of standard translation practice.

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[5] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 15.

[6] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 16.

[7] The following anecdote comes from my personal experience: "A church-planting mission organization that has used primarily oral Bible teaching methods has found the same resistance to strictly oral methodology from new converts in the Bikɔɔm area. One Bikɔɔm Christian who had been discipled in the storytelling tradition of this church told the American missionary who taught him, 'You are scattering us like tortoise meat in the forest.' The Bikɔɔm traditional stories typecast the tortoise as a very traditional slow-moving animal that other wiser animals tend to cheat. The tortoise is often compared to the Bikɔɔm people themselves who have clung to their traditions, do what is right, and often feel cheated by other people. The statement implies that by using only traditional methodologies (i.e., exclusively oral) the missionaries are contributing to their exploitation or at least not helping them overcome it" (Esala, "Implementing Skopostheorie in Bible Translation," 315).

[8] Esala, "Ideology and Bible Translation."

By contrast, contextual Bible study constructs a postcolonial practice that attempts to combine the life-giving elements of sectoral dialogue that are present in precolonial discourses of oral tradition, bringing them into literate colonial-era dialogue through writing group statements on paper in a dialogical fashion. In other words, CBS does not attempt to repristinate precolonial-era translation or begrudgingly continue with the ideologies of colonial-era translation. CBS returns precolonial agency to sectors that were effectively removed from legal public discourse by the translation-as-invasion paradigm. CBS accomplishes this by sharing colonial-era strategies with all sectors of society, such as ideologies of writing, and interpreting a text through a close reading. CBS encourages each sector to reinterpret their traditions' texts from their own lived experience, reasserting the validity of their social perspective in public discourse through collaborative cross-sectoral reading, speaking, and writing practices. CBS incorporates aspects of the precolonial and colonial eras into its experimental postcolonial practice, and it does so in a way that serves the ideological interests of marginalized groups in the present.

In the present time of entanglement, CBS as emancipatory postcolonial retranslation, responds to powerful acts of invasion, resisting invasion, using various strategies guided by a set of values. Colonial translation has left little room for neutrality. Translation as invasion is an ongoing action that contemporary translations engage with in one way or another. To make its response to invasion explicit in process and purpose, CBS prompts people to retranslate for postcolonial liberation. CBS works with the egalitarian dialogical ideologies of oral tradition but also makes use of literate ideologies through its structured set of questions that return groups to the study's overt ideotheological orientation. As an emancipatory postcolonial practice, CBS urges groups to participate inside biblical narratives, sometimes suggesting interpretations that go against a dominant ideotheological reception of a text.[9] Participants are invited to reimagine the dynamics involved in narratives.

The kinds of retranslations marginalized groups articulate as they participate in biblical narratives in the African time of entanglement are not ordered in the way conventional translation is ordered. The dialogical retranslations that communities articulate during CBS are partial. One moment, they focus on appropriating a text; the next moment, they shift to retell the story of the biblical narrative. CBS as emancipatory retranslation is characterized by a fluid moving back and forth between the biblical text and the contemporary context. CBS

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[9] "In the case of 1 Timothy we see the power of an emerging androcentric interpretation of Genesis 2–3, initially proposed by this text and then taken up by centuries of ecclesiastical interpretation. Here there is real [ideological] grain! The grain of the history of interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:8–15 is unambiguously against women, and so it should not surprise us that it takes considerable effort and perseverance to read against this grain" (West, "Taming Texts of Terror," 165).

participants do not restrict themselves to translating the narrative world alone. CBS as a process of retranslation is intended to develop pathways for life-giving community engagement with a biblical text in the present.

CBS responds to the ideologies of narrative and canonical ordering by using burning issues in the community's experience as a summons for what texts to engage, or what parts of a narrative to engage. For instance, the study of Ruth chose not to engage Ruth 4. The story of Ruth giving birth to Obed lends itself to serving royal patriarchal agendas in the past and the present.[10] As socially engaged theologians, the facilitators felt that this chapter was not useful to our desire to be on the young women's side, so we chose to skip it for the time being.

Even though we chose to skip engaging Ruth 4, ideologically difficult texts can be retranslated through CBS. If a community desires to engage a text of terror, it is those groups who are most likely to be marginalized by the text who should take the lead in retranslating the text, governed by the logic of liberation.[11] Re-translating a text of terror is a task that should not be undertaken lightly because texts can wound people.[12] Indeed, scholars of liberation hermeneutics indicate that marginalized groups often prefer an indirect approach to texts that marginalize them, rather than immediately engaging texts that terrorize them. Nevertheless, there may come a time for encountering a text of terror. Phyllis Trible uses the story of Jacob wrestling at the Jabbok as "a paradigm for encountering terror."[13] Those who retranslate these texts must recognize that both the Bible and transla-tion are sites of struggle. The strange figure with whom Jacob wrestles will wound, but retranslators hold on, seeking healing of wounds and a blessing. "If the blessing comes—and we dare not claim assurance—it does not come on our terms. Indeed, as we leave the land of terror, we limp."[14]

CBS reworks the nature and purpose of collaboration involved in translation. The translation-as-invasion paradigm involves justifying the alliance between

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[10] On the other hand, Phyllis Trible argues that the women in Ruth 4 reclaim the narrative from the patriarchal attempt to coopt it (Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 194–95; Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 85).

[11] Women in the church may consider retranslating 1 Tim 2:8–15 (West, "Taming Texts of Terror"). Communities practicing alternative sexualities have retranslated Gen 19. See Gerald O. West, Charlene Van der Walt, and Kapya John Kaoma, "When Faith Does Vio-lence: Reimagining Engagement between Churches and LGBTI Groups on Homophobia in Africa," *HvTSt* 72.1 (2016): 3.

[12] Gerald West highlights the argument of Itumeleng Mosala regarding the ideology behind biblical texts at their sites of production and reproduction. "The concern of Mosala is not that black theologians *cannot* read any text, no matter what its encoding, against the grain, but that they *ought not* to do this without *recognizing* what they are doing. The danger, Mosala warns, is that apparently tamed texts may come back to hurt and haunt us" (West, "Taming Texts of Terror," 161).

[13] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 4.

[14] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 5.

(neo)colonial representatives and an elite (royal) class to rule in an efficient and low-cost manner.[15] CBS as retranslation reworks the alliance of the translation-as-invasion paradigm. The nature and purpose of CBS's accountabilities attempt to do more than move beyond invasion; they work toward the inverse of invasion.[16]

The inverse of invasion does not mean the oppressed become the oppressors, or that the theologian or activist become revolutionary leaders of the people. The inverse of invasion means reworking the inner logic of invasion. Part of the way CBS reworks the inner logic of invasion is by focusing on an emancipatory rehumanizing process as it works toward an emancipatory purpose. The vision of what social emancipation (the purpose) will look like involves a discussion initiated by groups that the invasive system has structurally disadvantaged. CBS works with the marginalized within the marginalized, trusting the pain-bearers of society to lead the way toward well-rounded social healing—the inverse of invasion.

CBS's theory of change maintains that society's pain-bearers are in the best position to help society find its way toward social healing from the inside of social wounds out. The first two case studies in chapters 4 and 5 bear this out, at least in a preliminary way, while the third case study in chapter 6 is yet to be practiced. When groups who have suffered the most from a social wound feel safe enough to practice their hidden transcripts, they begin healing their social wound, without simply reversing the wounding process with an intention to injure. People living with bodily disabilities demonstrated their capacity for gracious and gentle care of their family members, some of whom have been a part of the wounding process. (See section 4.3.5 above.)

CBS's theory of change works with a modest, but important role for the activist intellectual in social change.[17] The activist translator can fill the role of the activist intellectual.[18] For the activist, the inverse of invasion means marginalized groups must lead transformation. Transformation of all actors moves beyond flat

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[15] Where a royal class did not exist in the precolonial era, colonial translation undertaken by administrators working with local translators contributed to creating the royal class by establishing hierarchy. This was the strategy in the North-West province (Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History*, 72). Where a royal class had developed in the precolonial era, colonial translation strengthened the royal class into a tribal caste system, creating layers of hierarchy using the translation of precolonial invasion narratives to help establish the logical justification for the caste system. (See section 6.1.)

[16] The values of CBS help reconfigure the nature of CBS's collaboration. (See section 4.2.2.)

[17] West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 111; Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival," 382. (See section 5.2.3.)

[18] In Bible translation, consultants are often biblical scholars and local translators are trained teachers or pastors. Literacy facilitators are often organic intellectuals, some of whom will have the giftings to facilitate CBS.

activism, threading the line between engagement and isolation in a way that respects the sacred agency of local actors in the process of transformation.

The case studies with people living with disabilities and with young women in sugar daddy relationships revealed that facilitators must trust the process and not attempt to manufacture results. Established alliances of domination will not change because a few people felt invigorated by a CBS experience. Activist translators must trust marginalized groups whose bodies are on the line in these engagements. If they are moving slowly, it may be that more powerful sectors of society are actively monitoring marginalized groups, or it may mean that the groups themselves are not in solidarity with one another. CBS as retranslation, often requires patient engagement, including an expectation of the necessity of the ongoing transformation of the activist translator.

The CBS experiences with young women in chapter 5 illustrate the difficulty of achieving safe spaces for groups not in solidarity. For young women, the neoliberal economy supported by neoliberal Christianity has broken up their internal solidarity. In this difficult situation, biblical narratives offer a strategic linguistic resource. As marginalized groups of women practice retranslating the story of Ruth, they learn to wield a biblical language of infrapolitics. They can speak about their situation using biblical characters and biblical narratives as a shield of protection. The language of infrapolitics offers marginalized groups the opportunity to gain important ground in social dialogue with less risk to themselves.[19]

Chapters 4 and 5, taken together, illustrate the power and limitations of agency in retranslating for liberation. CBS offers an opportunity to share the emancipatory experience of translating with all actors involved in translation, bringing a translation's sites of production closer together with its sites of reception. In chapter 4, I argued that the bodily entanglements of marginalized groups of people living with disabilities give them important perspectives on the way the biblical text is entangled with the present. The insights of people living with disabilities and young women in sugar daddy relationships are crucial to understanding particular entanglements with the biblical text. These entanglements can help turn and re-turn the text into a resource for liberation.

Chapter 5 problematized the notion of agency. Women in South Africa are asserting their agency to engage in blesser relationships. They assert their agency to acquire and consume the goods of neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberal Christianity implicitly argues that it is every person's God-given right to have consumer goods. These theologies help women justify their choices. Some women are using their agency in neoliberal Christianity with an individualist goal rather than a collective social goal. African women's theologies have encouraged women to use their agency to work towards egalitarian relationships with men while remaining in solidarity with one another. CBS helps marginalized groups retranslate as

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[19] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 200.

agents, but its process and purpose construct retranslation for collective liberation rather than individualist liberation.

Chapter 6 argued that conventional Bible translation takes place within a context where ethnicity is being manipulated to consolidate the traditional power of chieftaincy, the political power of representation, and economic power. Women are being targeted and suffer moral, spiritual, and physical degradation. As women suffer, so the community suffers. Conventional postcolonial/neocolonial Bible translation is ineffective in mounting a response and may even lend itself to being coopted by the agendas of postcolonial elites for neocolonial ends. An emancipatory postcolonial approach requires retranslating with a political and economic edge, combining indigenous religious resources for resistance. To be effective, retranslating for resistance in the 21st century will work towards trans-sectoral solidarities across gender, ethnic, and religious lines.

A Remaining Question for (Biblical) Translation

As I conclude this argument for emancipatory postcolonial retranslation of biblical texts produced on the margins of African communities, how can these marginal retranslations influence African postcolonial translation as a discipline, and the industry of Bible translation itself?

African scholars have mixed assessments of what Bible translations have done and are doing in African contexts. This book argues that the translation-as-invasion paradigm is entangled with postcolonial translation and continues to cause harm on the methodological, social, and theological levels. With Willie James Jennings, we can say there is both "honor and shame" in the entangled legacies of Bible translation, legacies that persist in theological education specifically, and in Western education, more broadly.[20] But there is potential at the interface of African translation theology and liberation hermeneutics to move beyond the translation-as-invasion paradigm in (Bible) translation.[21]

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[20] "Translation opens up endless possibilities of boundary-crossing freedom and life.… Translation, however, also opened up endless possibilities of boundary-crossing slavery and death. To be a teacher is to be in a powerful position, and to be a translator is to be close to ultimate power, the power to call worlds into existence through words, spoken and written. Unfortunately, Christians, especially Christians who would come to be called Europeans did not handle that power well. In the history of Christianity and in the history of missions, worlds formed around the bodies of teachers and translators. The specific world I am concerned with here is the world of education that formed around the colonial legacies of teachers and translators and gave us Western education and, specifically, theological education." See Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*, Theological Education between the Times (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 7–8.

[21] Kwame Bediako saw "liberation theology as the new method of theological reflection based on 'the southward shift of the church'" (Hartman, *Kwame Bediako*, 158; Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 163).

A contribution this book makes is to methodologically privilege the perspectives of pain-bearers in translation processes. When pain-bearers in a society actively retranslate biblical texts as part of their emancipation, the pain-bearers of society have the potential to articulate a positive vision of sectoral and collective flourishing from the inside of the social body to the outside. I am calling this the inverse of invasion in translation process and purpose.

African scholars and translators who make African postcolonies their home are open to dialoguing about the entangled legacy of missionary-colonial presence and practices in Bible translation. But what about the Bible translation industry? The Bible translation industry is ramping up its activity and production in marginal African contexts. How can the industry be remade to be responsive to the margins of the communities that Bible translation activities seek to engage? This is a question not only about overt missionary-colonial presence but about methodology.[22] What can be done about the legacy of missionary-colonial dispositions embedded in translation methods as much as in human bodies?

EuroAmerican churches, mission agencies, and institutions have a responsibility to shift the nature of their engagement in postcolonial contexts, to become learners with their siblings in the majority world.[23] This is especially important for the discipline of translation and the Bible translation industry, which is still active in African contexts.

For those "border-crossing" translators who have found themselves betwixt and between seemingly disparate postcolonial contexts, I want to highlight Marion Grau's work because Grau explicitly argues for engaging and recalibrating missionary-colonial legacies across contexts. Grau urges that interested parties from Europe, America, and the postcolonies engage with each other to "map possibilities for mutual transformation, beyond dialogue, and beyond simple pursuits of conversion without considering the impact on the transformation of life and society."[24] Unfortunately, what often happens when EuroAmerican churches and entities start coming to terms with some of the damage that missionary-colonial legacies have caused, many respond by turning away in shame.[25] They disengage

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[22] The COVID-19 pandemic has proven not to be decisive in influencing missionary-colonial legacies that persist in the Bible translation industry.

[23] De Gruchy, "Reversing the Biblical Tide."

[24] Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 13.

[25] "At the beginning of the twenty-first century, many progressive and mainline Christians, haunted by shame and white guilt regarding the dismal history of colonial missions, seem doubtful about a sense of mission that goes beyond the relief and development agencies they fund and support. As they turn away in shame and disgust from what they associate with mission—colonial exploitation, the export of Western mores and capitalism, conservative proselytizing, divisive hate speech against sexual minorities, and the preaching of prosperity—there seem only few spaces in which to articulate a resolute progressive Christian witness in praxis that gives account of the full complexity of the laments and

from theological and translational dialogue for mutual transformation with colleagues in postcolonial contexts. This is to their own detriment because remnants of the legacies they are ashamed of persist in their social bodies and their disciplinary methods. Instead, Grau argues for active engagement in paradoxical and polydox discussions across postcolonial divides.[26] Grau describes this method as hermeneutical and theological "circumambulation."[27] Grau considers case studies of "merchants, missionaries, [and] mercenaries" across time and space that have structural or topical similarity.[28] Grau moves in concentric circles around the four corners of the earth: north, west, south, and east. As Grau journeys, Grau looks for patterns across diverse "zones of interaction."[29] Grau is not looking for sameness but complexifies perceived ideotheological similarity across contexts.[30] Grau also identifies themes in one time and context that may have implications relevant to another context at another time.[31]

Affirming the theological orientation of liberation theologies, Grau argues for "polydox engagement that moves beyond the "apartheid of theory" that defined previous decades of theological engagement."[32] Grau employs methods from different contexts in an attempt "to show the multilayered thinking and action

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losses, the hybridities and tensions, as well as the chances and hopes of polydox soteriologies. They also turn away from their many fellow Christians in Africa, Asia, and the Americas" (Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 15). See also Catherine Keller and Laurel C. Schneider, *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation* (London: Routledge, 2011)*.

[26] "If paradox appears to upset, contest, or contradict formed opinions, then polydoxy contains a measure of the paradoxical, by virtue of holding multiple contingencies in tension. It resists claims to strict orthodoxy, if by that we mean the lifting up of one particular opinion as true, but it is engaged in orthodoxy as a discourse interested in reliable, resolute, and responsible claims to validity and in dynamic tension with orthopraxy" (Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 41).

[27] Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 2–3.

[28] Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 3.

[29] "The "zones of interaction" generated around frontiers are populated by tricksters and coyotes passing through, shuttling goods, meaning, and people to and fro, converting spiritual and economic currencies" (Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 12).

[30] "Rick Warren's explicit and tacit support of homophobic legislation in Uganda is a prominent example of a culture war exported, outsourced, and fought in multiple territories" (Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 23). See also Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 144–46.

[31] For example, Grau questions the limitations of some contextualizations of the gospel, an issue discussed in this book limited to African contexts, by exploring the Heliland, "a Saxon-styled rendering of gospel narratives overlaid with the values and idiom of Saxon warrior culture" Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 131. Grau observes that the Heliland, a gospel once performatively sung to resist Charlemagne's aggression, later became useful in crusades and nineteenth century nationalist projects. How does this forgotten fragment of history engage discussions of "an African Christ as chief, ancestor, or warrior" (Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 134)?

[32] Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 40.

patterns, the many motivations, juxtapositions, and pitfalls that accompany such encounters."[33]

Grau's circumambulatory polydox approach resembles some of the theoretical approaches employed in this book, including Mbembe's concept of entanglement, Sanneh's notion of reciprocity, the Comaroffs discussion of dialectical processes that link capitalism and mission, and Katz's notion of translocal topographies and counter topographies.[34]

The discussion of contextual Bible study as a form of (re)translation in chapters 4–6 illustrates aspects of at least three of Grau's emphases: postcolonial engagement, a polydox approach to mutual transformation, and circumambulation across time and space.

CBS as retranslation involves responding to colonial translation by engaging methodologically in a different mode of translating in African contexts. CBS engages with African bodies in contexts that have been excluded in colonial processes of engagement and translation. CBS as retranslation for liberation, moves beyond privileging one sectoral perspective in translation, that of established or aspiring royal patrilines. (See section 2.3.3 above.)

CBS engages the polydox dynamics of postcolonial contexts, engaging a variety of doxa, of opinions, and perspectives in a local context as marginalized sectors of people in that context observe and engage with detail in the biblical text, retranslating that detail in a dialogical fashion in pursuit of "a coalitional consciousness" undergirded by a "love hermeneutics."[35] In other words, marginalized sectors of a community use CBS to retranslate contextually relevant details in the Bible from their perspectives, in pursuit of what is lifegiving and emancipatory for that sector while still in dialogue with other sectors of the community about collective social healing and cross-sectoral flourishing.[36]

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[33] Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 283.

[34] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 172; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2:409; Katz, "On the Grounds of Globalization," 1229.

[37] Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 40.

[36] Social healing requires treating the causes of illness rather than temporarily ameliorating the symptoms. Writing from the discipline of missiology Brian Konkol offers a critique of the mission as accompaniment paradigm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Konkol argues that mission as accompaniment is a good starting point; however, its current practice does not sufficiently address neoliberalism as the dominant economic force fueling climate change and economic inequality. The dominant practice of mission as accompaniment is more akin to mission as anesthetic, treating the symptoms but not the causes of social sickness. Brian Edward Konkol, "From Anesthetic to Advocacy through Mission as Accompaniment: Towards a More Effective Response from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Global Mission to Mechanistic Dehumanization" (PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2016), 25. Konkol draws on Grau's notion of circumambulation and argues for a "converted" practice of mission as accompaniment (Konkol, "From Anesthetic to Advocacy," 260–63).

The challenge I am addressing in this closing section is how to reapply this postcolonial form of retranslation back into industries and disciplines that were founded by missionary-colonial legacies. These legacies are embedded in the methods, discourses, and practices of the Bible translation industry.

Grau's concept of circumambulation involves making connections cross-contextually.[37] Contextual Bible study offers a cross-contextual tool that is already being adapted for European and North American contexts.[38] In other words, even though contexts are different, the method of CBS can rework missionary-colonial legacies, decolonizing the methods and practices of studying and translating the Bible. In other words, the legacy of missionary-colonial methods is just as harmful for Europe and North America as it is for Africa!

This is why CBS, as a method, seeks to reapply its insights and method back into the academic centers and publishing centers that produce Bible translations. For people from Europe and America who may feel shame about the legacies of invasion in Africa, CBS can help them rework the legacies of invasion that persist in their methods, dispositions, texts, and contexts.

Those who use CBS methodology in African contexts are committed to reworking the disciplines and industries that contain the legacies of invasion in their very methodologies. The way African scholars are reworking the discipline of biblical studies could be an example of what I am imagining in Bible translation.

In the discipline of biblical studies, contextual methodologies were once treated as peripheral to the discipline. Contextual engagement was considered an ancillary step of pastoral application to the more objective work of historical and exegetical interpretation. African biblical scholars are overt about the fact that "African life interests lie at the centre of academic African biblical interpretation."[39] African scholars and scholars from around the world recognize that all acts of interpretation, even those of mainline Western biblical scholars who use the historical-critical method, are calibrated for and embedded within their contemporary contexts. Ideotheological readings of texts are ubiquitous, even in methods that try to limit their focus to the ancient world or the ancient textual tradition. Today, it is largely recognized that all interpreters do their historical and exegetical work with overt or hidden commitments within their contemporary contexts.

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[37] Sometimes, these cross-contextual connections involve different eras of time (Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 40).

[38] John Riches, *What Is Contextual Bible Study? A Practical Guide with Group Studies for Advent and Lent* (London: SPCK, 2010). See also Hall, *Insights from Reading the Bible with the Poor*.

[39] Gerald O. West, "Interrogating the Comparative Paradigm in African Biblical Scholarship," in *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue: In Quest of a Shared Meaning*, ed. Hans de Wit and Gerald O. West, Studies of Religion in Africa 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 40.

Even the overtly emancipatory work of CBS has established itself within biblical studies as a practice of liberation hermeneutics. Scholars of CBS have refused to let go of the biblical text, reading it with all the tools of their discipline as an additional sacred resource to be offered to contemporary projects of liberation. Scholars of liberation hermeneutics find that the biblical text speaks with many voices, including the voices of poor and marginalized groups in the present, voices that are entangled with poor and marginalized communities of the ancient world, whose real presence persists in the biblical text across space and time.[40] CBS requires the collaboration of marginalized groups and biblical scholars to help discern that presence in local contexts and ancient (con)texts.

Returning to Grau's notion of circumambulation, African biblical scholars share their contextually calibrated research in African contexts and around the world. The methods African scholars use and the insights into the text and context that their choices yield can be relevant across contexts, perhaps in unexpected places.

Just as CBS has found a place in biblical studies, this book argues for its place in the transdisciplinary and polydox methodologies of translation studies, specifically in the Bible translation industry.[41] Just as contextual engagement was once seen as an ancillary step after serious exegetical work, there will be a tendency to relegate the retranslations produced in CBS as an optional activity of engagement that may take place after the main work of translation is complete. Instead, I argue that the sectoral retranslations produced through CBS processes must also reciprocally engage the method and discourses of Bible reproduction in the publishing industry and scholarly disciplines. I want to extend what I am calling the inverse of invasion, mentioned above as applied to the local level, into the disciplines and practices of translation.

The inverse of invasion begins at the local level. African translators will benefit from learning about the values and processes of CBS. CBS influences the way conventional translation programs do translation for the better. CBS differs from conventional translation in the way a translator thinks about himself or herself in relation to others. Most conventional translators have constructed their translational loyalties at least partially according to the translation-as-invasion paradigm. CBS invites translators to rework their translational loyalties so they are partially constituted by marginalized groups in their contexts. (See section 5.3.2.2 above.)

I recognize that not all translators will be gifted facilitators of CBS. They can still be involved with African colleagues who are equipped to facilitate CBS in their contexts. Translators and emerging CBS facilitators can learn how to adapt

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[40] West, "Redaction Criticism as a Resource,'" 535.
[41] Babli Moitra Saraf, "Translation-Transdiscipline?," *Translation* 1 (2012): 107–15.

CBS for their contexts by working with experienced CBS facilitators affiliated with the Ujamaa Centre.[42]

Even if conventional translators do not facilitate CBS in their context, they can participate in CBS as careful listeners. After listening to the rereadings, retranslations, and reinterpretations of participants of CBS, there is a place for conventional translators who are gifted in the use of language to retranslate the biblical text in ways that work within the guilds of professional translation.[43] Conventional translators translate differently than the CBS participants. While the retranslations of CBS participants move fluidly between the textual world and the people's lived reality, professional translators will keep their translational articulations focused on the biblical narrative and the narrative flow, but they can do so in a way that maintains loyalty to marginalized groups in their audience.[44]

The inverse of invasion begins its reworking process in local contexts and translation offices and begins to infuse the values and goals of translation agencies. CBS processes invite translation agencies to express their intentions for community transformation and community flourishing by committing to what flourishing looks for marginalized groups in local communities. What does flourishing look like from the margins? What kind of social transformation is necessary to foster that kind of flourishing? How does the translated Bible play a role in such flourishing and transformation?

Flourishing on the margins includes a holistic life-giving vision of social healing articulated in dialogue with those who have occupied the centers of society—the inverse of invasion for mutual transformation. It may be that professional Bible translators, who are accepted by guilds of translators for their linguistic and interpretative competence, can serve as bridges between those retranslating at the

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[42] The CBS method should not be copied and pasted but recalibrated in each context. By contextually recalibrating CBS in each context, scholar-activists may avoid what Greg Urban calls "the metaculture of modernity" (Briggs, "Contested Mobilities," 287–88). See also Greg Urban, *Metaculture: How Culture Moves through the World*, Public Worlds 8 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). The Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal holds workshops where they model and teach the contextual Bible study methodology.

[43] African Bible translation is increasingly interested in translation studies and interfacing with the guilds focused on translation studies.

[44] "This article argues that CBS reorients the application of interpersonal loyalty in functional translation to marginalised groups in the host community and to source text scholars who privilege African contexts, including marginalised perspectives within African contexts, in their study of the ancient text and world. Such reorientation is theoretically important. CBS also challenges the initiators of a translation to reorient their own loyalty in relation to marginalised groups in the host audience" (Esala, "Loyalty and Liberation," 448). See also the conventional translation of Job 3 that draws from and footnotes insights from several CBS engagements at the end of the article (Esala, "Loyalty and Liberation," 453–54).

margins of African communities and those retranslating in more privileged social locations in African communities.

How does the inverse of invasion infuse Bible translation practices? The inverse of invasion cannot wait until after conventional translation has been accomplished before it begins infusing its values and dispositions into translation practice. Instead, in contexts where translation is being considered, CBS should occur before formal translation begins. CBS is more than an after-translation-activity, what is often called Scripture engagement in the industry of Bible translation. If care is not taken, the logics of invasion will relegate CBS retranslations to be optional add-ons, as niche translations, only relevant for those outside the mainstream of African communities. Instead, the inverse of invasion argues that marginalized groups, considered to be niche markets in conventional marketing, can use CBS to rework the logics of invasion that adhere in conventional Bible translation methods and practices. CBS as a decolonial method must influence how translation beyond invasion infuses translation processes in African population centers and in the Western world.

In the industry of Bible translation and in translation studies, what logic governs which texts are translated first in a community? The inverse of invasion invites African translators to hear the cries of their communities as they collaboratively make choices about which texts to translate. Another way of saying this is that guided by the lived experience of marginalized groups in their community, translators collaborate with community groups in selecting which texts to translate first. This kind of priority must flow back into the larger Bible translation industry.

African American author Vincent Wimbush has argued that, historically, for African communities, the time when the Bible first comes into a community is a formative time. All subsequent engagements are, to some extent, built upon those first engagements.[45] CBS methodology prefers that communities work through biblical texts in a way that brings life rather than death for marginalized groups within a community. Once communities have retranslated texts in a way that brings them life, subsequent (professional or otherwise) postcolonial retranslations are more likely to be received in the same way.

CBS (re)introduces biblical texts to a community based on themes or burning issues that the community identifies. When a community chooses to address an issue it identifies as a motivation for engaging a biblical text, then contextual concerns drive choices of text and canon. Contextual concerns drive a community's entrance into and out of a text. The choice of textual engagement is motivated by something inside the community's experience, not something outside the community's experience. CBS argues the ideotheological choice of translational ordering should be chosen by the community's calling and desire for thorough-going collective liberation, rather than some other ideotheologically motivated choice.

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[45] Vincent L. Wimbush, "Reading Texts Through Worlds, Worlds through Texts," *Semeia* 62 (1993): 131.

Furthermore, the epistemological privilege of poor and marginalized groups suggests that when a community engages a biblical text motivated by a theme, they must take care to enter into the text on the side of those who are most vulnerable. From this positionality, the CBS questions offer the participants calibrated resources for liberation from within the discipline of biblical studies relevant to the study's theme. Then, the vulnerable group's experience with the translated text is more likely to heal the community rather than further wound it.

Postcolonial translators who carefully listen to those emancipatory retranslations/reinterpretations articulated by marginalized members of their community are more likely to produce conventional retranslations that are accountable to marginalized groups in their communities. More importantly, communities are more likely to receive those conventional retranslations in ways that are concomitant with their earlier receptions, receptions that have already been calibrated to limit harm and maximize life-giving trajectories for social healing.

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Modern Authors Index