

ENCOUNTERING THE MBUTI PYGMIES
A Challenge to Christian Mission in the Democratic
Republic of the Congo

by

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I declare that “**Encountering the Mbuti Pygmies: A Challenge to Christian Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Signature

(Mr) MWP Kamuha

10 June 2013

Date

To
the Pygmy peoples,
victims of discrimination
and exclusion.

We should remember them well,
for they mirror our past.
They are the living spirits of our
not so distant
hunting and gathering ancestors.

(Duffy 1996)

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MWP Kamuha

SUMMARY

This thesis explores the Mbuti Pygmies, a sub-group of the Pygmy peoples, one of the main ethnic groups of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Mbuti Pygmies are settled mostly in the Ituri rainforest, and are, with regard to Christian mission, still unreached and unchurched. The oversight of the churches vis-à-vis these people is highlighted, through this thesis, as a challenge to Christian mission. This challenge is a result of the way Christian mission is understood and undertaken in DRC, namely in the selective and exclusive way of missioning, according to which some peoples are targeted and others forsaken.

Churches in the DRC shy away from the Mbuti Pygmies probably because, on the one hand, these forest dwellers belong to the group of Pygmies whose existence as full human beings is enigmatic and very controversial. Because of the uniqueness of the Pygmy peoples in terms of physical features, culture, and way of life, on the other hand, the non-Pygmy peoples, including Christians, suffer from a kind of complex of superiority that creates in them a spirit of discrimination against the Mbuti Pygmies. As the Mbuti Pygmies are discriminated against even by Christians, it is very difficult for them to be taken into account within the mission agendas of the churches. This challenge to Christian mission is highlighted by two facts. Firstly, Christian mission is designed for all the nations to which the Mbuti Pygmies belong. Secondly, the churches, with their missional mandate to all the nations, shy away from the Mbuti Pygmies as if these people were outside the scope of Christian mission and, thus, unworthy of God's grace and love.

To remedy this challenge, with the aim of implementing Christian mission in the DRC, this study suggests a missional encounter as a way forward to addressing the Mbuti Pygmies. In practice, this may be implemented through the missionary conversion, the right perception of the Mbuti Pygmies as being fully made in the "image of God" and fully part of the "all nations", promoting formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies, and sustaining the churches by an integrated theological education.

Keywords

All Nations, Challenge(s), Christian Mission, Church(es), Conversion, Discrimination, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Encounter(ing), Formal Education, Image of God, Integrated Theological Education, Mbuti Pygmies, *Missio Dei*, Mission (missional) encounter, Northeast DRC (Ituri rainforest), Pygmy Peoples.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i> (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity)
AIM	Africa Inland Mission
B.C.	Before Birth of Jesus Christ
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
CAR	Central African Republic
CE	Communauté Emmanuel
CEBCE	Communauté des Eglises Baptistes du Congo-Est
CECA-20	20 ^{ème} Communauté Evangélique au Centrale de l'Afrique
CECCA	Communauté Evangélique du Christ au Cœur de l'Afrique
CEI	Commission Electorale Indépendante
CEIRDC	Centre d'Echange d'Informations de la République Démocratique du Congo
CEPAC	Communauté des Eglises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIM	China Inland Mission
CIS	Congo Independent State
CL	Church Leader
CM	Communauté Mambasa (Mambasa Community)
CMA	Christian and Missionary Alliance
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CNCA	Communauté Nations du Christ en Afrique
CPM	Congo Pygmy Mission
CPPA	Cadre de Politique pour les Peuples Autochtones
CWME	Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DVD	Digital Video Disk
ed(s)	editor(s)
et al.	<i>et alii</i> , and others
ETCN	Ecole de Théologie du Congo Nord (Theological School of Northern Congo)
GCOWE	Global Consultation on the World Evangelisation
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time
HAM	Heart of African Mission
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
IBE	International Bureau of Education
IM	Immanuel Mission
IMC	International Missionary Council

IRIN	Integral Regional Information Network
ISDR	Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural
LIM	Livingston Inland Mission
LCWE	Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization
MARC	Mission Advanced Research and communication Centre
MM	Mambasa Mission
MP	Mbuti Pygmy
MPC	Mbuti Pygmy Camp
n.d.	no date given
NALU	National Army of the Liberation of Uganda
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
NP	Non-Pygmy
ONWR	Okapi National Wildlife Refuge
RFI	Radio France Internationale
RM	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i>
RUPs	Remaining Unevangelized Peoples
SANRU	Santé Rurale
SDAC	Seventh Day's Adventist Church
SOWIP	State of the World's Indigenous Peoples
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
STIs	Sexual Transmitted Infections
SWG	Strategy Working Group
TEF	Theological Education Fund
UAM	Unevangelized Africa Mission
UFM	Unevangelized Fields Mission
ULPGL	Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UK	United Kingdom
UPC	Université Protestante au Congo (Congo Protestant University)
US(A)	United States (of America)
USB	Université Shalom de Bunia (University Shalom of Bunia)
VEM	Verbundene Evangelische Mission (United Evangelical Mission)
v(v)	verse(s)
vol(s)	volume(s)
WCC	World Council of Churches
WEC	Worldwide Evangelization Crusade
WMC	World Missionary Conference

All the abbreviations related to the NGOs working among the Pygmy peoples are listed and explained in footnote 11. Moreover, scripture quotations are mostly taken from the English Standard Version (ESV), whereas the biblical references are used according to the model of the New English Translation Bible (NET).

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Chapter One

ORIENTATIONS TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Understood, undertaken, influenced mostly by patterns of the last two centuries, and branded by both colonial ideology and the expansion of the pioneering missions in the world, Christian mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) needs to be rethought in order to be more relevant for the Congolese people today, including the Mbuti Pygmies. With regard to globalisation, the consequences of which currently present both brand-new challenges and brand-new opportunities for Christian mission, Ahonen (2000:10) has realised so well that “the Christian church needs to rethink its responsibility for mission.” This is what the present study intends to investigate.

There are, indeed, a number of academic studies on Christian mission in the DRC. Carried out in the field of the history of missions, these studies deal mostly with the history and assessment of the achievements and growth of the traditional Christian missions, mostly within the framework of regional and denominational boundaries (cf. Lagergren 1970; Nelson 1989; Stanley 1992; Kasongo 1998). This means that the peoples among whom no traditional mission societies have been established are simply omitted from the Christian mission studies and action. As a result, one is justified in thinking of a stationary rather than a dynamic mode of perceiving and carrying out Christian mission in that country.

Taking this statement into account, this study intends to investigate the possibility of a mission encounter¹ with an important, but largely neglected, people within the Christian mission agenda in the DRC, the Pygmy peoples.² These Pygmy peoples are an integral part of over 250³ main ethnic groups of the DRC. They are settled throughout the country, except for the province of Bas-Congo and the city province of Kinshasa (World Bank Report 2009; CPPA 2010; Bikopo & Perodeau 2011). While the scope of Christian mission, according to Scriptures, is primarily the “all nations” throughout the whole world (cf. Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-18; Acts 1:8), in the DRC, however, Christian mission still seems to be carried out in a very limited and selective way. In the effort devoted to mission encounters, for instance, some groups of people seem to be more privileged than others. Mission activities, therefore, still seem to be limited to their historical paths. Among those who are the least targeted within church mission⁴ endeavours are the marginalised and vulnerable groups, mostly the Pygmy peoples.

Considering that the primary scope of Christian mission is the “all nations”, the issue relating to the Pygmy peoples is by no means a small challenge to Christian mission in DRC. To meet this challenge to Christian mission this study provides an exploration of the encountering approach to mission. This will be made possible through the case study of one of the major

¹Throughout this study, the concept of “mission encounter” is also referred to as “missional encounter”.

²Grammatically speaking, the term “pygmy” does not consist of a specific group of people. It is rather used as an adjective related to various people groups worldwide whose average height is unusually low. This is often used in a pejorative way, since it mostly refers to the shortness of both human beings and animals. Because the term “pygmy” involves various groups of people worldwide, including the DRC, in this study it will sometimes be necessary to make use of the phrase “Pygmy peoples” or “Pygmy people groups”. This does not imply ignoring the usual plural nature of the term “people”.

³In addition to the number of 250 main people groups (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>), the DRC, according to spoken dialects, numbers more than 460 sub-groups.

⁴In the course of this study, the terms “mission of the church” and “Christian mission” will be used interchangeably. While the term “mission” will mostly be used to refer to God’s mission, the *missio Dei*, the term “Christian mission” will be used especially to refer to the mission of the church.

group of the Pygmy peoples in the DRC, namely the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri rainforest in the northeast part of the country.

As a starting point to the current study, this introductory chapter consists of the statement of the research problem, the research question, the aims and objectives of the study, the rationale of the study, the scope and limitations of the study, the research methods, the review of relevant literature, and the structural overview of the study.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

It is demonstrated, through scholars such as Trilles (1931; 1945), Schebesta (1951; 1952), Turnbull (1961; 1965; 1966; 1976; 1983), Vansina (1965), Bahuchet (1979), Cornet (1989), Bailey (1991), Duffy (1996), and Wheeler (2000), that the Pygmy peoples are part of the Central African populations and some of more than 460 ethnic groups of the DRC. Their existence as full human beings is, however, enigmatic and very controversial in Central Africa as well as in the DRC. This issue has four dimensions:

- Firstly, the Pygmy peoples are probably not well known by the non-Pygmy people, both Africans and foreigners.
- Secondly, the Pygmy peoples are different from most people due to their slight height, particular habitat, ways of life, and culture. This results in many internal challenges as a consequence of the forest environment lifestyle.
- Thirdly, almost no one cares about the Pygmy peoples so that they have tended to become the “others”, seldom talked about within both general social life and the church.

- Fourthly, the Pygmy peoples face many challenges as a result of the way they are living within their forest environment as well as the way they are perceived by the non-Pygmy people.

Who are the Pygmy peoples? What is their real situation in the DRC? These are key questions that need to be examined in order to identify the major problem that this study seeks to tackle.

1.2.1 Who are the Pygmy peoples?

Anthropologists, ethnologists, historians, and other scholars describe the Pygmy peoples as all the people in the world the average height of whose men is less than 150 cm (4 feet 11 inches). The small height, from which the term “pygmy” has been derived,⁵ has become the foremost characteristic feature that identifies the Pygmy peoples. Stokes (Prayer for Afrika: Day 29) makes it clear in the following terms:

The term Pygmy is used to refer to diminutive people. European explorers and colonists used this term to describe the small-framed forest peoples they encountered in the Congo rain forest. The name has since stuck as an identifier for all such small-framed groups in the region even though it is sometimes regarded as derogatory.

Most of these peoples live in forests or on their fringes mostly as hunters and gatherers, living partially, but not exclusively on the wild products of their environment. Turnbull (1961; 1965; 1983) describes the Pygmy peoples as “classic forest peoples” probably because they identify themselves closely with the forest, which they consider to be the centre of their intellectual and spiritual life.

⁵ The term “pygmy” derives from the Greek word *pygme*, which refers to a unit of measure denoting the distance between a man’s elbow and his knuckles.



Figure 1.1: Average stature of a man Bantu (160 cm) and of a man Mbuti Pygmy (120 cm)

Among the Pygmy populations, there are a number of Asian descents, such as the Vedas from the island of Ceylon, the Semang of Malacca peninsula, the Aetas of Philippine islands, and the populations of Andaman's islands of India in the gulf of Bengale (Cornet 1982:3). Other Pygmy groups are found in central Papua New Guinea, in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brazil. In the Philippine islands, the members of the Aeta and Agta tribes are considered to be the indigenous people of the country. They are perhaps descendants of the first human beings who settled the islands during prehistoric times, before the Malayan migrations. Those Pygmy groups are commonly known as *Negritos*,⁶ that is, those who are characterised by shorter-than-average height (Steinberg 2006). Some Pygmy groups maintain their traditional way of life based on hunting and gathering, while others have abandoned this way of life to follow a settled agricultural existence. In addition, most of Pygmy groups often speak the languages of their neighbours, and are progressively being acculturated.

⁶ Assigned to the Pygmy peoples during the Spanish colonial period, the term *Negritos* identifies only the Asian Pygmy peoples. The correspondent term that identifies the African Pygmies is *Pygmid*.

In Africa, the Pygmy populations live especially in the central area, the great and virgin equatorial rainforest, from the Atlantic shore to Rwanda and Uganda, via Cameroon, Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, and Congo Kinshasa. In this huge African belt, which consists of the second thickest rainforest in the world after the Amazon in America, the Pygmy populations are thought to be the earliest inhabitants dating back to more than two thousand years ago. In the course of time, they have been pushed south and southeast in the savannahs by the invading *Negroid*⁷ groups. Among the important invaders are hordes of Bantu people from Nigeria and the Cameroon highlands, who have further displaced the Pygmy populations and greatly limited their habitat (cf. McGavran & Riddle 1979: 40). The Democratic Republic of the Congo Strategic Framework for the Preparation of a Pygmy Development Program (World Bank Report 2009:12) reads, “At the beginning of the first millennium, these Pygmy groups were confronted by the arrival of Bantu people, natives of the areas around Lake Chad who were forced to move south due to the desertification of the Sahara.” In spite of their dispersion and displacement, African Pygmy populations are still living into the great rainforest of the Congo Basin as well as in its surrounding savannahs. As the DRC contains almost a third part of the huge and dense equatorial rainforest, it is also believed to have the largest number of African Pygmy populations.

Though the Pygmy peoples are found in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and even in America as virtually similar peoples, blood typing and other studies indicate that they are all genetically distinct from one another and have independent origins (Pygmy in Encarta 2005). In view of that, the key problem of this study consists, not of the Pygmy people groups as a whole, but rather of the African Pygmy peoples settled in the northeast DRC, known as the Mbuti Pygmies.

⁷ The *Negroid* human race in Central Africa and the DRC as well consists of the *Bantu*, the *Nilotes*, the *Hamitics*, and the *Sudanic* people.

More will be said about these African Pygmy peoples, namely the Mbuti Pygmies, in the next chapter.

1.2.2 Overall situation of the Pygmy peoples in DRC

The situation of the Pygmy populations in DRC can be understood through a number of facts and challenges, both internal and external. In view of the facts, which are perceived by the non-Pygmies as internal challenges, the Pygmies live, as a result of forest environment, in squalid conditions in temporary or semi-permanent structures, with little or no security of tenure. These conditions isolate them from other Congolese citizens. Moreover, the Pygmy peoples seem to be a community that is so introverted that it almost completely ignores all that is going on outside its natural forest milieu. Where there are no external pressures, the community feels comfortable and concerned only with daily survival, without minding about the future.

Externally, the Pygmy peoples are facing several challenges. Some of these challenges (cf. African People and Culture 1996; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:217; Erasing the board 2004; Musafiri 2007) can be understood as:

- Seeing their rainforest homes threatened by logging, and being driven out by non-Pygmy settlers. In this respect, the Pygmy peoples are evicted from some places and see their livelihood, as well as their cultural and spiritual heritage, being transformed into national parks and forestry reserves,⁸ or farms, or simply destroyed in favour of so-called development projects.
- Being routinely deprived of their human rights by the government, which considers them to be equal citizens (Constitution DRC 2006, Art. 11 &

⁸ According the UNESCO report from <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/718>, the Okapi Wildlife Reserve covers a fifth of the ancient Ituri Forest, the home of the Mbuti Pygmies, in north-eastern DRC. This area is estimated to more than 13 700 km², that is, 1 372 625 ha.

12), but whose law does not protect them. Accordingly, the Pygmy peoples have virtually no access to basic social facilities such as education, health care, justice, sanitation, food, clothes, and they are denied development assistance. In addition, they are almost invisible in local and national government, as well as in public life and the church, and have no organised political representation.

- Suffering as a result of the low status and social discrimination that have become their lot as people groups. Discrimination by the non-Pygmy is ingrained, and the Pygmy peoples are often stereotyped as beggars and thieves. As Musafiri (2007:3) states, throughout the world, the history of indigenous people over the times is, first of all, a history of “object-like people”. Annihilated, pushed back or subjugated during the colonial times, forgotten, suppressed or bullied with regard to independence dramas, they are still subjected, put down, or *folklorised* within the nation-States in process of integration or disintegration into the world market.
- Suffering from customary beliefs according to which the Pygmy peoples possess mysterious power that protects them against poison, diseases, and death. To acquire this mysterious power, the non-Pygmy peoples often persecute the Pygmy people for alleged cannibalism and murder, and Pygmy women are raped.
- Being exploited by their neighbouring farm villagers, especially where they have lost control of the forest and its resources. In addition to this, some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) involved in providing assistance to the Pygmy peoples tend to exploit them as a “business venture” within the “forest-zoo”, rather than really trying to ensure their social well-being (cf. Mwenge⁹ 2010; Musolo W’Isuka 2011). This is also

⁹ Mwenge is a Mbuti Pygmy who is working as a Deputy Director of PIDP (*Programme d’Intégration pour le Développement du Peuple Pygmée*), one of the rare NGOs dealing with

the point of view of the Mbuti Pygmies surveyed in Epulu, Bandimaboche-Lolwa and Ndeisa-Lolwa, and in Undesiba (2010; 2012); the *Action Missionnaire pour les Nations* (2010; 2012); and of the *Ministère Evangélique des Pygmées en Afrique* (2010).¹⁰ For example, more or less 100 NGOs,¹¹ both local and international, survive thanks to

the Pygmy peoples that are created and managed by the Pygmy leaders. As a very committed defender of the human rights among his fellow Pygmy peoples, he is willing to be talked about even by using his own full name. In this study he is the MP1 (Mbuti Pygmy 1), but he will be referred to by his own name of Mwenge instead of the code MP1.

¹⁰ The *Action Missionnaire pour les Nations* (AMN) and the *Ministère Evangélique des Pygmées en Afrique* (MEPA) are two Christian NGOs that are trying to carry out Christian mission among the Mbuti Pygmies in the northeast DRC.

¹¹ It is important to mention that because of unceasing wars in DRC, assisting vulnerable people such as the Pygmy populations has become a great deal among local and foreign humanitarian NGOs. Why for only the Pygmy peoples, labelled also as indigenous people, there are more or less 100 NGOs that claim to assist within the framework of development and social integration? If indeed there were no exploitation motives, why these peoples should continue to suffer especially from the external challenges identified above? Why it seems that the more the number of the NGOs involved in assisting the Pygmy peoples increases, the more these peoples remain voiceless? Some of those NGOs both local and international are the following:

- AAPDMAC (Action d'Appui pour la Protection et la Défense des Minorités en Afrique Centrale)
- ACFD (Action Chrétienne des Femmes pour le Développement),
- ACODELPY (Action Communautaire pour le Développement Local des Autochtones Pygmées),
- ACPROD-Batwa (Action Communautaire pour la Promotion des Défavorisés Batwa),
- ACPS (Action Communautaire pour la Promotion de la Santé en milieu rural),
- ADEPEDE (Association de Développement pour la Promotion d'Education Endogène),
- ADIPA (Association pour le Développement et l'Insertion des Peuples Autochtones),
- ADIPET (Association pour le Développement Intégré des Paysans et des Enfants dans le Tanganyika),
- ADIPO (Action pour le Développement Intégral des Pygmées Originaires),
- ADPMC (Association de Développement pour la Promotion de Minorités au Congo),
- AEPYDEC (Association d'Encadrement des Pygmées pour le Développement Communautaire),
- AIFP (Association d'Intégration de la Femme Pygmée)
- AJAC (Association des Jeunes Autochtones du Congo),
- Alpha Ujuvi (which helps Pygmy peoples especially in teaching to read and write),
- AMN (Action Missionnaire pour les Nations),
- APAPE (Assistance aux Peuples Autochtones pour la Protection de l'Environnement),
- APDMAC (Action pour la Promotion des Droits des Minorités Autochtones en Afrique Centrale),
- APED (Action pour la Promotion de l'Environnement et du Développement au Kivu),

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- APDMA (Association pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits des Minorités Indigènes de Maniema),
 - APEFAPO (Action pour la Promotion et l'Encadrement de la Femme Autochtone Pygmée en Province Orientale),
 - APIPAB (Association pour la Promotion Intégrale des Peuples Autochtones Bashimbi),
 - APPL (Association pour la Promotion des Pygmées de Lokolama),
 - APRONAPAKAT (Action pour la Protection de la Nature et des Peuples Autochtones du Katanga),
 - ARAP (Action pour le Regroupement et l'Autopromotion des Pygmées),
 - BROT – Germany (Peace for the World)
 - CAMV (Centre d'Accompagnement des Autochtones Pygmées et Minoritaires Vulnérables),
 - CAPSA (Centre d'Appui à la Promotion de la Santé),
 - CBFF (Congo Basin Forest Fund),
 - CBFP (Congo Basin Forest Partership),
 - CEDEN (Cercle pour la Défense de l'Environnement),
 - CEFDHAC (Conférence sur les Ecosystèmes de Forêts Denses et Humides de l'Afrique, Centrale – Conference on Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems) ,
 - CENADEP (Centre National d'Appui au Développement et à la Participation Populaire),
 - CENDEPYG (Centre d'Encadrement et Développement des Pygmées),
 - CEPAC PROJET PYGMÉES (funded by Lakarmissionen),
 - CEPK (Centre d'encadrement des Pygmées de Kolibo),
 - CIDB (Centre International de Défense des Droits des Batwa),
 - CIDOPY (Centre d'Information et de Documentation en faveur des Pygmées),
 - CNCJA (Conseil National de Concertation des Jeunes Autochtones de la RDC),
 - COMIFAC (Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale),
 - COOPPI-Kivu (Coordination des Paysans Pisciculteurs du Kivu),
 - CPAKI (Collectif pour les Peuples Autochtones du Kivu),
 - CPPA (Cadre Politique pour les Peuples Autochtones),
 - CREF (Conservation et Réhabilitation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers),
 - DGF (Direction de la Gestion Forestière),
 - DGPA (Dynamique des Groupes des Peuples Autochtones). The DGPA includes 43 NGOs all of which deal with Pygmies issues. cf. <http://dgpa.cd/membres.html>.
 - DIPY (Dignité Pygmée),
 - DPMET (Défense et Protection des Minorités Ethniques au Congo),
 - DYPROPYPYA (Dynamique pour la Promotion des Pygmées et des Populations Autochtones),
 - EGP (Ecosystems Grand Programs) – The Netherlands,
 - ERND-Institute (Environnement, Ressource Naturelle et Développement),
 - FAAP (Fédération Africaine des Autochtones Pygmées),
 - FIPAC (Forums Internationaux des Peuples Autochtones d'Afrique Centrale),
 - FOSCAL (Forêt au Service des Communautés Autochtones Locales),
 - FPP (Forest Peoples Programs) – London,
 - GALE (Groupe Apprenons à Lire et à Ecrire),
 - GEEC (Groupes d'Etudes Environnementales du Congo),
 - GLHP (Grands Lacs Human Program),
 - GLI (Great Lakes Impact),
 - GPA (Greenpeace Afrique),
 - GTF (Groupe Travail Forêt),
 - IPROFAV (Initiative pour la Promotion de la Femme Autochtone Vulnérable),

donations and fundraisings on behalf of the Pygmy peoples, but the Pygmy peoples benefit very little from these.

- Being virtually neglected and excluded from the missional agenda of the churches. For example, among the noticeable achievements of the

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- IDK (Initiative pour le Développement du Kivu),
 - IPROFAV (Initiative pour la Promotion des Femmes Autochtones et Vulnérables),
 - IWGIA (International World Group Indigenous Affairs),
 - LAUCO (Ligue des Autochtones du Congo),
 - LINAPYCO (Ligue Nationale des Associations Autochtones Pygmées du Congo),
 - Lovemore Project among the Mbuti Pygmies. This is an individual NGO that bears the name of its initiator, Mr Lovemore, who is involved in initiating the Mbuti Pygmies in planting trees).
 - MEPA (Ministère Evangélique des Pygmées en Afrique),
 - MRG (Minority Rights Group International),
 - OCEAN (Organisation Concertée et Écologistes et Amis de la Nature),
 - ODCS (Œuvre pour le Développement Culturel et Social),
 - OSAPY (Organisation pour la Santé et l'Alphabétisation des Pygmées),
 - PAP-RDC (Programme d'Assistance aux Pygmées en RD Congo),
 - PEDDP (Projet d'Encadrement et de Défense des Droits des Pygmées),
 - PFBC (Partenariat pour les Forêts du Bassin du Congo),
 - PIDP (Programme d'Intégration pour le Développement du Peuple Pygmée),
 - PNFoCo (Programme National Forêts et Conservation),
 - PRO (Pygmy Rescue Outreach),
 - Rainforest Foundation – Norway & UK,
 - RAPHY (Réseau des Associations Autochtones des Pygmées au Congo),
 - REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation),
 - REJEP, (Réseau d'Experts et Journalistes pour l'Environnement et les Peuples Autochtones),
 - RENAPAC (Réseau National des Peuples Autochtones du Congo),
 - REPALEAC (Réseau des Populations Autochtones et Locales pour la gestion durable des Ecosystèmes Forestiers d'Afrique Centrale),
 - REPALEF/RDC (Réseau des Populations Autochtones et Locales pour la gestion durable des Ecosystèmes Forestiers de la République Démocratique du Congo),
 - REPAR (Réseau des Parlements pour la Gestion durable des écosystèmes d'Afrique Centrale),
 - REPEQ (Réseau des Pygmées de l'Equateur),
 - SEIPI (Service pour l'Education Intégrale aux Populations Inaccessibles),
 - Seventh Day Adventists Church Project for the Mbuti Pygmies,
 - SIPA (Solidarité pour les Initiatives des Peuples Autochtones),
 - Solidarité Pygmée,
 - TRAFEED (Travail en Réseau avec les Fédérations des Femmes et Enfants en Détresse),
 - UAPM (Union des Associations Pygmées de Mbandaka),
 - UEFA (Union pour l'Emancipation de la Femme Autochtone),
 - VAPYBA (Voix des Autochtones Pygmées de Bandundu),
 - VMI (Voix des Minorités Indigènes),
 - WWF-DRC (World Wild Fund for Nature – Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Christian mission in DRC, such as local church assets, for example, health care centres and hospitals, schools and universities, housing, sanitation, agricultural skills, and other development means existing throughout the country, nothing has been done in favour of the Pygmy peoples. Things are done in such a way that one would think that the church mission was, and still is, designed for the people other than the Pygmies.

The above-mentioned challenges facing the Pygmy peoples are clearly obvious challenges to Christian mission in DRC. They all need a heartfelt mission endeavour that is not happy to merely gather and nurture willing churchgoers. The paradox, however, is that no one seems to mind about the challenges that are characteristic of the really appalling situation of the Pygmy peoples, and their uncertain fate is often viewed as normal. It is in this way that the research problem of the present study can be highlighted.

1.3 Research Question

In view of the above statement of the research problem, this study seeks to examine the question, “What mission strategy would be the most appropriate for the Mbuti Pygmies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?” To unfold this main and guiding question of the study, the following sub-questions can also be posed:

- Who are the Mbuti Pygmies? Are they well known and considered by the non-Pygmy Congolese as worthy of divine grace, with the same rights and opportunities as others for the future?
- Why are the Mbuti Pygmies relegated to the margins of the Christian mission and considered as unreached and unchurched people groups in the DRC?

- How can one reach out to the Mbuti Pygmies?
- Why is it necessary to reach out to the Mbuti Pygmies through Christian mission more than in any other way? Have peoples in DRC been developed only by means of Christian mission endeavours?
- If the missional encounter is a way forward to tackle the challenges to Christian mission in the DRC with regard to the Mbuti Pygmies, how can it be done without harming these peoples in terms of their identity and culture, since those who dare to assist them are so often simply involved in terms of uprooting them from their traditional way of life?
- If the Mbuti Pygmies are considered to be fully human, created in God's image, after His likeness, is there something to learn from them within today's context of market globalisation and interaction among peoples?

As these questions are addressed in the course of the study, one would be able to identify the real causes of the uncertain fate of the Pygmy peoples in the DRC. In so doing, it would be opportune to formulate a missiological approach that the church should apply with regard to its missional responsibilities towards neglected and voiceless peoples such as the Pygmies. This is, indeed, the missional encounter. As such, the church should not shy away from advocating for love, justice, and equity in favour of all peoples and all the nations.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study aims at promoting mission encounters with neglected and voiceless peoples, namely the Mbuti Pygmies, in light of Jesus Christ's mandate for "all the nations". Jesus Christ's mandate to Christians involves mission as:

- proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom throughout the whole world as a testimony to “all the nations” (Matt. 24:14), or going into all the world and preaching the gospel to “all creation” (Mark 16:14-18);
- going and making disciples of “all the nations” (Matt. 28:18-20);
- proclaiming repentance for forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name to “all the nations” (Luke 24:45-49);
- preaching the gospel to “the poor”, proclaiming release to “the captives”, and recovery of sight to “the blind”, setting “oppressed people” free, and proclaiming the year of Lord’s favour (Luke 4:18-19); and
- to be the Lord’s witnesses “from Jerusalem to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Articulated differently, but in a coherent way, by the authors of the synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the apostles, Christ’s mandate involves the whole mission, the mission in word and in deeds, to the whole of humanity (all the nations), and, by extension, to the whole of creation.

Snyder (2001:224-5) further maintains that the gospel is good news to the whole of creation. It is global good news, good news about personal, social, ecological, and cosmic healing and reconciliation. It is also good news to the whole of creation – to the whole earth and, in fact, to the cosmos as a whole. This is what the “all things in heaven and on earth” of Paul’s letters implies. In this respect, the good news addresses God’s creation on at least four levels. Firstly, it is directed at the individual human person, calling for the conversion of heart and mind, so that life is lived after the pattern of Jesus Christ. Secondly, it is addressed to society, to social life, the structures of public life, calling for the righting of wrongs and the liberation of the oppressed. Thirdly, it is addressed also to the underlying patterns and assumptions of culture, the root paradigms that form worldviews and govern definitions of truth and reality.

Fourthly, the gospel is addressed to the whole cosmos, the rocks and mountains, the earth and planets. God speaks through His Word to the whole created order. This is the basis for what might be called “ecological evangelism”.

The Mbuti Pygmies as well as all other Pygmy groups in DRC are facing all kinds of challenges mostly as a result of non-access to the gospel. This is probably due to the fact that the scope of Christian mission, the bearer of the gospel, is not clearly defined as reaching all the nations. Mission as encounter, therefore, should first of all help tackle the major challenge of ignorance about the Pygmy peoples who are wholly part of the whole of creation. It should also open doors to the way all the other challenges facing these Pygmy peoples could be overcome. To this end, the mission encounter with the Pygmy peoples aims at considering them to be more human, both spiritually and socially, than is recognised at present.

In order to apply the above scriptural truths as the mainstay of what can be employed to implement the mission encounters with the Pygmy peoples, this study seeks to attain the following precise objectives:

1. To enhance knowledge about the Mbuti Pygmies through writings, so that the mission encounters with them can be achieved. Learning about other peoples through the mission encounters involves obedience to God, whose redemptive motive is to encounter human beings. Christians should, therefore, seek to enhance their Christian status by encountering other peoples who live elsewhere and act differently from themselves. Such mission encounters would help people understand that the Christian faith is not of such a nature as to be kept at home, but rather to be spread and shared with others. In view of such an understanding, Christian mission would have to be the locus of the continuing encounter between God and human beings.

2. To review the mission attempts among the Pygmy peoples in order to identify the gaps and to suggest new ways for the mission encounter with vulnerable and neglected peoples such as the Mbuti Pygmies. This will include:

- Enabling the mission enterprise in DRC to pay attention to the richness and complexity of human life as it is lived in different ways and in different places. In this regard, Turnbull (1983:v) is right when he maintains that “when an understanding of way of life very different from one’s own is gained, abstractions and generalizations about racial structure, cultural values, subsistence techniques, and the other universal categories of human social behaviour become meaningful”.
- Sensitising church leaders and Christians in general to the issue of poor, vulnerable, and neglected groups within communities. This would bring about consciousness in terms of caring about the human dignity and protecting the rights of voiceless people. In fact, if the Mbuti Pygmies are suffering from deprivation, discrimination, eviction, exploitation, murder, rape, and other distressing forms of treatment, this situation should be decisively tackled in order to let them experience abundant life (cf. John 10:10). Smith (Karecki 2002:18) suggests that the life of abundance demands the end of oppression through injustice and the development of a life of justice and peace. Encountering the Mbuti Pygmies thus presupposes an act of justice and peace towards them.
- Contributing to the process of accepting and integrating the Mbuti Pygmies into the dynamic of the society of the DRC as a whole, so that they also participate in the management of the *res publica*. This would not mean uprooting them brutally from their cultural heritage and identity. On the contrary, such an acceptance and integration process should be made possible through a Christian commitment that aims decisively at

overcoming all those challenges that they are facing. By so doing, Christians could be demonstrating God's love and concern for the Mbuti Pygmies.

- Encouraging Christians to become involved in intercultural mission through which a genuine fellowship with new peoples who live within cultures and contexts radically different from theirs could be made possible. As the Lord Jesus Christ says in Matthew 5:47, "If Christians greet only their brothers, what more are they doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?" The Christian faith is to be shared with everyone, whatever their culture and lifestyle.
3. To learn from people with other worldviews, lifestyles, cultures, and contexts, such as the Mbuti Pygmies. This, according to Kritzinger (2008:5), "means that we should never treat another person as 'an object of my religious conquest' but listen for the message that they might have for us". Thus, as far as the Mbuti Pygmies are created in God's image and after His likeness, just like anyone of the non-Pygmy peoples, no one should deny them the right of exercising their God-given skills and of owning the values that are different from those of the non-Pygmy peoples. The Mbuti Pygmies may even have a helpful message for the non-Pygmy Congolese. Furthermore, the way the non-Pygmy peoples live and act within their own contexts is not necessarily the best standard way of living and acting. Thus mission, as encounter, involves humility and the respect towards the others. In today's context on climate change challenges, for instance, one of the most important values that should be learned from the Mbuti Pygmies is likely to be their involvement in caring about the environment. It will be shown, in chapters two and four that, contrary to the non-Pygmy Congolese and foreigners, the Mbuti Pygmies really avoid wasting the environment around them, and that they use only what is necessary.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

This study is rooted in the researcher's pastoral experience and interest in observing various peoples in the DRC. Having lived, studied, and worked in this country as a pastor, a chaplain, and a lecturer in the field of practical theology and missiology, the author's background has enabled him to develop a critical view of the "otherness" within communities, including local churches. This phenomenon of "otherness" within communities is often emphasised in contexts of conflict, unceasing wars, and related sad events, during which almost each community is forced to retreat in order to protect itself from hardships. Such has been the socio-political and economic situation in the DRC in the last three decades. That situation did not spare the Church, but it has tested its biblical calling and its resolve in doing mission. The fate of the Pygmy people groups within the context of conflicts and the endless wars in DRC should attract the attention of scholars, sociologists, government authorities, and, especially, church leaders.

The Pygmy peoples, who had only the forest as their single shelter, have been invaded and threatened by the non-Pygmies. Despite the fact that the mismanagement of their "otherness" has been, among other things, the core reason for conflicts and wars in DRC, the Pygmy peoples seem to be the true "others" within Congolese communities. As such, they are unique "others" mainly because, in addition to their slight height, they live in the forests where they depend on uncertain providence alone. While the non-Pygmy peoples struggle in terms of socio-economic, developmental, and political issues, the Pygmy peoples struggle only in terms of what a day's roaming in the forests offers them through hunting and gathering. This way of life has created a deep "otherness" perception with regard to them. This is not to say that, before conflicts and wars in DRC, the Pygmy peoples were living better lives with regard to the various challenges that they face, but the sad events of the last

three decades have served as a beacon to disclose that these forest dwellers have had no one to care seriously about their well-being. Regarding Christian mission, it has been identified that these forest dwellers, often considered as the “others”, were not only almost completely absent from the whole life of the society but also from within the Church. It was as if Christian mission, along with the DRC government, was shying away from the Pygmy peoples. Why would such a situation be experienced within a so-called Christian country in Africa, namely the DRC? Indeed, if no one else dares to be concerned about the Pygmy people, the Church should be an exception to this rule.

It is against this background that this study has identified the “missional encounter” as a practical approach for reaching out to the Pygmy peoples and also as a challenge to the Christian mission endeavour that should be tackled. This study thus strives to illustrate the paradox between the well-known Christian status of the DRC and the unchurched status and extreme poverty and vulnerability of the Pygmy peoples living in it. Without intending to come back to the objectives, this study seeks to establish viable mission strategies that can assist churches to be more relevant and efficient among all communities, including the neglected Pygmy groups. It also seeks to provide church leaders with valuable insights into intercultural mission. About the way mission should be carried out, the study suggests that mission be understood in a holistic and comprehensive manner. The study arises, furthermore, within the context according to which mission is perceived as “belonging” to some individuals, a “belonging” that Bosch (1991:376) considers to be the “static conception of the Church”. Static perception can help neither to strengthen outwards mission, nor to make it available for the voiceless, and poor and vulnerable, such as the Pygmy groups.

In view of the above, this study is submitted to the academic scrutiny for three major reasons. Firstly, there is a scientific curiosity consisting in surveying not-well-known and neglected peoples such as the Pygmies. From there, it will

be opportune to verify, for instance, the assumption that the Pygmy peoples exist as full human beings created in God's image, after His likeness, but with a very particular culture and different ways of life. The second reason is a missiological exercise consisting of applying the encountering approach to mission as a suitable mission strategy to address the Pygmy peoples. The third reason is the necessity for the Church to commit herself to the carrying out of Christian mission in a comprehensive and holistic mode; that is, to consider it in all its aspects, both in word and in deeds.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study is not intended to be a handbook that addresses or answers all the challenges to Christian mission in the DRC, and even less all the problems of all the Pygmy populations living in that country. Rather, it adheres (Scheyvens & Storey 2003:10) to the conviction according to which much can be learned from reading about the experiences and problems of others, and how these have been dealt with. Thus, in order to establish the boundaries, exceptions, reservations, and qualifications, as required by any scientific research (Creswell 1994:110), this thesis is circumscribed within the framework of the theology of mission applied to the case study of the Mbuti Pygmies in the northeast DRC.

It should be pointed out that the Pygmy peoples consist of several groups scattered over a vast area in Central Africa of which the DRC itself covers the most important part. These people are distributed among three main groups: the Bambenga, who are settled in the Western Congo Basin, including Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the north-western part of the DRC; the Batwa or Bacwa, settled from the Great Lakes Region to the western DRC; and the Bambuti or Mbuti Pygmies, settled in the north-east part of the DRC, mainly in the Ituri rainforest. Because, in to the purpose of being precise and concise, it is not possible to survey all the

Pygmy groups, this study is limited to the group of the Mbuti Pygmies. In the DRC, the Mbuti Pygmies are found in the Ituri District and in the surrounding territories of Beni and Lubero in the North Kivu province and also of Bafwasende and Wamba in the Orientale province.

Ituri rainforest, the home of the Mbuti Pygmies



Figure 1.2: The Ituri rainforest in the northeast DRC

Source: http://www.lardc.com/zaire/carte_politique.php

The main areas where the Mbuti Pygmies are settled in the Ituri rainforest, which covers lands beyond the administrative District of Ituri, and which consists of the study area, can be seen more clearly on the following map. This is the enlarged format of the encircled part within the *figure 1.2*. Its limitation, however, highlighted by a dotted red line, consists only of the precise area of the field that has been visited by the researcher.

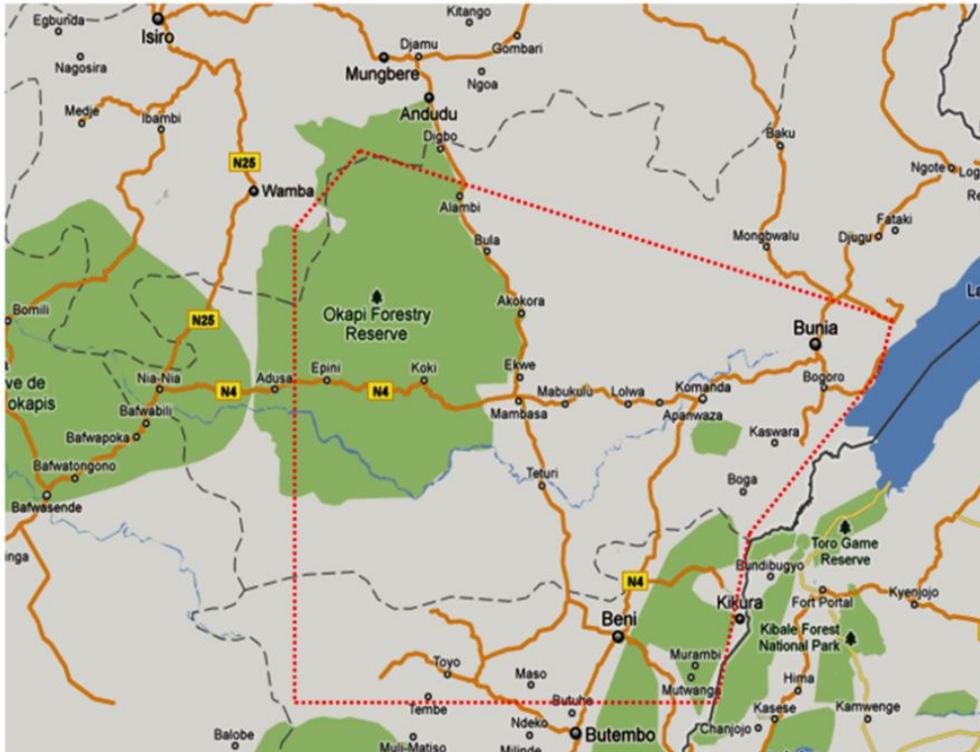


Figure 1.3: The areas of the Mbuti Pygmies that consists of the geographical frame of the study

Source: DRC. <https://maps.google.com>

The above-mentioned areas where the Mbuti Pygmies are settled are indeed the main natural mission field of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Congo Pygmy Mission 1 (CPM-1), the Africa Inland Mission (AIM), the Immanuel Mission (IM), the Congo Pygmy Mission 2 (CPM-2),¹² and the Heart of African Mission (HAM), which has become the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC). The Mbuti Pygmies are, however, more concentrated in the territories of Mambasa and Irumu in the Orientale province, and the territory of Beni in the North Kivu province.

On the missiological level, it should be admitted that there are several ways of approaching Christian mission. According to Bosch (1991), Christian

¹² CPM-1 and CPM-2 consist of the author's way of drawing a difference between the CPM created by the missionaries from the US and the other CPM created by the missionaries from the UK.

mission can be addressed as the church-with-others, as *Missio Dei*, as mediating salvation, as the quest for justice, as evangelism, as contextualisation, as liberation, as inculturation, as common witness, as ministry by the whole people of God, as witness to people of other living faiths, as theology, and as action in hope. Because of the empirical nature of the current study and the particularity that the Mbuti Pygmies represent as full human beings, Christian mission will be dealt with as encounter, within the framework of the theology of mission. The choice of this field of research, however, should not prevent the gleaning of some relevant data from the other fields of missiology and beyond.

It has been quite impossible to limit the study with regard to time, because the research problem that is identified is a very long-lasting issue. Nevertheless, it seems quite clear to note that this issue dates back to the explorations era through which the DRC entered into contact with Christianity.

1.7 Research Methods

There are two main approaches or methods to the empirical research in the social and human sciences: the quantitative and qualitative research (Dreyer 2004:16). In agreement with Dreyer, Kothari (1985:6-7) spells out that *quantitative approach to research* involves the generation of data in quantitative form which can be subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis in a formal and rigid fashion. This method is deductive, as it aims at proving facts by means of testing theories by trying to refute their propositions, and deals mostly with numbers rather than words. The *qualitative approach to research*, on the other hand, is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behaviour. Qualitative researchers deal mostly with words rather than numbers in connection with human beings. The qualitative method is thus inductive, as it involves the effort of learning and developing theories coming from observation and experience. It is also epistemological, as it stresses the understanding of the

social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants; and ontological, as it implies that properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals (cf. Bryman 2012).

May (2011:161) emphasises the difference between these two approaches to research pointing out that in the scientific writings, quantitative research is often presented in terms of justification of hypotheses, while qualitative research is concerned with discovery. Despite the difference between the two approaches, they can be integrated and dealt with together in order to produce a more complete study picture of a given social group. This third approach, which is relatively new, is called “mixed methods” (cf. Creswell 2009; McMillan & Schumacher 2010, Ivankova *et al* 2011; Bryman 2012). While the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research are well established in the social and behavioural sciences, the mixed methods approaches are growing in prominence.

Given that the present missiological study aims at investigating human beings, namely the Mbuti Pygmies, the *qualitative approach to research* is the most suitable method that is used in order to achieve the objectives of the study. In agreement with such a choice, Elliston (2000:826) argues that missiological research does not aim to “prove” anything in an absolute way – which is the role of the quantitative approach – but rather to “investigate and describe”, which is the role of the qualitative approach.

1.7.1 Justifications of the choice of the qualitative method

The qualitative method is the most suitable approach to dealing with mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology, and Myers (1997) points out that this kind of research approach was “designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live”. Likewise, Creswell (2007:39-40) provides the following set of justifications:

We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored. This exploration is needed, in turn, because of a need to study a group or population...

We also conduct qualitative research because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature.

We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study...

We conduct qualitative research when we want to write in a literary, flexible style that conveys stories, or theatre, or poems, without the restrictions of formal academic structures of writing.

We conduct qualitative research because we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address the problem or issue. We cannot separate what people say from the context in which they say it – whether this context is their home, family, or work.

We use qualitative research to follow up quantitative research and help explain the mechanisms or linkages in causal theories or models. These theories provide a general picture of trends, associations, and relationships, but they do not tell us about why people responded as they did, the context in which they responded, and their deeper thoughts and behaviors that governed their responses.

We use qualitative research to develop theories when partial or inadequate theories exist for certain populations and samples or existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem we are examining.

We also use qualitative research because quantitative measures and the statistical analyses simply do not fit the problem. Interactions among people, for example, are difficult to capture with existing measures, and these measures may not be sensitive to issues such as gender differences, race, economic status, and individual differences...

Creswell's justifications for the use of qualitative method have greatly contributed in the implementation of the fieldwork among the Mbuti Pygmies. From the assumption that qualitative method aims mostly at researching human

beings within their natural settings, Winberg (1997:42-3) corroborates Creswell's justifications saying that:

- Qualitative methods emphasise validity, as they allow researchers to stay close to the real or empirical world. They ensure a close fit between the data and what people actually say and do. By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talk about what is on their minds and looking at the documents they produce, the qualitative researcher obtains a first-hand knowledge of social life unfiltered through concepts, operational and rating scales.
- All people and all contexts are worthy of study. As such, qualitative researchers believe that there is no aspect of social life which is too trivial or unimportant to be studied. They also believe that all people are both similar and unique. The ways in which they are unique are largely context dependent, which is why fieldwork and contextual studies are important in qualitative research.
- Qualitative research is constantly developing, that is, qualitative methods are not as refined or standardised as quantitative methods. Qualitative methods develop with the experience of researchers and change with input of people whom they study. An important part of qualitative research is to reflect on the method of research. There are guidelines to be followed, but not rules.¹³

In view of the justifications listed above, one may conclude that the approach to mission as encounter is, by itself, a qualitative approach to Christian mission.

¹³ One may read also Rossman and Rallis (2012:8-11) who maintain that the qualitative research that takes place in the natural world uses multiple methods, focuses on context, is emergent rather than tightly prefigured, and is fundamentally interpretive. The qualitative researcher views the social world holistically, systematically reflects on who she/he is, is sensitive to personal biography, uses complex reasoning, and conducts a systematic inquiry.

1.7.2 Qualitative research designs

According to the scholars, qualitative method comprises several research designs all of which vary. Creswell (2007) retains narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study, whereas McMillan and Schumacher (2010) omit the narrative research from the Creswell's five designs and add critical studies. Nieuwenhuis (2011:70-8), on the other hand, retains six designs including conceptual studies, historical research, action research, case study research, ethnography and grounded theory. This study refers to most of these qualitative research designs, especially to ethnography and case study. Sometimes the case study research includes ethnography. From this understanding, David and Sutton (2011:66) argue that "case studies share many characteristics in common with the ethnography" and that "With regard to the study of organizations and communities, case study and ethnography often mean the same thing." So, what does a case study mean?

According to Nieuwenhuis (2011:75), a case study research is a "systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest." Walliman (2011:93), in addition, shows that the process of selecting just a small group of cases from out of a large group is called "sampling". If, however, one wants to examine the dynamics within different groups rather than individuals, the individual cases will be groups rather than the single people or the things that make up groups. That is why, when researchers want to draw conclusions about all the cases, they will need to select a few typical ones for detailed study, called "case studies" using a sampling method.

Because there are several groups of Pygmies scattered across the huge rainforest of the DRC, and given that there is need to save time and to keep accuracy in research, it is not possible to survey all the Pygmy peoples. This is why the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri rainforest in the northeast DRC have been

taken as a case study to which the missiological theory that is being developed will be applied. Of course, the missional encounter approach can be applied to any group of people, but this study aims particularly at studying the Mbuti Pygmies.

1.7.3 Qualitative data gathering techniques

For gathering data¹⁴ in empirical social and human sciences, qualitative research requires techniques among which are documents (literature) mostly for the collection of secondary data; and observation, interviews, focus groups and first-hand documents for the collection of primary data. Primary data from the field are usually gathered in the form of sounds, words, numbers, and images (photographs or videos). Rossman and Rallis (2012:4) point out that, “When data are grouped into patterns, they become information. When information is put to use or applied, it becomes knowledge.” In line with this study, apart from the researcher’s own experience, this dissertation relies mainly on diverse documents and on observation within the field that has been identified as the research site.

1.7.3.1 The documents

As a data gathering technique, documents focus on all written communications that may shed light on the phenomenon that is being investigated (cf. Nieuwenhuis 2011:82). Data written sources for the present study include a desk review of existing literature on mission and theology in general,

¹⁴ Nieuwenhuis (2011:81) reveals that most qualitative studies do not treat data collection and data analysis as two separate processes, but see them as an ongoing, cyclical, and iterative (non-linear) processes. The reason for this is that qualitative studies are guided by the criterion of saturation of data (the point where no new ideas and insights are brought to the fore). Owing to this statement, this section does not include a point on data analysis.

anthropology, sociology, geography, and law, as well as on the historical, religious, socio-economic and political environment of the DRC, and, of course, the Holy Bible. This involves both published and unpublished documents such as books, journals, articles, theses, DVDs, films, web materials, newspaper, church and government archives and records, reports by NGOs, letters, e-mails, and any other documents related to the investigation.

1.7.3.2 Observation within the field research

As previously said, in the section about the rationale of the study, this study was born out of the researcher's pastoral experience and interest in observing various peoples in the DRC, among whom are the Pygmies. In addition to the researcher's experience within the broad context of the Pygmy peoples, it has been also important to conduct field research in order to observe and check the relevance of the research problem and the research question of the study, and then to compare the secondary sources about the Pygmy peoples to the reality on the ground. The field research, which is based on interacting with and talking to people in a given setting, is also known, according to Warren and Karner (2010:59), as an ethnographic research. It involves time spent within a culture or group way of life (David & Sutton 2011:147).

Broadly speaking, the field research has been conducted within three periods and in three places. The preliminary field research took place in March 2010 in urban areas, namely Bukavu and Goma, two main cities where most of NGOs dealing with the Pygmy peoples are located. This preliminary field research consisted of collecting necessary information that could help in the mapping of the appropriate settings of the Pygmy populations to enable contact with them. The second and formal field research was conducted over a five week period, between October and November 2010, in the northern part of the Ituri rainforest, from the city of Beni to Epulu, via Bunia, Irumu, Komanda,

Lolwa, and Mambasa. The next formal field research was also conducted during a five week period, between August and September 2012, in the southern part of the Ituri rainforest. This latter field research took place from the city of Beni to Eringeti-Irumu, via Mavivi, Mbau, Oicha, and Eringeti-Beni, and then from the same city of Beni to Lalia Mambe, via Mangina, Makele, Makumo, Byakato and Lalia. As the Mbuti Pygmies are assumed to be divided into several sub-groups according to the places where they are settled and the Bantu languages that they use, the two formal field research activities consisted primarily in not only observing their culture and ways of life, their interactions with the Bantu and the churches, and the different challenges they face, but also what differences among them could be discerned.

From the geographical point of view, the two formal field researches took place in three administrative territories, the main sanctuary of the Mbuti Pygmies, namely the territory of Beni southward, and the territories of Irumu and Mambasa northward. These field research programmes were basically made possible thanks to the authorisation and guidance of the field animators of the host NGOs, the workers of the Okapi National Wildlife Refuge, and some church leaders. One may note that most of the Mbuti Pygmy camps that have been explored are almost all owned by NGOs, and no one can visit them without the official approval of those NGOs. The churches, such as the *Communauté Emmanuel (CE)*, also have some Mbuti camps where the Mbuti church leaders conduct spiritual activities. These are, for instance, the camps of Bandimaboche, Ndeisa, and Baputepe around Lolwa, and others nearby Komanda.

As one of the objectives of the study is to seek to enhance knowledge about the Mbuti Pygmies in order to enable the mission encounter with them, the field researches have focused mostly on observation. In fact, observation has been identified as the most appropriate qualitative data gathering technique with regard to the issue of encountering the Mbuti Pygmies.

What does observation in research methods mean? According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:350), “Observation is a way for the researcher to see and hear what is occurring naturally in the research site. It is the mainstay of qualitative research, an essential data collection for ethnographic studies, and used frequently with other types of qualitative studies.” In more amplified words,

Observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. Observation is an everyday activity whereby we use our senses (seeing, touching, smelling, tasting) – but also our intuition – to gather bits of data. As a qualitative data gathering technique, observation is used to enable the researcher to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon being observed... It allows us to hear, see and begin to experience reality as participants do. (Nieuwenhuis 2011:83-4)

For Mack *et al* (2005:13), observation, also known as “participant observation”,¹⁵ always takes place in community settings, in locations believed to have some

¹⁵ For more information, Nieuwenhuis (2011:84-5) identifies 4 types of observation. These are:

- The *complete observer* whereby the researcher is a non-participant observer looking at the situation from a distance (called an *etic* or “outsider” perspective). This is the least obstructive form of observation, but with some limitation, because the researcher does not become immersed in the situation and does not really understand what he or she is observed.
- The *observer as participant* whereby the researcher gets into the situation, but focuses mainly on his or her role as observer in the situation. The researcher may look for patterns of behaviour in a particular community to understand the assumptions, values and beliefs of the participants, and to make sense of the social dynamics – but he or she remains uninvolved and does not influence the dynamics of the setting.
- The *participant as observer* whereby the researcher becomes part of the research process, and works with the participants in the situation to design and develop intervention strategies. The researcher becomes a participant in the situation being observed, and may intervene in the dynamics of the situation and even try to alter it. He or she thus immerses himself or herself in a chosen setting to gain an insider perspective (called an *emic* perspective) of that setting.
- The *complete participant* whereby the researcher gets completely immersed in the setting, to such an extent that those being observed do not know that they are the subjects of observation. Although some ethnographic studies may fit this description, this type of observation is seldom used as it raises serious ethical concerns when those being observed have not granted consent to being observed or when they are not aware that they are, in fact, being observed.

relevance to the research questions. Through it, researchers encounter the participants in their own environment, where they try to learn what life is like for “insiders” while remaining, inevitably, “outsiders.” Mack *et al* (2005:14) keep spelling out the advantages of the use of observation as a qualitative data gathering technique by maintaining that:

Participant observation is also useful for gaining an understanding of the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts in which study participants live; the relationships among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms, and events; and people’s behaviors and activities – what they do, how frequently, and with whom... Through participant observation, researchers can also uncover factors important for a thorough understanding of the research problem but that were unknown when the study was designed. This is the great advantage of the method because, although we may get truthful answers to the research questions we ask, we may not always ask the right questions. Thus, what we learn from participant observation can help us not only to understand data collected through other methods (such as interviews, focus groups, and quantitative research methods), but also to design questions for those methods that will give us the best understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Although the field research focused on the observation as a main qualitative data gathering technique, this did not prevent the researcher from using other qualitative methods. Mack *et al* (2005:16), in this respect, admit, “Participant observation is almost always used with other qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups.” Indeed, observation has been implemented thanks to informal interviews,¹⁶ conversations, recording of voices, and shooting of photos and videos, wherever the shooting of them was permitted.¹⁷

Among the four types of observation, the researcher, in the present study, has made use of the second type, the *observer as participant*.

¹⁶ Wadsworth (2011:67-8) talks about “individual interviews”, while May (2011:136) talks about “informal, unstandardized or unstructured interviews”.

¹⁷ Because of a fear with regard to the business purposes of most of the tourists, researchers and other people who used to visit them, the Pygmy people no longer allow people to photograph them or make videos of them. For them, the Bantu and all other foreign people are making a lot of money from selling their photographs and videos. Such behaviour, whenever it is verified as being true, is indeed another way of exploiting the Pygmy peoples.

For the purposes of general information and orientation about the Pygmy peoples, a number of non-Pygmy people in urban areas such as Bukavu, Goma, Beni, Bunia, Komanda, Oicha, and Butembo were interviewed. Data from these urban interviewees have been received with caution, for this study relies less on urban people than rural people. In addition, data from urban people about the Mbuti Pygmies, who often are discriminated against and considered to be “wild people”, might be subjective, biased, or exaggerated depending on how these Pygmy peoples are perceived by those non-Pygmy people. This is the reason why only the non-Pygmy people living nearby the Mbuti Pygmy settings and those who are involved in assisting them in one way or another could be more relied on as informants. Moreover, the fact that the Pygmy culture is not based on reading and writing, and also because writing and reading while talking to the Pygmy peoples seems to show a lack of consideration and courtesy towards them, it was not possible to make use of structured interviews and questionnaires. Thanks, however, to the interactions and encounters with both the non-Pygmy peoples and the Mbuti Pygmies during the field researches, it has been possible to establish that the research problem and the research question of this study deserve to be examined within an academic work. Rightly speaking, accounts about the Pygmy peoples in literature are less expressive than the face-to-face encounter with them within their natural settings.

In total, 61 informants have been involved in the informal interviews: 17 Mbuti Pygmies, 20 non-Pygmy church leaders, and 24 independent non-Pygmy peoples. Moreover, 16 groups or camps of Mbuti Pygmies and 12 NGOs have been explored. All of these informants, both individuals and groups, are, however, not formally cited within the thesis, because their input was either general information about the Pygmy peoples or similar to that of other informants previously encountered. For the sake of privacy and confidentiality, as Creswell (2009:89) suggests that participants should not be put at risk and that vulnerable populations should be respected, the informants are represented

by codes. The informants or interviewees from amongst the Mbuti Pygmies are, therefore, represented by the codes MP1, MP2, MP3, and so on; the Church Leaders by the codes CL1, CL2, CL3, and so on; and the Non-Pygmy peoples by the codes NP1, NP2, NP3, and so on. Next, the groups or camps of the Mbuti Pygmies are represented by the code MPC(s) followed by their real names.

Paradoxically, it was not possible to respect ethical requirements with regard to getting informed consent from the Mbuti Pygmies during the face-to-face conversations and informal interviews with them. The reasons for this are that the Mbuti Pygmies, as previously mentioned, have almost been made the property of NGOs owners who usually decide on their behalf without necessarily seeking their point of view. In the same way as almost all the Ituri rainforest currently belongs to some individuals and private companies, so the MPCs belong to some NGOs. It is within this framework that the researcher was introduced to the Mbuti Pygmies as a guest who should visit “private estates”. This practice of owning the MPCs as “private estates” is also another form of challenge the Mbuti Pygmies are facing.

1.8 Review of Relevant Literature

Two major areas of research are specifically outlined as applicable to this study. These are anthropology and missiology (theology). In the course of the thesis, one hopes bringing anthropology and missiology into discourse with each other will break a new ground. These two major areas of research did not prevent the study from being informed by other areas of research, such as the other fields of theology, the history, geography, ecology, law, and research methods, etc.

Presenting the influence of earlier studies on the Pygmy peoples, Bailey (1991:5) says, “Because Pygmies have held the fascination of Europeans since before the time of Homer, it is not surprising that there are literally hundreds references to Pygmies in anthropological literature”. By the end of the 19th

century, anthropologists and ethnologists, and other scholars and explorers, have conducted abundant research that has produced an enormous literature about the Pygmy peoples. Within the literature surveyed on the Pygmy peoples in general, and the Mbuti Pygmies in particular, one can mention Trilles (1932; 1945), Leyder 1934; Schebesta (1952), Turnbull (1961; 1965; 1966; 1976; 1983), Vansina (1965), Bahuchet (1985), Cornet (1989), Bailey (1991), Duffy (1996), Wheeler (2000), Musafiri (2007). The main aim of all these books has been an effort to acquire better knowledge about the Pygmy peoples in order to respond to the controversial debate on whether or not these Pygmies were fully human. Unfortunately, most of this literature is almost too old, especially if one heeds Walliman (2011:52) who reminds researchers that the most important reason for doing research is to produce new knowledge and understanding, and make them available to everyone. Nonetheless, in order to track down the latest knowledge, and to assess it for the purpose of relevance, quality, controversy, and gaps, one can trawl through all the available information sources. The above literature was a very useful preparation for the conducting of the fieldwork researches. Literature and fieldwork should, therefore, be viewed as complementary practical tools for the implementation of any qualitative research.

Among what could be considered to be recent literature, there are some useful books such as the “Children of the Forest” by the anthropologist Duffy (1996). With an elegant simplicity and deliberate absence of jargon, this book is explicitly personal and intimate as well as informative. It reads easily like a narrative diary rich in information. It is a definitive contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the Mbuti Pygmies based on original research. Duffy’s book is an intimate study, which portrays the hunter-gather Mbuti Pygmies of the former Zaïre. The author describes how these forest nomads, who are as adapted to the forest as its wildlife, gratefully acknowledge their beloved home as the source of everything they need, food, clothing, shelter, and affection. Looking on the forest in these deified terms, the Mbuti Pygmies sing

and pray to it and call themselves its children. With his patience and knowledge of their ways, Duffy was accepted by these world's smallest people and invited to participate in the cycle of their lives from birth to death, all of which confirm their humanity. In addition to the rich knowledge about the Mbuti Pygmies, Duffy's book presents a genuine encountering approach with the Pygmy peoples that Christians should take into account.

Another book is "What place for hunter-gatherers in Millennium three?" (Headland & Blood 2002). This book is written by nine authors who have surveyed the hunter-gatherers of Central Africa, Southern Africa, and the Philippines. These authors take a hard look at the traumatic cultural changes that the planet's remaining hunter-gatherer societies experienced in the twentieth century and the precarious future that is about to engulf them in the twenty-first century. In this comprehensive volume, the authors agree that the foraging way of life, humankind's most successful adaptation for many thousands of years, has come to a close with the end of the second millennium. Case studies are presented here looking at the past and the uncertain future for post-foraging societies in Africa and Asia, and especially the central African Pygmies, the San Bushmen, and the Agta Negritos. Interwoven with these chapters are emphases on tropical deforestation and indigenous rights, looking at these through the framework of human ecology. As it is stated in the foreword, "If the human rights of proud former foraging peoples are given the attention they deserve, then there can be a bright future for them in Millennium Three. The task is not an easy one, but this book helps greatly to focus our attention on the issues that matter."

In the book "*Droit foncier des peuples autochtones et le Droit International: Cas des peuples de la forêt (Pygmées) de la RD Congo*", Musafiri (2007:9) pleads in favour of the rights of the indigenous Pygmy peoples in the DRC, especially the rights related to land. Musafiri, therefore, denounces the Congolese law according to which land is the exclusive property of the State and

not of the individuals in the DRC. He also notes that many African governments especially that of the DRC are tending to apply the development paradigms that focus on assimilation approaches intended to transform indigenous people into sedentary farmers. This is due to a hypothesis according to which the lifestyle and culture of the indigenous people should change because they are “primitive”, “backward”, and “degrading” the environment. In other words, Musafiri agrees with Headland and Blood on the issue relating to the end of the Pygmy culture and lifestyle, by indicating that, if the Pygmy rights over lands are not respected, the DRC runs the risk of losing this cultural diversity forever.

On the subject of mission and missiology, there is almost no relevant literature available about the Mbuti Pygmies and the Pygmy peoples in general.¹⁸ The only book accessed on the Mbuti Pygmies is one by Irvine (1978) who, from an historical point of view, describes briefly the mission attempts among the Mbuti Pygmies by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Congo Pygmy Mission 1 (CPM-1), the Immanuel Mission (IM), the Congo Pygmy Mission 2 (CPM-2), and the Heart of African Mission (HAM). To this work by Irvine, one may also add Wild-Wood (2010), Bahigwa (1992), Sinker (1950), and Lloyd (1931), who focus on the effort of the pioneering work of the CMS among the Mbuti Pygmies through the African missionary Apolo Kivebulaya. The important work of Wild-Wood (2010), however, makes it clear that it has been written on Apolo Kivebulaya, and does not explore ways and means for targeting the Mbuti Pygmies, but rather honours the heroism of an African missionary who dared to challenge the Western missionaries through a genuine and lasting mission endeavour among the “forest dwellers Mbuti” in Ituri.

With reference to the fields of interreligious encounter and of intercultural Christian communication, it is important to mention, first of all, that the topic of

¹⁸ In a bibliographical Survey of about 1 000 entries, conducted by Hewlett and Fancher on the Congo Basin Pygmies, which consists of 8 countries, cf. http://www.cefe.cnrs.fr/ibc/Conference/ICCBHG_Bibliography.pdf, there is no single entry on the topic of theology in general and of mission – missiology in particular.

this study was inspired by Kritzing (2009; 2008) and Karecki (2012; 2009; 2002; 2000) who, in their missiological discourses, put emphasis not on the Pygmy peoples but rather on mission as encounter, and missiology as encounterology. The idea of reflecting on mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology in this study comes from the article, “Faith to faith: Missiology as encounterology” that Kritzing (2008) wrote to honour Piet Meiring in connection with the book *Suid-Afrika, land van baie godsdienste* (Meiring 1996). In this article, Kritzing appreciates the integration between the fields of Religious Studies and the Theology of Religions, and suggests that a missiological approach should explore the interreligious encounter rather than merely what is believed about the possibility of saving potential converts from another religion. An approach of “encounterology”, according to him, requires:

- a holistic and reflexive process that considers seven different dimensions of encounter, namely the Agency, Context analysis, Ecclesial analysis, Theological analysis, Spirituality, Practical projects, and Reflexivity; and
- a dialogical approach in which a Christian enters into a journey of mutual witness with a follower of another faith.

This is important because, as Presler (2001:68) regards it,

The gospel’s encounter with other religions is related to its encounter with the diversity of human cultures. ...religion is the substance of culture; culture is the form of religion. ...we can say that every religious expression is culturally formed, and that culture often expresses religious values, either explicitly or implicitly.

In turn, Karecki (2009) honours Kritzing through the article entitled “Contemplative Encounter and Mission Praxis”, by establishing that the idea of encounter has been one of his key areas of study and research. For her, the idea of encounter has shaped much of Kritzing’s missiological thought. With this

as inspiration, Karecki has taken the missiological concept of encounter and looked at its relationship to the encounter that takes place in the stages of contemplative prayer. She first explains the nature of contemplative encounter and then relates it to the missional encounter using Miroslav Volf's metaphor of embrace. Finally, Karecki makes a case for the need for mysticism and missiology to be brought into dialogue so that the missional encounters are informed by the *missio Dei* rather than one's own plans and programmes. Karecki's article focuses on the idea that mission begins with encounter and that, in each encounter, Christians open the way for the Reign of God. The author, therefore, concludes that, "If we have allowed our encounter with God to transform us we will more easily meet the other in love and openness without any desire to control or manipulate." (Karecki 2009:34).

Regarding the key concept of mission as encounter, an abundant and diversified literature has been surveyed in order to glean what could serve as tools for building the theological foundations for mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology. From Ahonen (2000), who maintains that the God of love seeks and calls every human being into fellowship with him and that God does not remain distant in his transcendence, but comes to where people are, revealing himself and sharing what is his, it has become easier to comprehend that revelation is not only knowledge but primarily God's presence. God is himself present in his revelation, and revelation is an encounter between God and humankind. If without God's own revelation, his real nature remains completely alien to human beings, God has made himself known and accessible through mission – the *missio Dei*. As a foundation to mission as encounter in addition to the revelation, the *missio Dei* includes the Incarnation as a character of mission, the Holy Spirit as the chief agent of mission, and the church mission as a missional church for the fulfilment of the *missio Dei* (cf. Bosch 1991; Kirk 1994; Scherer & Bevans 1999; Dorr 2000; Rogers 2003; Wright 2006; Ott & Strauss 2010). As the concept of mission as encounter is theologically founded,

this can be applied logically as a missional approach with regard to the mission encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies.

So far, the reviewed literature does not clearly show why and how Christian mission encounters with the discriminated and vulnerable people such as the Mbuti Pygmies should be dealt with and applied. The tackling of this very issue is, thus, what the current study intends to investigate as its specificity and contribution to the missiological knowledge. It is expected, therefore, that the approach of missional encounter should help bridge the obvious gap between Christian mission in the DRC and the Pygmy peoples in general. Ultimately, this essay intends to be a practical tool that brings about the possibility of the Church's rethinking its mission with regard to the Mbuti Pygmies and all those who live in a similar way across the DRC and beyond. The Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri rainforest are simply taken as a case study of poor and vulnerable people for whom the missional encounter should be applied.

It is important to conclude this section with reference to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:96) who maintain, "The literature review in the qualitative study is (a) presented as separate discussion and/or (b) integrated within the text... The literature is found in the introduction and the more detailed discussion is located in the concluding interpretations of the study." This means that the literature review will continue in the course of the dissertation up to the end.

1.9 Structural Overview of the Study

This study is structured on basis of the pastoral circle or cycle of mission praxis constructed by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot (cf. Karecki 2002:139; Botha 2010:187). In terms of the mission encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies in DRC, the pastoral cycle appears to be the most appropriate tool that could help to getting a better alignment of ideas in the course of the present study. Karecki (2002:139) recommends the pastoral cycle of mission praxis by arguing that it

was chosen because it enables learners to enter the world of other people in a way that is accessible to them. She keeps on affirming, “Too often people fear those who are different than themselves. I wanted to challenge learners to take another perspective: that of seeing others as mysteries, not as problems or enemies” (:140). This is also true of the Pygmy peoples whose uniqueness of culture and lifestyles prevents the non-Pygmies from daring to enter into their communities in a way that is accessible to them. So the pastoral cycle below is suggested as a tool that can be a guide for the missional encounter with other communities.

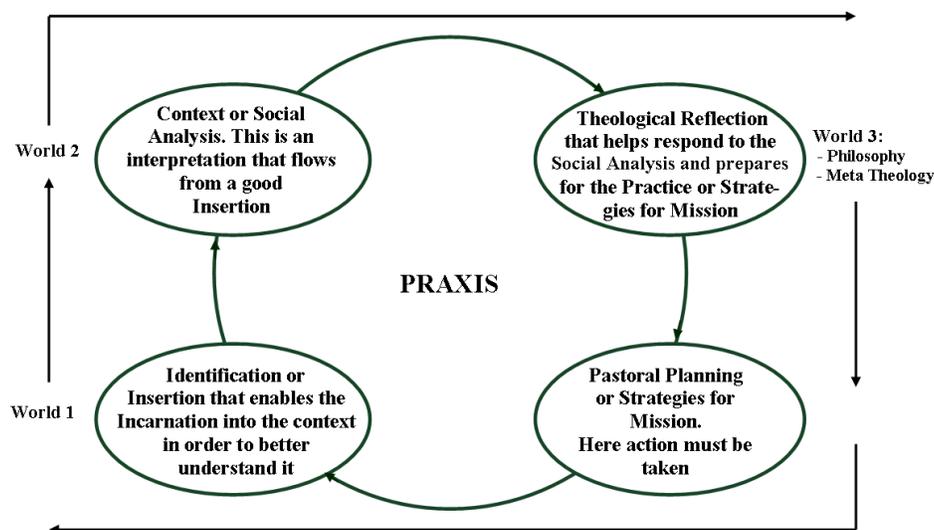


Figure 1.4: The Pastoral Cycle of Mission Praxis

Source: Adapted from Karecki (2002:139) and Botha (2010:187)

The topic that is being studied is structured into six chapters. The first stage of the pastoral cycle of mission praxis, the insertion or identification, involves both chapters one and two through which one should learn about the Pygmy peoples. While chapter one provides the necessary orientations to the study, chapter two provides an overview of the Pygmy peoples in Africa as well as in the DRC, with an emphasis on the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri rainforest, their lifestyle, the challenges they are facing, and a look at attempts to provide assistance to the

Pygmy peoples. Chapter two also suggests that the Pygmy peoples be taken into account in the same way as all other Congolese peoples are. In the same way as the first stage of the pastoral cycle is very important, because if it is not well done, the other stages will fall flat (cf. Botha 2010:188), these first two chapters are a necessary key entry for this study.

The second stage of the pastoral cycle, the context analysis or social analysis, involves the third chapter of the thesis. This third chapter is designed as an historical overview of the mission attempts among the Mbuti Pygmies in the DRC. It evaluates both the early and contemporary mission efforts among the Mbuti Pygmies and enables one to interpret their current social context so that one may determine the working mission methods and strategies for these people. From this perspective, one should be able to establish and estimate the relevance of the research problem and research question that have been previously identified.

The third stage of the pastoral cycle, the theological reflection, involves the fourth chapter which is a theological reflection that suggests that Christian mission should be approached as encounter and missiology as encounterology. This fourth chapter responds to the context or social analysis about the mission attempts among the Mbuti Pygmies and prepares for the strategies for the mission encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies. This fourth chapter itself also consists of an overall understanding of the concept of mission as encounter, a look at the revelation of God himself, and a review of the concept of *missio Dei* with all its related elements of the Incarnation as a character of mission, the Holy Spirit as the chief agent of mission and the church as missional church in participating to the fulfilment of the *missio Dei*. It also draws attention to some practical implications of mission as encounter.

The fourth stage of the pastoral cycle, the pastoral planning for action, refers to both chapters five and six. Chapter five provides practical strategies for the mission encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, which are missionary

conversion, the right perception of the Pygmy peoples as fully made in the “image of God” and a full part of the “all nations”, the effort of promoting formal education as a contribution to a sustainable development among the Mbuti Pygmies, and the need for sustaining the churches by an integrated theological education. The sixth and last chapter concludes the study by reviewing the use of the pastoral cycle of mission praxis, summarising the findings, and providing some recommendations and suggestions for further studies on Christian mission among the Pygmy peoples.

Coming back to the pastoral cycle of mission praxis, it is important to mention that praxis is placed at the centre not as a stage by itself, which represents a specific section of the thesis, but rather as a pervasive element that informs each stage of the cycle. The praxis of mission is thus a motivational goal which must ground the process of dealing with the four stages of the pastoral cycle. From this understanding, praxis is a set of substantial findings that should emerge from this study.

1.10 Conclusion

Investigating a population group whose history is totally thought about and written about from outside is not an easy task. The Pygmy peoples who are introduced in this first chapter are indeed the main subject of this thesis. Their history is totally thought about and written about from outside, and their physical features, culture, and lifestyle differ to such a degree from those of the majority of people that these Pygmies are not well known by the non-Pygmy peoples including Christians. Because of this, the Pygmy peoples as a whole are facing many challenges, and to engage in encountering them is identified as a challenge to Christian mission in the DRC.

In order to tackle this obvious challenge with regard to Christian mission, this first chapter, after defining the research problem and question, the aim and

objectives, and discussing related methodological aspects, has suggested the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies as an appropriate missiological approach that should be explored in the course of this study. Thus, the pastoral cycle of mission praxis, which includes a quadruple stage of insertion or identification into the context, social analysis, theological reflection and pastoral planning, will help as a guideline in order to attain the expected goals of the study.

Chapter two is, therefore, designed to pursue the first stage of the pastoral cycle, insertion or identification into the context, as a result of which one can listen to and learn about the Pygmy peoples in order to understand who the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri rainforest are and how they can be encountered. In fact, listening and learning about any given population group seems to be the preliminary working approach that one should employ within the missional encounter with any particular population group.

Chapter Two

LEARNING ABOUT THE PYGMY PEOPLES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to provide substantial knowledge about the Pygmy peoples in general, and the Mbuti Pygmies in particular, in order to enable the mission encounter with them. This is an attempt to address the assumption according to which it is argued that the Pygmy peoples are not well known by the non-Pygmy people.

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section is an overview on the Pygmy peoples in Africa given by a brief historical view and information about their name, their groups, locations, and languages. The second section deals with the Pygmy peoples of the DRC. It describes the land and people of the DRC briefly, and introduces the groups of Pygmies, which include the Babinga, the Twa or Tswa and the Mbuti, and their estimated numbers. It also describes the way of life of the Pygmy people with an emphasis on the Mbuti Pygmies who are located in the northeast DRC. The third section draws one's attention to the fact that the Pygmy peoples, whose culture and lifestyle are quite different from those of the rest of the Congolese people, are facing many challenges. These challenges relate mainly to the discrimination that they often experience as a result of negative stereotyping, segregation, the denial of fundamental rights, and exploitation, all of which make them vulnerable.

The fourth section of this chapter two deals with some attempts for assisting the Pygmy peoples. Because of their distressing situation, the Pygmy people really need humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance in this

respect, however, seems to be subject to many interpretations. On the one hand, the government and humanitarian NGOs tend to focus on relocating the Pygmy peoples from the forests where they traditionally pursue their livelihood and traditions to villages within new traditions and cultures. By so doing, unfortunately, they create new challenges that stem from their attempts to address the traditional challenges facing the Pygmy peoples. On the other hand, the humanitarian assistance, although necessary, does not always correspond to the real needs of the Pygmy peoples, which relate mostly to being treated as full human beings, worthy of respect and of God's grace.

2.2 Overview of the Pygmy Peoples in Africa

Insofar as their origins, physical features, and cultures seem to be alike, one would not be able to undertake any significant survey on the Congolese Pygmy populations without having a brief look at the African Pygmy peoples taken as a whole. The present section, therefore, presents an overall survey of the African Pygmy peoples through a brief historical view, their names, groups and locations, and languages.

2.2.1 Brief historical view

Among the African population currently estimated at 1 044 809 425 people (cf. Central Intelligence Agency - CIA 2011), i.e., exactly 15% of the world's population, are the Pygmy peoples who apparently are unique in Africa and the rest of the world in terms of lifestyle, physical appearance, and cultural features. In Africa, Pygmy populations are not well known by the non-Pygmy peoples to the extent that there are persons who refer to them simply as prehistoric people who have disappeared, or simply as a myth. Paradoxically, no one in Central Africa can deny their obvious existence, no matter how they are considered.

Historians, anthropologists, and ethnologists are all unanimous that the Pygmy peoples are the earliest inhabitants of Central Africa (Trilles 1932, 1945; Schebesta 1952; Turnbull 1961, 1965, 1966, 1976, 1983; Vansina 1965; Bahuchet 1985; Cornet 1989; Bailey 1991; Duffy 1996; Wheeler 2000). Likewise, the different groups of Pygmies encountered in the east and northeast DRC, in 2010 and 2012, refer to themselves not primarily as Mbuti, Efe, Twa, Aka, Sua, Lese, Bila, but rather as the “first citizens”, the “indigenous people”, or the “citizens of the forest”. They sometimes identify themselves collectively as the Bambuti (cf. Duffy 1996:2). Turnbull (1983:1) and Duffy (1996:3), who have lived among the Mbuti Pygmy communities for a long time, maintain that these forest dwellers consider themselves as *bamiki ba’ndura*, which means “children of the forest”. In fact, the Pygmy populations are proud of being the earliest citizens, and they prefer to be identified as such because, according to them, all other names used to identify them are both pejorative and meaningless (cf. Musafiri 2010).

For many centuries, African Pygmy populations have been at the centre of the concerns and research of scholars. Obenga (1984) and Ndaywel é Ziem (1997) quoted in the World Bank Report (2009:11), maintain that the Pygmy peoples who currently live in the Congo River Basin and its borders are the descendants of a people whose ancestors can be traced back to the Stone Age, i.e. to 3000 BC. Moreover, the literature and sculpture of the Old Kingdom of Egypt refer to the Pygmy peoples of the black human race as early as about 2250 B.C. In fact, the earliest record of the existence of the Pygmies is in a letter¹⁹ from the Egyptian Pharaoh Nefrikare Pepi II, in the Sixth Dynasty of the

¹⁹ Nefrikare’s letter to Harkhuf as quoted *in extenso* from Duffy (1996:18) is written as follows:

I have noted thy letter, which thou hast sent in order that the King might know thou hast descended in safety from Yam with the army which was with thee. Thou hast said in this thy letter that thou hast brought a dancing dwarf of the god from the land of spirits...

Come northward to the court immediately; thou shalt bring this dwarf with thee, which thou bringest living and healthy from the land of spirits, for the dances of the god, to gladden

Old Kingdom, to Harkhuf, the Governor of the South, whose expedition into Central Africa discovered a tiny forest people who sang and danced. The expedition returned with a “dancing dwarf” known as an Akka. To the god-king Pepi II, a dancing Pygmy person was more desirable and precious than anything else his Governor Harkhuf might bring back from the exotic forests of the South (Duffy 1996:18-19; Wheeler 2000).

More than one thousand years later, the Pygmy people were mentioned in Homer’s *Iliad*, where the Greek word *pygme*, which refers to a unit of measure denoting the distance between a man’s elbow and his knuckles, was used in reference to their small stature. Some hundreds of years later, another Greek, the historian Herodotus, mentioned the Pygmy peoples in relation to the Nasamonians who travelled south across the desert to a region of trees, where they were captured by the Pygmies. Aristotle also asserted that the Pygmy peoples lived near the source of the Nile (Wheeler 2000), one of the two branches of which, known as White Nile, derives from the Lake Albert (Lake Mobutu) in the northeast DRC.²⁰ While Homer believed that the Pygmy peoples are short because they were decimated by the cranes, for Aristotle, it was that they are short for having lived in caves (Bahuchet 1979:13).

By the end of the nineteenth century (1874), the German Schweinfurth, who arrived in the Ituri region in 1870, saw the Pygmy peoples as “the remnants

the heart of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Neferkrere, who lives forever. When he goes down with thee into the vessel, appoint excellent people, who shall be beside him on each side of the vessel; take care lest he fall into the water. When he sleeps at night appoint excellent people, who shall sleep beside him in his tent. My majesty desires to see his dwarf more than the gifts of Sinai and Punt.

²⁰ It is important to note that the Ruvyironza River of Burundi is regarded as the ultimate source of the Nile. This River is one of the upper branches of the Kagera River, which follows the Rwanda-Tanzania and Uganda-Tanzania borders into Lake Victoria. On leaving Lake Victoria, this section of the Nile, called the Victoria Nile, flows northwest for about 500 km through Lake Kyoga, until it enters Lake Albert. Leaving the northern end of Lake Albert as the Albert Nile, it flows through northern Uganda and in Sudan becomes the Baḥr al Jabal. At its junction with the Baḥr al Ghazāl, which is fed by numerous tributaries, the river becomes the White Nile (Baḥr al Abyaḍ). At the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, the White Nile is joined by the Blue Nile from its source, Lake T’ana in the Ethiopian highlands, where it is known as the Abbai (Fegley 2005).

of a declining race”, the original forest hunter-gatherers who were no longer able to subsist without the assistance of the domestic foods and iron implements of the Bantu (Bailey 1991:6). Wheeler (2000), who spent eight years among the Mbuti Pygmies, asserted, “Their unusual stature is due to the complete absence of receptors for a growth-related hormone.”

Moreover, there are many other historical accounts of the Pygmy people from the time of the Arabian traders in Congo in the first century B.C., the early European explorers such as Henry Morton Stanley who reached the Ituri rainforest in 1887, up to the large number of authors of the seventeenth to the twentieth century who devoted themselves to researching these peoples. Among the well-known authors, two deny the humanity of the Pygmy people. In 1699, the anatomist Edward Tyson concluded, “Our Pygmy is not a man, and he is not even a common monkey, but a kind of mixed animal. Even though he is biped, he is rather one of the animals whose members end with hands.” In 1775, Buffon took into account Tyson’s conclusions by maintaining that Pygmies are really monkeys with a strong waist (Bahuchet 1979:13). Then again, Trilles (1932:2) denounces two false theories about the origin of the Pygmy people. The first theory considers the Pygmies as regenerated people, and the second theory affirms that they are the remnant of primitive people. In fact, up to the 19th century, the common belief about the Pygmy peoples was that they were not complete human beings, but rather evolved monkeys, or, at least, the intermediate creatures between human beings and monkeys.

More recently, as said earlier, the Pygmy peoples are known only through literature and films. In this respect, Didier Ouénangaré and Bassek ba Kobhio have directed a film in which they denounce the discrimination and exploitation of the (Baaka) Babinga Pygmies of the Central African Republic. Through this film, which is entitled *Le Silence de la Forêt* or simply *The Forest* (for the English version), one may note the following false beliefs held about and abusive words used to comment on the Babinga Pygmies:

They are a tourist attraction for the country ...

They are a natural wealth we should exploit ...

They are invited to entertain guests as in a zoo ...

They are given an opportunity to show their achievements, their dexterity ...

They like to be hit and punished ...

They are savages with whom people cannot live ...

They are human beings but created like beasts ...

They are untamed animals ...

They must remain what they are ...

They are real monkeys ...

They lack both brain and soul ...

(Ouénangaré & Kobhio 2003)

More important than all the opinions of aforesaid authors and the false beliefs about and abusive words used against the Pygmy peoples, are some recent researchers, such as Schebesta, Trilles, Turnbull, Bahuchet, Cornet, Duffy, and Wheeler, who, having lived and spent a very long time among these forest dwellers, bear vivid and undeniable witness to their humanity. Through available writings and records, and experiences on the ground, the Pygmy peoples are believed to have developed trading relationships with their neighbouring villagers and have even served as forced labourers for villagers in many places throughout the thick Congo River Basin. In spite of all the arguments and proofs about the humanity of the Pygmy peoples, however, the past still seems to carry weight and many continue to regard them as if they are really what they have unjustly and erroneously been considered to be. Do the Bantu and all other non-Pygmy peoples really know the Pygmy peoples? This pertinent and challenging issue will continue to be examined in the following sections.

2.2.2 The name

As has been said previously, the nickname “Pygmy” derives from a Greek word *pygme*, which has been used to refer to the small stature of the Pygmy peoples. From Greek times on (Trilles 1945:45), the name “Pygmy” has been used in all European languages. If “Pygmy” is no more than a nickname, is there a true name by which the African peoples of smallest stature can be referred to?

Indeed, the Egyptians named these peoples of small stature “Akkas”, a name that was engraved on the pyramids. In 1872, Hamy coined the name “Negrils” to refer to West African Pygmies. De Quatrefages followed him by using “Negrils” to refer to Central African Pygmies, and “Negritos” for the Pygmies of the rest of the world. The Pygmy populations found across the African rainforest and equatorial Africa were subdivided into several clans, some of whom lived close to neighbouring Black tribes as slaves, and others of whom lived freely in the dense forest. Then the neighbouring tribes gave different names to the Pygmy clans close to them. So, from Congo Brazzaville to Cameroon, for instance, the Pygmy peoples have been given the common name of *Akka* with some alterations such as *Akoa*, *Okoa*, *Bayaka*, *Bako*, *Beku*, *Benkwel*, etc. More often, the non-Pygmy peoples have given pejorative names to the Pygmy people, such as *Babongos*, which means people with big heads; *Ba-Kweya*, which means people similar to chimpanzees; *Batwa*, which means hunted people; *Ba-Mbuti*, which means hunters (Trilles: 45-46). The Pygmy peoples are commonly referred to by several names, most of which are given names.

While common opinion suggests the name of “Akka” with regard to the Egyptian historical name, Schebesta (1952), who has surveyed the Pygmy groups of the northeast DRC, suggests that all the Pygmy peoples be called “Bambuti”. In addition, Wheeler (2000) refers to all the Pygmy populations of the African rainforest as *Efe*. In spite of this controversial debate among

scholars, however, the name “Pygmy” which is properly speaking an adjective has remained the only universal one to refer to the peoples of small stature. Thus, as there are several groups of Pygmy peoples, it is better to make use of their local given names together with the word “Pygmy”. It is; therefore, better to say “Babinga Pygmies” instead of *Babinga*; “Batwa Pygmies” instead of *Batwa*; and “Bambuti Pygmies” or “Mbuti Pygmies” instead of *Bambuti* or *Mbuti*, etc.

2.2.3 Groups and location

Regarding the African Pygmy populations, one cannot tackle the issue of their location, subdivision, and language separately. These elements are intimately linked. The location determines both the ethnic groups and the dialects within the context of the Pygmy populations.

In Central Africa, the Pygmy peoples may be located in the following three main areas: the eastern part of Central Africa; the central part of the DRC; and the western part of the Congo River basin. The eastern part of Central Africa includes the eastern DRC and both Rwanda and Burundi. In this area, there are two main groups of Pygmies, namely the Mbuti Pygmies, who are settled in the north-east DRC, especially in the Ituri rainforest, and the Batwa Pygmies settled in Kivu and Katanga, and also in both Rwanda and Burundi. The Mbuti Pygmies are subdivided into three or four groups, whereas the Batwa or Bacwa Pygmies form one group even though they speak several languages depending on the languages of their neighbouring farmers. In the rest of the DRC, apart from the capital city Kinshasa and the province of Bas-Congo, there are also Batwa Pygmies called Tswa, who are almost the same as those living in the East. The whole of the western Congo River Basin, from Congo Brazzaville and a small part of the northwestern of the province of Equateur, and the whole of the southwest part of Central African Republic (CAR) to the Atlantic shore, is

settled by the Babinga Pygmies, also sometimes called Akka. These Babinga Pygmies are also subdivided into several groups, namely the Akka, Baka, Akoa, Babongo, Bekii, Bekwi, Bagieli, and Babenzele, all of which are found in almost six countries, namely the DRC, CAR, Congo Brazzaville, Cameroon, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea (cf. Schebesta 1952; Turnbull 1965; 1966; Bahuchet 1979).

The Mbuti Pygmies, among the three main groups of the Pygmy peoples, will be those most investigated in this study. In fact, they are assumed to have maintained genuine features of the African Pygmies, namely depending entirely on the forest for hunting and gathering, living as nomadic people within the forest, and being the shortest human beings in the world.

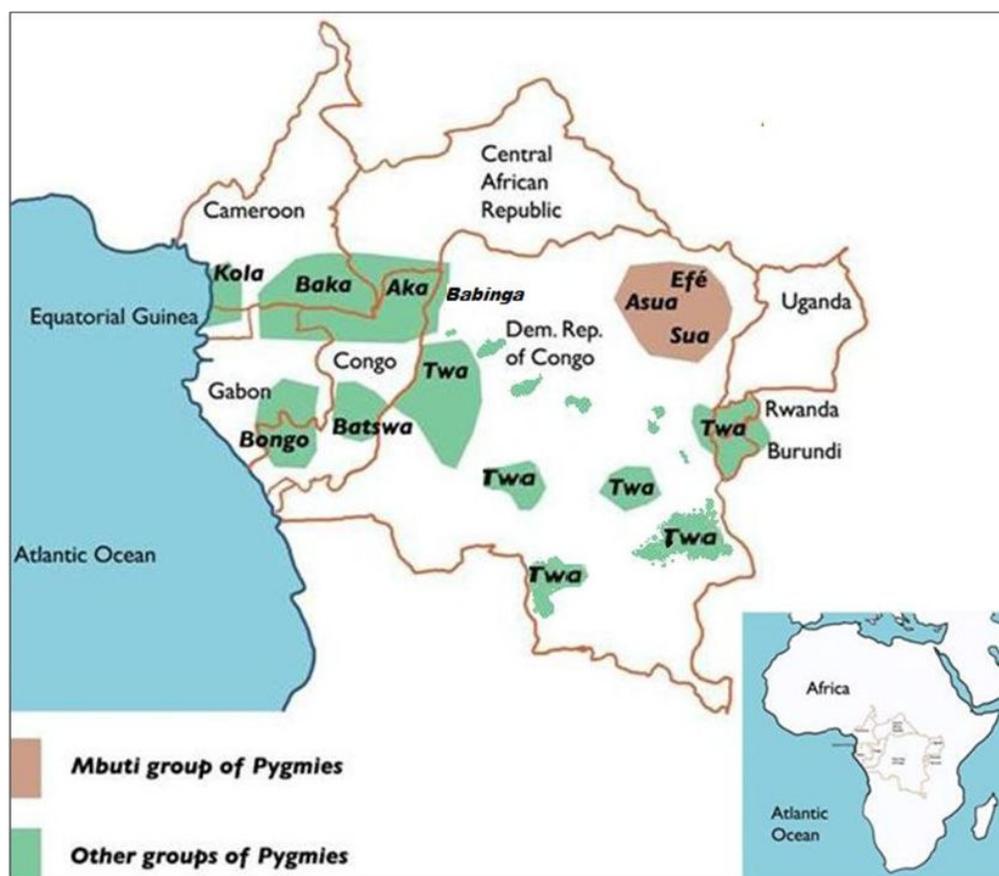


Figure 2.5: Distribution of the Pygmy populations in Central Africa

Source: Adapted from Billy (2006)

Wheeler (2000) assumes that the Mbuti Pygmies are the last members of a race of people living as everyone did ten thousand years ago. Their physical and cultural features among other things undoubtedly determine their fate. With respect to the above, Schebesta, after exploring the African Pygmy peoples on more than four occasions, concluded that the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri remain anthropologically the purest human race of its kind (Schebesta 1952:3-21, cf. Leyder 1934:8). Likewise, Turnbull (1976:117) asserts that, “The Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri forest represent in its purest form the entire Pygmy population of the equatorial forest.” Bahuchet (1979:15) goes on to maintain that the Mbuti Pygmies are not only the smallest, but also, according to the anthropological agreements, the only true Pygmies among all others who are in fact *Pygmoids*.²¹ In order to gain further information, however, other Pygmy groups in Central Africa and the rest of the DRC will also be referred to, even though this study focuses mainly on the Mbuti Pygmies.

2.2.4 Languages

While ethnic and tribal groups in Sub-Saharan Africa are usually identified by reference to their languages and mother tongues, apart, of course, from the specific cases of the Hutu and Tutsi of both Rwanda and Burundi who have a unique local language, this approach is not valid for the African Pygmy peoples. In fact, without ceasing to be Pygmies and without belonging to any other non-

²¹ The *Pygmoids* or *Pygmiforms* are all the hybrid or strongly acculturated Pygmies. In Central Africa, these are the Babinga and the Batwa/Batswa with their sub-groups. While a few true Pygmies may be found among the Babinga/Akka in CAR, Cameroon and Gabon, the assumption that only the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri rainforest are the purest has given rise to a stormy debate among scholars. Schebesta (1952) and Turnbull (1961; 1965; 1966; 1976; 1983) claim the purest status for the Mbuti Pygmies, whereas Trills (1932, 1945) considers that as pretentious and says that the true Pygmies are the Akka, whose existence is recorded all the way back to the 4th Millennium B.C. in the Old Egyptian Kingdom. On this debate, Bahuchet talks about “the invention of the Pygmies”, while Mary (2010:889-890) concludes, “Each one has its pure Pygmy people”. Pure or not, all Pygmy peoples experience the same lot that must be tackled.

Pygmy ethnic and tribal groups, the Pygmy peoples use more than one language as mother tongues. Are they, for this reason, subdivided into several ethnic and tribal groups? Besides this, the Pygmy peoples are aware of the existence of other Pygmy populations elsewhere, but they do not care about the issue of tribes and ethnic groups among them. They recognise only that they are all *bamiki ba'ndura* (children of the forest) consisting of several small groups or hordes scattered throughout the forest according to familial affinities. On this point of view, Schebesta (1952:206) asserts, "Pygmies have no ethnic and tribal consciousness. Though they know that they all belong to one human race, this knowledge has no influence on their common life." This is an amazing fact that recalls the earliest times when God created human beings. Scripturally speaking, God created human beings without entrusting to them any ethnic or tribal responsibility (cf. Gen 1-2).

About the languages, it is important to highlight, first of all, that the linguistic situation of the Pygmy groups is a very complex issue. More than one person considers that the Pygmy peoples usually speak the languages of the farmer-villages with whom they live in symbiosis. This is very likely acceptable because the Pygmy peoples who have been made slaves are *ipso facto* compelled to speak the languages of their masters. In support of this point, Trilles (1945:47) states that weak people are often compelled to speak the languages of the powerful people. Thoughtful observers, however, are not reticent about arguing that things are not that easy, as one can believe. Actually, the symbiosis between the Pygmy and non-Pygmy peoples has caused obstacles to linguistic scientific efforts with regard to the Pygmy populations. The non-Pygmy peoples who often suffer from a guilty complex of superiority towards the Pygmy peoples, whom they often consider to be wild people who must be civilized (cf. Observation during the field research in 2010 and in 2012),²²

²² Through the field research among the Mbuti Pygmies in Ituri, it has been easy to find out that the relationship of the non-Pygmy peoples with the Pygmy peoples is based on a complex

cannot conduct any impartial surveys that are not tainted by prejudice. This means that the linguistic domain with regard to the Pygmy peoples is subject to contradictory theories. The following theories, among many others, are, for instance, often debated. Firstly, the Pygmy peoples have lost their language, and it is necessary to search for traces of the original language (cf. Bahuchet 1979:17). In relation to this theory, Trilles (1932:218) compares the Pygmy language to a huge net from which a number of stitches and several tattered pieces have disappeared during the centuries and as a consequence of migrations. The Pygmy peoples, Trilles goes on, have repaired these nets with affordable materials at their disposal, and, consequently, trying to find the old pattern is not easy. Secondly, Schebesta (1952:4-5) believes that the genuine Pygmy peoples of the Ituri forest have their own language, which is, in fact, the basis of two linguistic groups, namely the Bantu dialect *bira-sua* and the Sudanic dialect *balese-efe*. According to him, in addition, the *lese* dialect of the group Mamvu-Lese-Mvuba that the Efe Pygmies speak should be regarded as the original language of the Pygmy peoples (cf. Bahuchet 1979:28).

Because the history of the Pygmy populations in Africa is not yet fully understood, each of the above theories could be sustainable. In fact, the Pygmy society consists of several hordes of about fifty individuals, each of which has its own internal cultural features. Owing to this social fact, it is possible that the Pygmy peoples have lost their own language in favour of the more powerful and “slave” culture of their master-villagers. Indeed, minority and weak persons easily lose their own cultural values when they face the powerful culture of the majority. The Mbuti Pygmies of Ituri, however, even though they have been

of superiority. For example, almost all the efforts of the NGOs dealing with the Pygmy peoples, such as the AMN, CAMV, CENDEPYG, CEPAC Projet Pygmées, Lovemor Project, MEPA, PAP-RDC, PRO, and the Seventh Day Adventists Church, aim at civilizing these forest dwellers through several development projects according to the model of the Bantu but not according to the real needs of the beneficiaries, which consist of rehabilitating their cultural way of life. The fact that the Bantu tend to impose their ways of life on the Mbuti Pygmies is indicative of a complex of superiority.

acculturated to the extent that they speak the languages of their neighbouring farmer-villagers, have shown that their pronunciation of a number of words is still linked to a certain old language, which would be theirs. They sometimes use their own words and phrases that do not exist even in local languages that they use. Schebesta (1952) may, therefore, be right when he asserts that the local languages in Ituri originated from the Pygmy language. In keeping with this understanding, there is still an urgent scientific need to search for and reconstruct the remnants of the Pygmy language. Here, indeed, there are pertinent questions that ought to be posed. Firstly, is it possible to reconstruct a language whose people are subdivided into several small groups of about fifty individuals each, and who are also scattered as minorities among other major groups? Secondly, do the Pygmy peoples need languages other than those that they are currently speaking?

With reference to the Pygmy language, which as it is assumed, has already been diluted by other languages, Vansina (1965:53-4) highlights that not only have the Pygmy peoples adopted many cultural features from farmer-villagers, but that farmer-villagers have also adopted many cultural features from the Pygmy peoples. This means that there has been a social interaction between the Pygmy and non-Pygmy peoples, but with an emphasis on the latter. So, according to Schebesta (1952:5), despite their acculturation, the Mbuti Pygmies of Ituri and the surrounding areas have succeeded in keeping the fundamental values of their racial and cultural originality. They have also succeeded in contributing to the formation of a half-caste people, the *Negro-Bambutids*,²³ in whom genuine Pygmy features of both language and culture are obvious. Accordingly, one may conclude, with Schebesta, that in Africa all the so-called Pygmy peoples, namely the Batwa and Babinga Pygmies, have no

²³ The *Negro-Bambutids* and the *Pygmoids* are the same, i.e., the half-caste from genuine Pygmies.

languages of their own. They merely speak the languages of their masters and neighbouring farmer-villagers.

2.3 The Pygmy Peoples in DRC

In light of the above background, the DRC can very likely be considered to be the cradle of the Pygmy populations, from where they would have migrated towards the other areas of Africa. Keeping within the scope of this study, one may draw attention to the link between the land and the people of the DRC in general, and, specifically, the broad context in which the Pygmy peoples live.

2.3.1 Brief profile of the DRC

Considering that the DRC has a wide variety of geographical features and ethnic groupings, this section briefly highlights the crucial issues that one needs to highlight from the relationship that exists between land and people.

2.3.1.1 The land

The DRC fills almost the whole central area of Africa and belongs to two time zones, GMT+02:00 in the east and GMT+01:00 in the west. Among African nations, it ranks second²⁴ in size, with 2 345 000 km², after Algeria, with 2 381 741 km², and fourth in demography with 71 712 867 inhabitants, after Nigeria with 155 215 573 inhabitants, Ethiopia with 90 873 739 inhabitants, and Egypt with 82 079 636 inhabitants (CIA, July 2011). The country's landscape is formed of grassy plains, valleys, highlands, mountains, and dense forests

²⁴ The DRC holds this position since July 9th, 2011, as a result of the official division of Sudan into 2 countries: the Sudan, the north part of the country with Khartoum as its capital city, and the South Sudan with Juba as its capital city.

covered by varieties of plants and trees. It is a home to animals and more species of primates and birds than any forest in Africa, with fertile soil, especially in the Kivu, rivers, lakes, and mineral and agricultural wealth. While the northern African countries are threatened by the encroachment of the Saharan desert, reassuring vegetation in contrast, covers the whole of the DRC. One should also note that the DRC alone has the largest quantity of water and the greatest portion of forest in Africa. The entire country measures 2 345 000 km², whereas the rainforest alone, the homeland of the Pygmy peoples, measures 1 280 042.46 km² (cf. CEIRD Congo), that is, 55% of the whole surface area of the country. For Wheeler (2000), the DRC's forest is one of the few places where true wildness, wild animals, and nomadic people still coexist.

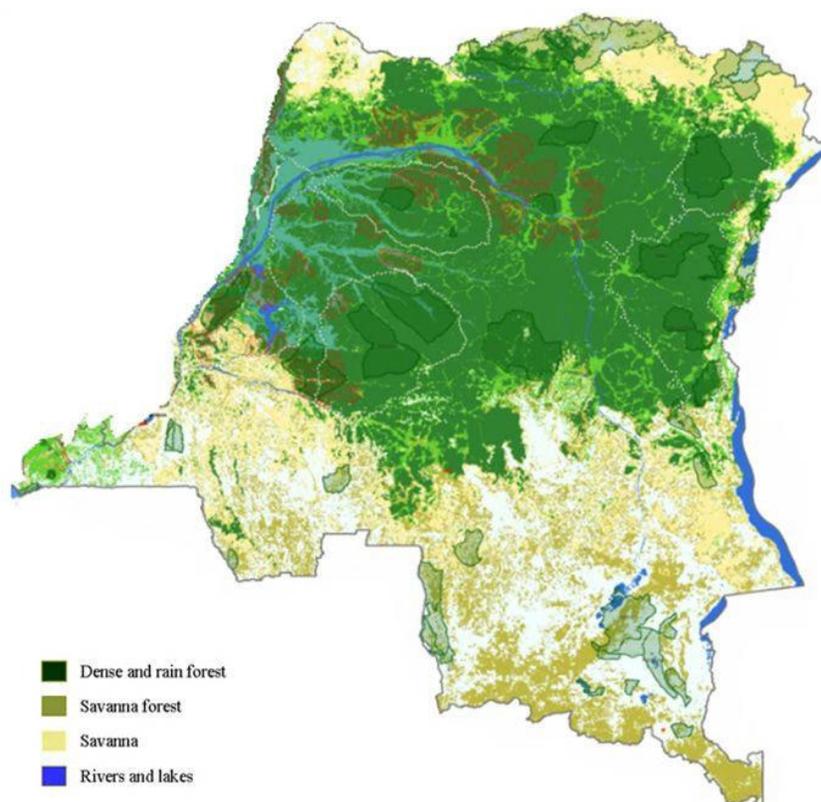


Figure 2.6: The forest areas of the DRC

Source: UN-REDD (2012).

Because of its strategic position due to its flora, fauna, mineral, and hydrographical wealth, the DRC is not only located in the centre of Africa, but it is also a central focus of the world's need to acquire resources. Its strategic position was one of the major issues of the Scramble for Africa during the Berlin Conference in 1884-5 (Wright 2005b). While other African countries were claimed as properties of the European governments involved in the Scramble for Africa, the DRC was instead claimed as the private property of the Belgian king, Leopold II, and so became the "Congo Free State". Leopold II was compelled to cede the "Congo Free State" to the Belgian government in 1908, after 32 years of cruel exploitation. Newman (2005) briefly describes the situation in the following terms:

Across most of sub-Saharan Africa, colonial rule was accompanied by the exploitation of the continent's raw materials by private European concessionary companies. The conduct of these companies was often brutal. The worst excesses were in the Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), which Belgian king Leopold II ruled as his personal fiefdom until it was taken over by the Belgian government in 1908.

The way Leopold II ruled over the DRC has shaped a unique type of leadership in this country until today. From the "Congo Free State" to the "Belgian Congo" which was the colony of the Belgian government, to the current DRC, there has been a type of selfish leadership, which cares very little or not at all for the indigenous and destitute Pygmy peoples. As the focus of ruling over this huge and potentially wealthy country, since the Berlin Conference, has been primarily economic, the wellbeing of the unknown Pygmy peoples hidden within the forests has obviously not been taken into account.

2.3.1.2 The population

The DRC comprises an amazingly diversified population consisting of three main groups, the Negroid, the foreigners and refugees, and the Pygmies. The main Negroid group, consisting of the Bantu in the central area and the south, comprises 82.4% of the population, and includes over 300 ethnic groups speaking over 150 main languages; the Sudanic in the north comprise 13% of the population and include possibly 100 ethnic groups speaking more than 50 main languages; and the Nilotics and Hamitics in north-east, comprise 1.5% of the population (Johnstone & Mandryk 2001:197). The Pygmy groups are associated with almost the entire Negroid group.

According to McGavran and Riddle (1979:37), the first sub-race of the Negroid, the Bantu, now settled all over the country, brought with them the knowledge of working iron, which gave them a definite superiority over the Pygmy peoples with their stone-tipped weapons and tools. The Bantu are also believed to have been involved in mass migrations from northern Africa, extending over centuries and covering vast distances. The World Bank Report (2009:12) writes:

... it was the Bantu who predominantly occupied a substantial part of the current Congolese territory, the vast Congo River Basin, from the central rain forest to the two savannahs in the North and the South, as well as the Kivu mountains. They arrived in the West (Bas Congo and Bandundu) and the North (Equateur and Bandundu), as well as the East of the rain forest. This gradual invasion took place throughout the first millennium.

The second sub-race of the Negroid in the DRC consists of the Sudanic-speaking people who mostly are the Abandia, Amarambo, Avungura, Azande, Babelu, Babwa, Budu, Lese, Mamvu, Mangbetu, Mbandja, Ndaka, Ngbaka, Ngbandi, Nzakara, and Togbo who live in the belt from Ituri to Zongo in the northwest DRC. Some of these ethnic groups, such as the Bangbetu, Budu, Lese,

Mamvu, and Ndaka, have incorporated a number of Pygmy people known as the Efe, Aka, and Sua.

The third sub-race of the Negroid is that of the Nilotic people, who originally came from eastern Sudan, live in the northeast DRC. These are mostly the Alur, Bari, Fajulu, Kakwa, Kaliko, Logo, Lugbara, Madi (Cornet 1989:166), and they are physically distinctive, tall, about five feet ten on the average (for adult males), with long limbs, extremely slender bodies, and narrow heads. They are also skilled at surviving by nomadic cattle-raising as a primary source of food and other needs, with agriculture as an option wherever practical (McGavran & Riddle 1979:38). The Hamitic people, who are the Tutsi and Hima or Hema and live in Kivu and Ituri, are generally associated with this cluster and they survive by nomadic cattle-raising as a main source of food and other needs.

It should be noted here that the Sudanics, the Nilotes, and the Hamitics as neighbours of the Pygmy peoples beside the Bantu, will all be referred to as Bantu or non-Pygmy peoples throughout this study. In terms of their behaviour towards the Pygmy peoples, these Sudanics, Nilotics, and Hamitics seem to have been “bantuzied”. In any case, the Pygmy peoples do not make a distinction between the Bantu and the other Negroid groups, simply because almost all of them have the same negative feelings towards the Pygmy peoples.

The second main group beside the Negroid and often non-talked about, consists of foreigners and refugees, the latter of whom come mostly from Rwanda, Burundi, and Angola. This group is estimated to comprise 2.2% of the population (Johnstone & Mandryk 2001:197).²⁵

The third and last main social group in the DRC, beside the Negroid and the foreigners and refugees, consists of the Pygmy peoples. This last social

²⁵ Foreigners and refugees consist of a very unstable group to the point that their fair estimative number can only be obtained from the entire number of 100% deducted of the number of stable groups. This makes $100 - (82.4 + 13 + 1.56 + 1.5) = 1.54\%$.

group is the main subject of this study. Estimated to comprise 1.56% of the population (cf. *Section 2.3.3*), the Pygmy peoples are an important social group in the DRC ranking third in demography, after the Bantu and the Sudanics. This is clearly shown in the *figure 2.7* below, where the three sub-races of the Negroid, namely the Bantu, Sudanics and Nilotics are compared to the second and third main groups.

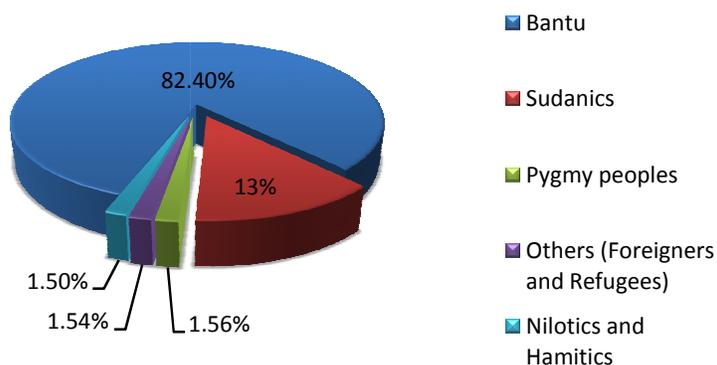


Figure 2.7: The five main social groups in DRC

2.3.2 The main groups of Pygmy peoples in DRC

As stated in the preceding chapter, the Pygmy populations are scattered throughout the DRC, except for the province of Bas-Congo and the city-province of Kinshasa (cf. Bikopo & Perodeau 2011:3). On the demographical level, as shown in the *figure 2.7* above, the Pygmy peoples constitute a very representative social group in DRC. Across this huge country, they are identified through three main groups whose generic names are Babinga, Batwa or Batswa (Cwa), and Bambuti.²⁶ One may identify their natural settings across the country in the following map (*figure 2.8*).

²⁶ In the Bantu languages, the prefix “ba” refers to the plural form of nouns. The plural of the following ethnonyms is formed as follows: Mbuti = Ba-mbuti, Twa = Ba-twa, Tswa = Ba-tswa, Binga or Mbinga = Ba-binga or Ba-mbinga. However, these ethnonyms can also be

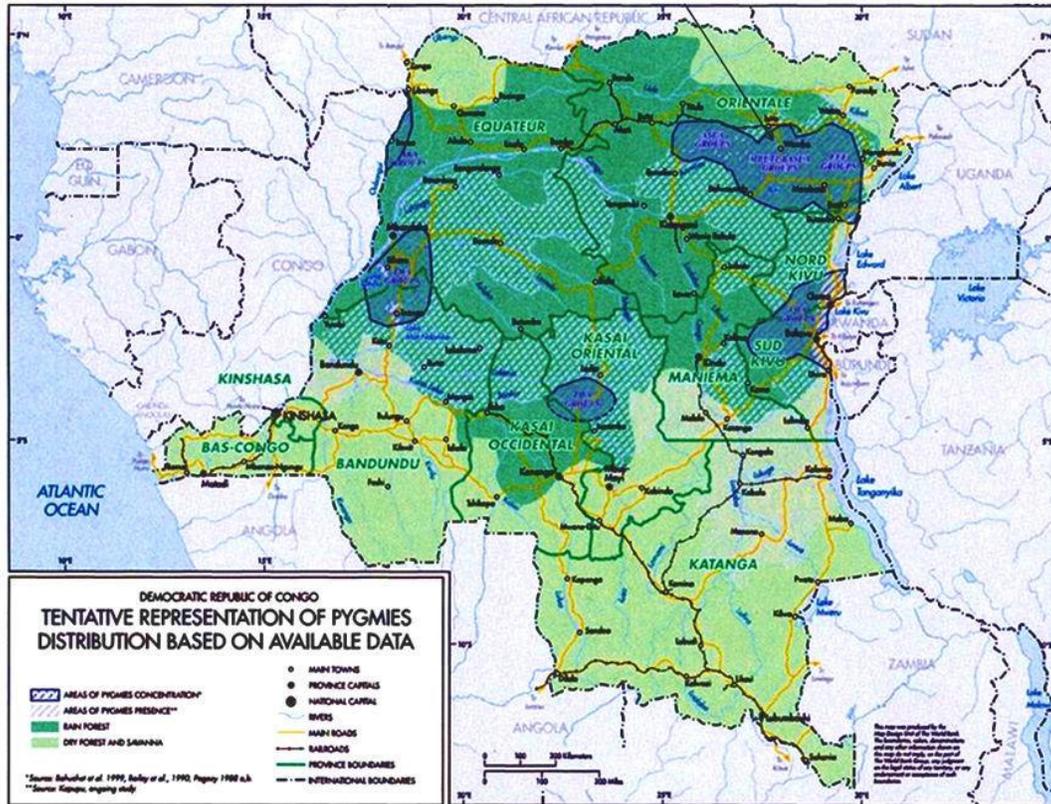


Figure 2.8: Tentative representation of the main Pygmy groups' distribution in DRC

Source: Forest in Post-Conflict DRC – Analysis of a Project Agenda. <http://www.cifor.cgiar.org>

2.3.2.1 The Babinga Pygmies

The Babinga Pygmy groups, sometimes called Aka or Bayaka (Lee & Daly 1999:190), are settled mostly west in CAR, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea. Small numbers of them live in the lower Ubangi, the left bank of Ubangi River, in the north-western part of the DRC (Schebesta 1952:33s). Compared to the other Pygmy groups in the DRC, the Babinga Pygmies are half-casts and are called Pygmoids or *Pygmiforms* by the anthropologists (Leyder 1934). Their physical and cultural features are almost

used in the plural without the prefix “ba”. In this case, the plural will depend on the use of the article and of the verb related to it. Therefore, one may say, for example, “*The Mbuti are* or *Mbuti are* the shortest people in the world”.

closer to the Batwa or Batswa than to the Bambuti. As they are the smallest Pygmy group in the DRC, they are often studied in relation to their western neighbours living in the previously mentioned five countries.

2.3.2.2 The Batwa Pygmies

The Batwa Pygmies, who represent the largest number of Pygmies in DRC, are scattered across the country, from the west to the east and the south. According to the numbers suggested by the World Bank Report (2009) and the CPPA (2010:22), as seen in the next *table 2.1*, the Batwa Pygmies number almost 643 260 of the 660 064 Pygmy peoples in the DRC, that is 97%. In the east, they are known as Batwa, whereas in the rest of the country they are known either as Batswa or Bacwa, or simply as Pygmies. Compared to the Bambuti and the Babinga, the Batwa are strongly half-casted. They are acculturated to the Bantu and live almost in symbiosis with them. Regardless of their strong acculturation, the Batwa have never succeeded either to integrate into the Bantu society or to be accepted by Bantu society as full human beings. On the contrary, they undergo the same maltreatment as all other Pygmy peoples in Central Africa.

2.3.2.3 The Mbuti Pygmies

The Pygmy peoples of the northeast DRC are commonly known as Bambuti. Not only are these Mbuti Pygmies the most studied, but they are also, according to anthropological consensus, the only true African Pygmies, whereas all the others are *Pygmoids* (Bahuchet 1979:15). Usually, these Mbuti Pygmies are talked about only in relation to the Ituri geographical limits, because the foremost groups live in the Ituri rainforest, which covers areas found beyond the administrative limits of the Ituri District. The Mbuti Pygmies are settled mostly

in the territories of Mambasa, Beni,²⁷ Irumu, and Djugu. These settlements are located in two provinces, the Orientale province and the North Kivu province. In the Orientale province, the Mbuti Pygmies are found in all the four districts, Ituri, Haut-Uelé, Tshopo, and Bas-Uelé, whereas, in the North Kivu, they are found in the territories of Beni and Lubero. The geographical map of the Mbuti Pygmies settlements may thus be thought as being drawn from Beni, via Irumu, Djugu, Mambasa, Watsa, Isiro, Wamba, Bafwasende, and Banalia to Bondo. All of this vast area is blanketed by the equatorial rainforest.

Mostly settled in the Ituri rainforest, the Mbuti Pygmies are assumed being distributed into three or four groups characterized by differences in terms of language, geographic location, and means of subsistence. Among scholars, however, this subdivision is the subject of contradictory points of view. Wheeler (2000), Duffy (1996:3), Bailey (1991:12-13), and Cornet (1989:149) respectively, on the one hand, speak of four groups. These are the *Bambuti*, associated with the Bantu-speaking Bira or Bila, the *Efe*, associated with the Sudanic-speaking Lese and Mamvu,²⁸ the *Sua* or *Tswa*, associated with the Budu and Ndaka, and the *Aka*, associated with the Mangbetu and the Azande. For Duffy (1996:3), the first two groups are the well-known nomadic Pygmies, and the *Bambuti*, considered as a specific group of Pygmies are the largest and the most studied. Among the last two small groups, there are a few *Aka* left. According to Bailey (1991:13), many may have fled to the south and east to become *Sua* and *Efe* in the 19th century when the Azande and the Arabs took control over the Isiro area; others may have migrated to other areas as the forest

²⁷ Though Beni is located in the North Kivu province, it was part of the former Kibali-Ituri province, which, since 1963, included the current District of Ituri and the territories of Beni and Lubero (Cf. *Historique des divisions administratives de la République Démocratique du Congo*).

²⁸ In the territory of Beni, the *Bambuti* identify themselves as *Bila* or as *Lese*, because of the local languages and other cultural features they have already adopted from these ethnic groups.

has become badly degraded during the following 20th century. Ngbami²⁹ (2010:16), Vansina (1965:54), and Schebesta (1952:206) respectively, on the other hand, consider that there are three groups among the Mbuti Pygmies, namely the *Efe*, associated with the Lese; the *Aka*, associated with the Mangbetu; and the *Sua*, associated with the Bira.

Some pertinent questions arise from this. How many different groups of Pygmies are there in Ituri? Does the collective name of Bambuti relate to a specific group of Pygmies? Are the differences associated with the subdivision among the Mbuti Pygmies, taken as a whole, a result of the fact that they remain almost unknown by the Bantu?

Another confusing element that can be noted about the two groups of scholars relates to the *Sua* Pygmies. How can this last group be related simultaneously to the Sudanic-speaking Budu and Ndaka and to the Bantu-speaking Bira? This misunderstanding would mean that even the different names given to the Mbuti Pygmies in Ituri might be both subjective and pejorative. As well as the nicknames by which the different Pygmy groups are referred to can be seen as being subjective and pejorative, the Pygmy peoples are never involved in any debate about the so-called subdivisions among them. Wheeler (2000), for instance, considers all the Pygmy populations of the African rainforest as *Efe*, while Schebesta (1952:9-10) considers all of them to be Bambuti.

Sharing the point of view of Schebesta, CL7 (2011) tries to settle the debate about the subdivisions among the Bambuti in the following terms:

In the Ituri region there is only one Pygmy people called Bambuti. Even though they speak several languages according to their neighbouring farm villagers where they are settled, these Mbuti Pygmies have basically the same physical and cultural features. They are a same people. The most important Mbuti

²⁹ Ngbami is a Bira pastor of the Emmanuel Community of Lolwa in the Mambasa territory, where he lives and works among the Mbuti Pygmies and the Bira tribe as well. He wrote a dissertation for an Honours degree on the socio-linguistic situation of the Bira people.

Pygmies, for instance, speak my own mother tongue, the *Kibira*. Beyond the so-called 3 or 4 groups of the Bambuti identified according to the languages they often speak in Ituri, there are some who speak at the same time more than 3 languages of the farm villagers, for example, *Kilese*, *Kibira*, *Ndaka* and *Kiswahili*. To which ethnic group do these last Pygmies belong if the Bambuti are ethnically distributed according to the languages they speak?

CL8 (2010) supports the opinion of CL7, in different words, by revealing that the one single Mbuti community in Ituri would have been divided into several groups by the neighbouring Sudanic and Bantu ethnic groups, the *kpara* (overlords or masters), who appropriated the Mbuti to themselves as their vassals. As a result of this practice of the *kpara*, the Mbuti vassals of the Bira have been forced to adopt the cultural features and language of the Bira, and so on for the Mbuti vassals of the Lese, of the Nyali, of the Ndaka, and of the Bagbetu. Insofar as the only major difference among the Mbuti Pygmies is the different languages they speak according to the areas where they live, CL8's point of view is most likely acceptable. So, one may conclude that the Mbuti Pygmies consist of only one ethnic group. In the territory of Beni alone, for example, the Mbuti Pygmies are associated with more than six ethnic groups, namely the Lese, Bila, Mbuba, Choli, Pakombe and Bira (AMN 2012). These Pygmies acknowledge being part of the main group of the Mbuti who have been scattered among local ethnic groups for the *kpara* motives (cf. MPC of Undesiba 2012).

Another contradictory issue similar to the ethnic subdivision among the Pygmy populations in DRC consists of their number. How many Pygmy peoples live in the DRC? Ought they to be counted among the minority groups in DRC?

2.3.3 Estimative number of the Pygmy peoples

It is right to admit, along with the World Bank Report (2009:19), that there is great uncertainty about the precise number of the Pygmy peoples living in DRC.

Often the researchers based in certain specific areas of the country, and who provide data about this very issue do not take into account the bigger picture. According to the data provided by Leyder (1934:7-12) and Schebesta (1952), however, the Pygmy population was formerly estimated at being between 100 000 and 250 000, and 150 000 and 300 000 people. Other researchers, such as Wheeler (2000), for instance, estimate the number of all the African Pygmy peoples as being no more than 120 000 people. Since the Pygmy peoples remain almost unknown by both their neighbouring Bantu and all other non-Pygmy peoples, the exact size of the Pygmy population cannot be accurately determined.

There are in the DRC, for instance, a number of reasons why it is difficult to estimate with precision the size of the Pygmy population. The World Bank Report (2009:19) highlights, among these reasons, the following:

- The only census ever undertaken in DRC since independence in 1960 was in 1984. The National Agricultural Statistics Service updated this between 1990 and 1994. There are regular yearly administrative censuses but they are subject to major distortions. The Land Administration authority does, in fact, have employees (census takers) on all administrative levels but employees are often not able to execute their tasks with the result that numbers are frequently extrapolated or inflated for electoral reasons. Village chiefs are required to maintain a registry of births, deaths, and movements, but this is rarely done and is not systematic.
- Ethnic censuses have never been undertaken in DRC, and ethnicity is not registered in official data or civil registry offices. Only the administrative sector of origin is registered.
- Census takers of the Land Administration authority have estimates of the country's different ethnicities, but these are unreliable and rarely updated. The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) carried out some censuses

in 2005 and 2006, but it did not register ethnic origins or household members.

- Censuses carried out by the Health Zones are generally considered more reliable, but they do not include ethnic indicators.

Such a disappointing reality of what has occurred in this regard in the DRC relates to the Congolese people as a whole. Beyond the general official census, however, one may rely on available numbers drawn from the compiled efforts done by organisations such as schools, churches, health services, and the NGOs involved in development. Unfortunately, all these organisations seem to deal with matters relative to the Pygmy peoples as if the Pygmy people were not part of the Congolese population. Despite difficulties with regard to the efficient census of Pygmy groups, fieldwork conducted by some NGOs involved in Pygmy people concerns and gathered within the network *Dynamique Pygmées (DYPPY)* made it possible, in 2008, to define the dispersion of Pygmies across the country and their plausible number (CPPA 2010:22). Conducted in nine provinces of the eleven of the DRC, these surveys ended up with the following substantial findings (CPPA 2010:22; World Bank Report 2009):

Table 2.1: Interim number of the Pygmy peoples in DRC according to the DYPPY

<i>Province</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Equateur	Twa	172 197	26
Province Orientale	Mbuti	16 804	3
Bandundu	Twa	56 210	8
Kasai Oriental	Non-defined	Non-defined	Non-defined
Kasai Occidental	Non-defined	Non-defined	Non-defined
Maniema	Twa	4 452	1
Katanga	Twa	320 930	48
Nord-Kivu	Twa	25 871	4
Sud-Kivu	Twa	63 600	10
Total		660 064	100

These numbers cannot be accepted without some observations, because they seem to be considerably underestimated for some provinces. For example, the Orientale province, which is known as the main cradle of the Pygmy populations thanks to the Ituri rainforest, cannot be home to only 16 804 Pygmy people. This underestimated number is refutable for several reasons. Firstly, the territory of Mambasa, located in the very geographical centre of the Ituri rainforest which is the very geographical cradle of the Pygmy populations in Africa, shows a record of 299 989 people from several ethnic groups, namely the Lese, Bira, Nyali, Ndaka, Mamvu, Nande, Bali, Mbuti, etc. Of this number, according to Ngbami (2010:16), the Mbuti Pygmies only comprise 30%, that is, 90 000 individuals, and they are known to be the foremost population group of the Mambasa territory. Secondly, Barret, Kurian and Johnson (2001:74-78), who have conducted ethnological surveys throughout the world including the DRC, seven years before the *Dynamique Pygmées*, recorded a compiled number of about 233 648 Pygmy people in the Ituri District alone, plus the territory of Watsa.

Table 2.2: Number of the Pygmy peoples in the northeast DRC according to Barret *et al*

<i>Location</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Numbers</i>
Ituri	Asua (Aka)	A-suati	25 827
Ituri / Watsa	Efe (Amengi)=>Lese	Amengi	28 126
Ituri	Lese (Lisi, Mbute)	Lese-otsodu	70 317
Ituri	Mbuti (Twa)	Lese-otsodu	25 827
Ituri / Irumu	Mbuti (Twa)	Kibira	83 551
Total			233 648

Beyond the area identified by Barret, Kurian and Johnson, the Pygmy peoples are also found in some areas of the Districts of Haut-Uélé, Bas-Uélé, and Tshopo in the Orientale province. Thirdly, the anthropologist and ethnologist Paul Schebesta, who conducted fruitful surveys on the Mbuti Pygmies of Ituri from the 1930s onwards, estimated their number to be 25 000 people (Leyder

1934:7-12). With this in mind and many years on, one may strongly doubt the accuracy of the very limited number of 16 804 Pygmy people living in the Orientale province. If the numbers given by Ngbami (2010) and Barret *et al* (2001) are worthy of confidence, the Pygmy peoples in the whole of the Orientale province should be estimated to be at least 30 0000 individuals.

Another area where the number of the Pygmy population seems to have been strongly underestimated is in the Equateur province. According to Yves Mombando Yogo, the former governor of this province, his province was home to some 350 000 Pygmy individuals (IRIN 2006:24). Indeed the Equateur province, which is basically located within the western part of the DRC rainforest, the extension of the Ituri rainforest, is historically known as a home of important Pygmy peoples, the Batswa and Babinga Pygmies.

In keeping with the above observations on the DYPY's numbers, and without taking into account the other provinces where the numbers are also underestimated, and those where the numbers are not defined, the overall Pygmy population in the DRC should be estimated at numbering more than one million individuals, as is shown in the chart below (*table 2.3*).

Table 2.3: Probable estimative number of the Pygmy peoples in DRC

<i>Province</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Equateur	Twa	350 000	31.2
Province Orientale	Mbuti	300 000	26.8
Bandundu	Twa	56 210	5
Kasai Oriental	Non-defined	Non-defined	Non-defined
Kasai Occidental	Non-defined	Non-defined	Non-defined
Maniema	Twa	4 452	0.4
Katanga	Twa	320 930	28.6
Nord-Kivu	Twa	25 871	2.3
Sud-Kivu	Twa	63 600	5.7
Total		1 121 063	100

Source: Adapted data from the CPPA (2010)

This represents exactly 1.56% of the entire population of the DRC, currently estimated at 71 712 867 people (CIA 2011). This estimated number of more than one million Pygmy people in DRC is not very far from the number of 900 000 Pygmies, that is, exactly 1.5%, provided by the Congolese Ministry of Social Affairs in 2005, when the entire population of the DRC was estimated to be 60 million (IRIN 2006:23). In the light of this estimated number of Pygmy peoples in the DRC, one may conclude that these brave forest dwellers are politically rather than numerically a minority. Likewise, the challenges they face in DRC are not due to the fact that they are a minority group.

2.3.4 The Pygmy peoples ways of life

It is not easy to describe the customs, culture, and technology of all the Pygmy groups scattered across the DRC where they are facing several outside influences. Because of this difficulty, the current section will discuss only the Mbuti Pygmies by briefly drawing attention to their social, administrative, political, and economic organisation, their craft and entertainment, their interaction with the Bantu, and their religion. It is thus important to draw attention to the fact that, as each society in the world is the subject of continuous change in terms of customs, cultures, and technology, the Mbuti Pygmies as a fully human society are also subject to change in their customs, cultures and technology.

2.3.4.1 Social organisation

The society of the Mbuti Pygmies is structured into hordes or camps³⁰ of six to seven nuclear families each (Vansina 1965:56), that is, about fifty persons,

³⁰ In his writings, Turnbull uses the term bands instead of hordes or camps. For him (1965:93), a band is the largest political unit among the Mbuti Pygmies.

gathered mostly around common hunting interests. The nuclear family is the basic unit, whereas the entire camp, which considers itself to be a single family, is the largest effective political unit. The whole life of the Mbuti Pygmies is thus lived fully within the framework of the nomadic hordes to which each one belongs. Even though the Mbuti Pygmies are aware of the existence of other hordes within the forest, their life is lived, and all their activities, such as hunting, gathering, marriage, craft, and entertainment, take place regardless of the neighbouring hordes. Writing about the nomadic way of life, Bailey (1991:52) specifies that moving from one camp to another is a form of travel that can contribute to subsistence. On average, he explains, the Mbuti Efe move camp about every three weeks, and they spend three to four hours carrying their belongings between locations. As a consequence of this social organisation which consists of nomadic camps that almost function as small tribes within the framework of the Mbuti Pygmies taken as a whole; researchers do not understand the Pygmy society easily. Nor is this societal structure easily managed in terms of sustainable development. Moreover, the Pygmy nomadic tradition and social organisation in small camps, which are often criticised, are justified by the fact that the Pygmy peoples care about the health within their camps.

Without ignoring the dangers that threaten the Mbuti Pygmies because they live within the forest, Dr Jardin, quoted by Schebesta (1952:79-81), states that they know that the crowds and the sedentary way of life bring about sicknesses and disease, problems of household garbage management, and harmful insects such as flies, cockroaches, and mosquitoes which endanger the health of people. For this very reason of hygiene, the Mbuti Pygmies regularly renew their camps by moving away to search not only for food but also for new and fresher areas within the forest. They, in the same way, move from a camp

where someone has died.³¹ In Ituri, the Mbuti Pygmies often perceive the campaign consisting of relocating them from the forest as a deliberate way of depriving them from the advantages of the forest, their natural home. Even those who live in the roadside MPCs live there temporarily, expecting aid from NGOs. But their mind is constantly turned towards the forest, because the expected humanitarian aid has never responded to their vital needs (cf. Ndeisa MPC 2010).

The nomadic way of life implies an exceptional way of housing, the huts called *kumbe*. Women make these *kumbe* mostly of sticks and leaves within about two hours.



Figure 2.9: A hut or *kumbe* for one nuclear Mbuti family

These huts consist of a one-room, beehive-shaped structure with neither door nor window, in which only a child could stand upright inside. Their length is barely that of a sleeping person. The Mbuti Pygmies have never learned to make any other kind of shelter (cf. Duffy 1996).

³¹ As observed at Byane Mundihulu in Eringeti, in August 2012, however, the Mbuti Pygmies who are relocated alongside the main road by the AMN are now burying their dead beside their huts or *kumbe* (cf. Musafiri 2010; MPCs of Undesiba and Kadohyo 2012).

The *kumbe* (huts), which are temporary “leaf houses” that provide the shelters of the Mbuti Pygmies; illustrate clearly the simplicity that characterises the daily life of these people. In fact, simplicity characterises their life in almost all aspects: small leaf houses, small sized nuclear families averaging two children, small temporary camps, clothing, eating, elementary kitchenware and work tools, archaic technology, insignificant belongings, and daily work done within only four hours. One would think that they would take serious care of the environment management and would not waste any of their resources.

2.3.4.2 Administrative and political organisation

Apart from the chiefs of the nuclear families, the married males, who are the heads of their own households, and who lead hunting activities for their camps, there are neither chiefs nor administrative or political leaders formally recognized among the Mbuti Pygmies. Common life issues are often settled through discussions around the campfire that often end up as collective decisions. It is also in a collective manner that order is maintained within families and camps (Vansina 1965:56-7) and the Mbuti welcome visitors. All conversations with outside persons usually include everyone in the camp, children, women, men, and elders, because everything must be shared. Therefore, no secret deal can be tolerated within the Mbuti community.

Within any one cluster of households, however, an adult male of the senior branch lineage will have more authority than others, and generally will speak for them in the event of any dispute (Turnbull 1983:63). The roadside MPCs established by the NGOs have temporary chiefs who speak for their fellow Pygmies in the distribution of aid” (cf. MPCs of Epulu & Ndeisa 2010). In these two cases, however, the chiefs are not formally appointed and they do not work according to the current administrative and political understanding of what a chief is, since the Mbuti Pygmies are not educated in the Bantu system of

education. These kinds of chiefs among the Mbuti do not have offices from which they rule over their people, but, rather, their authority is merely spontaneous. Moreover, those who are living in the roadside MPCs are in a kind of mixed system in which they struggle between the nomadic and sedentary lifestyle and their own culture and outside cultures.

2.3.4.3 Economic organisation

It seems appropriate, along with Turnbull (1965; 1976; 1983), to draw attention to the fact that the economy of the Mbuti Pygmies is mostly based on hunting and gathering, and that they are perfectly capable of independent subsistence. This economy requires a minimal technology, still at the Stone Age level, though they no longer use stone tools; they domesticate neither plants nor animals, and they live in intimate sympathy with their forest world rather than by trying to control it. The gathering of mushrooms, roots, fruits, berries, and nuts provides the bulk of the diet, but it is mostly hunting that shapes the form of the society of the Mbuti Pygmies (Turnbull 1976:117-8).

Duffy (1996:30) describes the Mbuti Pygmies as people who are probably completely culturally integrated into the forest environment, where they work hard enough for the sustenance it provides, and who thankfully acknowledge that this beloved forest home gives them everything they need, food, clothing, shelter, and affection. As an expression of this belief, the Mbuti Pygmies sing, dance, and pray to the forest and identify themselves as “the children of the forest”. Despite their archaic and rudimentary technology as a result of which they are considered poor in the eyes of the Bantu who possess material wealth, the Mbuti Pygmies seem to have mastered the knack of survival. Because their technology is perfectly adequate for their needs, for them wealth would be cumbersome and disadvantageous. In addition, they do not burden themselves unduly with excess of any kind (Turnbull 1976:121 cf. 1983:4).

Insofar as everything is done by, within, and for the camp itself, the camp can substantially be considered to be an economic unit. Within this economic unit, there is no room for saving, ownership, wealth, foresight, stores, economic development, or, indeed, the future. For all of the Mbuti Pygmies, everything must be understood within the framework of the present time. From this perspective, one would think that these forest inhabitants are aware of the Scripture according to Matthew 6:34, which states, “Don't worry about tomorrow. It will take care of itself. You have enough to worry about today”. Referring to the Mbuti perception of the time, Turnbull (1983:vi) says, “The past, the present and the future flow together as they would.” Duffy (1996:176) makes it clear in the following terms:

To the Mbuti, the past is unimportant because it is gone completely and forever. As for the future, they have little desire to control what does not yet exist. The present is something that happens every day, and is to be enjoyed with consideration for others, with love, and sometimes with passion.

What is noticeable within the MPCs is that everything is shared fairly with every single member. There is no discrimination according to age, gender, family, skills, and belief. Even those who did not find anything from hunting must benefit from those who have the game (cf. Vansina 1965:56). From this, one can deduce that the cooperative and sharing nature of the Mbuti economy with regards to almost everything enhances the family feeling and creates the vital solidarity within their society. Duffy (1996: viii) bears witness to the values of these Mbuti Pygmies as follows:

Perhaps long ago the Mbuti decided that they had everything they wanted, and that to have more was undesirable. To this day, a nomadic Mbuti band will publicly criticise one of their own who hoards or keeps something to himself that the others don't have. In the same way, there are no chiefs among the Mbuti because to be chief means to have power that others do not have. An informal system of community approval – or disapproval – takes the place of

laws or kingly authority. Whatever the reasons, the Mbuti culture adequately survived through the centuries, while the great civilisations of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome rose and fell.

When one encounters the Mbuti Pygmies within their forest homes, it is easy to discover that their daily consumption of food consists of resources from about 70% of gathering, usually carried out by women and children, and 30% from hunting that is usually carried out by men assisted by young people. To prevent excessive consumption in any one area, the hordes must move from camp to camp. During the hunting seasons (January – March) and the honey ones (June – September), for instance, they leave their camps and go deeper into the forest for several months (cf. Bailey 1991). This ongoing, moving way of life brings about instability and uncertainty in their economy and their life taken as a whole. It also leads to a very fluid social organisation. As such, the Mbuti Pygmies exchange³² meat, labour, and other forest resources for meagre-cash payments, food, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or hard goods (Laden 1992:35 cf. Bailey 1991:56-7), primarily cloth and iron implements. When game appears to be rare, they move more deeply into the forest where wildlife is still more plentiful, or they choose to prowl around the villages of agricultural people to benefit from their gardens. Some Mbuti Pygmies, as foragers, do live self-sufficiently, but not strictly in the forest itself; rather, they subsist on a combination of many efforts such as working for wages, barter, the food production of the Bantu farmers, crafting, and the exploitation of resources of the wild. In Epulu, for instance, some 50 Mbuti were employed by the ONWR to feed³³ okapis, and were paid, in addition to weekly food and other supplies, \$50 USD per month. Since June

³² For more information about the Mbuti economic organisation and exchange with the Bantu, one may read Mitsu Ichikawa in Peterson and Matsuyama (1991:135-162); Bates and Lees (1991:55-83).

³³ From the field research conducted in Epulu, an okapi is daily fed 25 kg from a combination of 150 kinds of leaves among which at least 35 are obligatory. The Mbuti are preferred employees of the ONWR, because they are the only persons who have mastered the forest and are capable of finding the appropriate leaves within it.

2012, after the massacre of the okapis and of people in Epulu by the militias of Morgan (Radio Okapi 2012), this employment of the Mbuti Pygmies has probably been suspended. In whatever manner is advantageous to both the Mbuti and the Bantu, however, they interact with one another very cautiously.

2.3.4.4 Craft and entertainment

In addition to hunting, gathering, and sometimes fishing, the Mbuti Pygmies are known to be good crafters, well skilled in wild plants and good singers and dancers. They craft baskets, nets, bows or arches, arrows, wooden and ivory artefacts, pots, and they make clothes from tree barks that they often decorate with well thought aesthetical ornamentation. They also make musical instruments, such as rattles, wooden bells, zithers, *likembe*, harps, and flutes (*baruma*). Women know different styles of natural makeup, body ornaments, and they also make different kinds of bracelets and necklaces. In the eastern DRC, Rwanda and Burundi, for instance, the Batwa Pygmies are known as good potters.

In the domain of flora, the Mbuti Pygmies know, with exceptional and subtle awareness, which plants, trees, and roots can serve them in both their dietary and therapeutic needs. They claim to be capable of treating all kinds of diseases, apart from some which are incurable and those that necessitate particular health care, such as a surgery (cf. Schebesta 1952:185-188). The non-Pygmy farmers often need to meet with the Mbuti Pygmies not only for trading meat, honey, and other forest resources, but also to employ them unfairly as a labour force and for learning Mbuti herbal skills. Unfortunately, the Mbuti Pygmies are not willing to share their skills with outside people. They assume that a valuable gift from their beloved “mother” and “father”, the forest, should not be thrown away or given to “naughty” people (cf. MP6 2010 & MP8 2012).

If there is an area in which the Mbuti Pygmies are more recognised and marketed, it is, of course, in the field of entertainment. Since the earliest times, during the Pharaonic reigns over Egypt, in the 2 250s B.C., the Pygmies were known, and referred to, as good dancers, the “dancers of God” (Trilles 1945, Duffy 1996, Wheeler 2000). Until today they still spend a lot of time rejoicing through singing and dancing. Schebesta (1952:188) maintains that they are prime among human beings worldwide who find pleasure in living, and who dedicate several hours every working day to entertainment. Their life is richly imbued with music from birth to death, to such an extent that every single event becomes an appointed opportunity for music and dance. Such events are, for example, success in hunting, thanksgiving when times are good, supplication during hardship or grief after death, the task of cheering up the forest which provides for all their needs, the ritual ceremonies such as birth, marriage, circumcision, and the initiation of girls called *elima*.³⁴ Owing to their specific talent in singing and dancing, the Bantu admire the Mbuti Pygmies very greatly and invite them to display their talent in their major festivities (cf. Musolo W’Isuka 2011:78). It is, however, not rare to find that the excessive need for rejoicing, enjoying freedom within the forest, and carefree behaviour regarding the daily life leads some Mbuti Pygmies to the abuse of alcohol and drugs. (cf. MP14 2012).

Despite some rare cases of bad behaviour, the structure of the society of the Mbuti Pygmies pivots fundamentally around a powerful forest-oriented system of values. To perceive their culture and ways of life more deeply, one ought not to miss reading with both interest and amazement Duffy’s poetic writings below:

³⁴ The *elima*, which is celebrated after the first appearance of menstrual blood in young girls, is best regarded as a premarital festival, whereas the *nkumbi* that consists of circumcision and the initiation of young boys is regarded as a passage into manhood.

Try to imagine a way of life where land, shelter, and food are free, and where there are no leaders, bosses, politics, organized crime, taxes, or laws. Add to this the benefits of being part of a society where everything is shared, where there are no rich people and no poor people, and where happiness does not mean the accumulation of material possessions. Put all this together and you have part of the traditional life of Africa's hunting and gathering Mbuti Pygmies who live in the Ituri forest of Zaïre. The life includes – for about four hours of work per day – a steady supply of food, along with good fellowship, music, dancing, singing, and a pride and pleasure in one's family. For those so inclined, free love is openly enjoyed and even ritualized among the young people, yet marriage, when it occurs, is generally monogamous and permanent. (Duffy 1996: vii)

As previously suggested, non-Pygmy peoples often tend to see the Mbuti Pygmies through their own lens as “poor” and “vulnerable” facing many challenges. The poetic description of their life by Duffy presents another picture. When one considers all the cultural and social values of the Mbuti Pygmies, it is clear that their apparent physical small size is really of very little significance. Discovering who they really are in all the richness of their culture should lead to glorifying God the Creator for his wonders. The Mbuti Pygmies are wonderful human creatures.

2.3.4.5 Interaction with the Bantu

Even though there are apparent considerable trading deals between the Mbuti Pygmies and the Bantu, the relationship between these two groups of people consists mostly of mutual mistrust and suspicion (cf. Epulu, Bandimaboche, and Ndeisa MPCs 2010; Byane Munihulu, Masenze Byakato, and Makumo Base MPCs 2012). On the one hand, the Mbuti Pygmies believe that the Bantu and all the non-Pygmy peoples are invaders and environmental spoilers. For them, the involvement of the Bantu in threatening the forest, the Pygmy's home and gift provider, often is seen to be an unforgivable offence. Cutting the forest and

abusing its resources are clear evidence of actions that prevent its inhabitants from living. As a result of this attitude, the Mbuti Pygmies remain very cautious *vis-à-vis* the Bantu. Even though, for instance, the Batwa and Batswa Pygmies have, at one time or another, intermarried with the Bantu, so losing many of the true Pygmy physical characteristics and at the same time losing a great deal of their original hunting and gathering culture (Turnbull 1965:16), the Mbuti Pygmies, except in some rare cases of their daughters, do not formally enter into marriage with the Bantu.

It is widely believed, on the other hand, that the Mbuti Pygmies are subject to village authority and are a subordinate people. Because of this, they are considered as cheap manpower to such an extent that some have become the vassals of the *kpara*. This belief depends especially on the assumption that the Mbuti Pygmies are dependent upon the villagers, and this theory has been extended into political and ritual fields as well as economic fields (Turnbull 1965:33). About this issue of dependence, however, one should note, in accordance with Turnbull (1976:122), that the sense of dependence and belonging taught from birth unites the Mbuti Pygmies in common opposition against the neighbouring tribes of forest farmers, who have a very different attitude to the forest, thinking of it and its inhabitants (elephants, leopards, baboons, snakes, and Mbuti people) as a hostile place they have to cut down in order to survive. With these Bantu, therefore, the Mbuti trade, not necessarily for economic reasons, but rather to prevent the farmers from encroaching into their forest world in search of meat and other forest products that the villagers always need.

The villages offer the Mbuti Pygmies, for a brief while, an agreeable change of pace, and an opportunity for relaxation that is not always possible inside the forest. Unfortunately, relaxation in the villages quite quickly turns to stress, especially when the Mbuti Pygmies try to compare themselves to the villagers. Moreover, the dependence of the Mbuti on the villagers is seen in

terms of their need of iron implements, such as machetes and kitchen utensils, and quite seriously for those who are being sensitised to adopt the sedentary life of nearby villages. Turnbull (1986:103-4) points out, however, that the issue of the Mbuti dependence upon the Bantu is merely a myth,³⁵ because even though the Mbuti need iron, which is lacking in their technology, it is perfectly possible for them to survive without any iron implements. For him, the Mbuti Pygmies have succeeded in surviving without iron tools for thousands of years in the same Ituri forest prior to the relatively recent immigration of the iron-smelting and forging villagers. What is important to underline, Turnbull continues, is the fact that the major need of the Mbuti is political rather than economic, whereas the burning need of the villagers is distinctly economic with respect to the resources of the forest (1986:104), including the Mbuti Pygmies as labourers.

Despite the common interests that one may expect the Mbuti and the Bantu to share, the relationship between the Mbuti and the Bantu is mostly ambivalent. It is based on an obvious duality of values and logic regarding admiration and disdain, collaboration and bondage, friendship and prejudices, respect and contempt, small stature and great stature, kindness and exploitation, candidness and deceptiveness, simplicity and an arrogant attitude, smile and carelessness, inferiority and superiority, weakness and power, etc. With reference to this ambivalent relationship between the Bantu and the Batwa Pygmies in the Equateur province, Cornet says:

The attitude of the Bantu and Batwa Pygmies towards one another is strongly discriminatory. The Dwarf Batwa are considered like a lower race that is as poorly human. According to the tradition, the Bantu and Batwa Pygmies are all from a same ancestor, but the Batwa Pygmies have been cursed for having

³⁵ To make it clear, Turnbull (1986:105) refers to the rebellions and troubles of the 1960s, which provided ample evidence on the issue of dependence. In fact, the villagers who fled from the roadside (along which their villages are strung like beads), and thus from the opposing military forces, had nowhere to go but into the forest. There the villagers found that their “superior” iron technology was of no avail, and the only ones who survived were those sheltered, fed, and protected by the Mbuti.

disobeyed... The Batwa Pygmies consider themselves as the traditional owners of soil, and accuse the Bantu to be invaders. (Cornet 1989:199-200)

2.3.4.6 Religion

As applies to the languages, the religion of the Mbuti Pygmies is a very complex issue. Insofar as the Mbuti are structured into several camps and ethnic groups which are spread all over the northeast DRC where they also share several outside cultures, it is not easy to determine which is really their religion. However, the concept of a unique and living God in whom they believe is closely linked to the forest. Actually, the intimacy with which the Mbuti live in relation to their forest world is seen in the fact that they personalise it and refer to it as their “father” and “mother”, for they say it gives them food, warmth, shelter, and clothing, just as parents do (Turnbull 1976:120). The forest is thus more than a mere environment to the Mbuti, but a living, conscious thing, both natural and supernatural, something that has to be depended upon, respected, trusted, obeyed, and loved (Turnbull 1965:17). The Mbuti, especially the Sua, do not consider the forest to be a living God, but they venerate the spirit of the forest through a ritual ceremony called *molimo*. When there are accidents, death or any other sad and frightening event, the Mbuti manage to soothe the forest through the *molimo* ritual usually accompanied by songs and dances.

Molimo is not a religion but rather a ritual and the name of a horn made of a long wooden-pipe, which is used as a musical instrument during the ritual. The horn of *molimo* is hidden far away in the forest from where it is brought out and to which it is returned when unused. The ritual of *molimo* is neither an offering nor a sacrifice, but a festivity dedicated to the god of the forest. It consists only of songs and dances. The sacred things in the ritual of *molimo* are not the horn, but the songs and the horn music (Vansina 1965:57-8). The Sua Pygmies, as well as the other Mbuti groups, have borrowed some rituals from the Bantu,

such as the *elima*, which consists of the initiation of girls, and the *nkumbi*, which consists of the circumcision and the initiation of young boys. In all of this, the Mbuti do not believe in the ancestors, the spirits of the nature, the sorcery and the witchcraft, as the Bantu do. The different aspects of spiritual power that are generally recognized, as Turnbull (1975:248) describes them, are as follows:

- Each man and each animal, even the inanimate and vegetable world, is endowed to a greater or lesser extent with such power.
- This power derives from a single source whose physical manifestation is the forest itself, named *ndura*, which is ultimately the forest itself.
- The disembodied spirits, which, like the Mbuti, inhabit the forest, derive from the prime source of spiritual power. These spirits, which have no power to harm or help, are named *pepo*, *keti*, *boru*, *roho* or *satani*.
- The Mbuti also believe in individual personality, which is essentially of the body rather than of the spirit, but which is enhanced and activated by the spirit. This enables individuals to speak with conviction, from their inner heart rather than their lips and chest.

From the above assumptions, one should note that the Mbuti conception of God is undefined to such a point that they may be considered as people without religion, that is, animists.

It should be understood, along with Billy (2006:57), that, as the Pygmy peoples practice the classic rituals of animism, their religion belongs to the animist group of religions. Whatever their religion may be, however, as is true of almost all of the African non-Pygmy peoples, the Mbuti Pygmies need to be liberated from their vague and limited knowledge and enlightened about the “unique Creator God”. By so doing, one should take into account the Mbuti conception of the time, the past, the present and the future. In fact, the Mbuti

Pygmies conceive their existence in relation to the day-to-day context. They are less concerned by the past and the future.

With regard to the future, be it in this life or the one that comes, as Turnbull (1965:246) describes it, the Mbuti eschew speculation on the grounds that not having been there they do not know what it is like, and not knowing what it is like they cannot predict what their behaviour will be. They say that to try to go into the future is to “walk blindly”, and their response to villagers, missionaries, or any who claim knowledge of the afterlife is to say, “How do you know? Have you died and been there?” They link such discussion to the talk of hunters or gatherers who plan to run their activities in an unknown place. They assume that such people act “emptily” or that their heads are loose and not properly attached to the body.

2.4 Challenges Facing the Mbuti Pygmies

The Mbuti, as well as all other Pygmy peoples in the DRC, face many challenges in their daily life. These challenges may be divided into two main categories: the internal challenges which are inherent in their existence within their intimate forest context which is considered to be part of their cultural heritage; and the external challenges that they face as a result of their vulnerable status *vis-à-vis* the Bantu. Internal challenges might be more something that concerns outside observers than a reality for any of the Pygmy groups themselves who, indeed, consider their situation within the jungle as normal. This kind of resignation of the Mbuti Pygmies with regard to the apparent internal challenges, which do not seem to concern them, has become another challenge. They only complain about external challenges (cf. Bandimaboche and Efulu MPCs 2010; Byane Mundihulu, Makele Paris, Masenze Byakato, and Lalia Mambe MPCs 2012). However, both internal and external challenges deserve to be investigated equally in order to gain a better understanding of the

way the Mbuti Pygmies live and how they may be encountered for Christian mission purpose.

2.4.1 Internal challenges

The most noticeable internal challenges facing the Mbuti Pygmies as seen by the external observers can be categorized into four groups: challenges inherent in the forest environment; economic isolation; the nomadic way of life; and the demographic challenges.

2.4.1.1 The challenges inherent to the forest environment

The first noticeable threats against the life of the Mbuti Pygmies inside the jungle are bad weather and housing conditions. Not only so the Mbuti Pygmies live in squalid conditions in provisional or semi-permanent structures with little or no security of tenure (Musolo W'Isuka 2011:77), but they are also exposed to any consequences of bad weather and the jungle, such as permanent humidity beyond rainy seasons, cold nights, stinging insects such as wasps, thorny bushes which wound almost everyone, and dead branches that can suddenly fall from the trees and cause fractures and even death, snakes, fire that can burn and fierce animals that can break down their bare-door huts at any time, etc. Despite their relative consciousness about hygiene, which is given expression by their frequent movement to new and fresh places, the forest does not offer suitable hygienic conditions at all.

As a result of inappropriate housing and hygienic conditions, made worse by their lack of access to medical care, the forager Mbuti Pygmies are the victims of tropical diseases, such as wounds, coughs, headaches, 'flu, pneumonia, polio, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, dysentery, yaws, filariosis, bilharziosis, infant and venereal diseases, and sometimes malaria and

trypanosomiasis (CEPAC Projet Pygmées nurses 2012). To this list of tropical diseases, NP8 (2012) adds anaemia, and emphasises that pneumonia is mostly caused by the consumption of alcohol and drugs such as tobacco and marijuana. This does not mean that the village farmers do not suffer from such diseases, but these diseases are more severe and even mortal among the Mbuti because they do not have access to appropriate health care, which could at least provide them with vaccines, antibiotics, and other prophylaxes. Despite all these threats, especially the tropical diseases among which some are blamed on their interaction with the Bantu, the Mbuti Pygmies claim to be psychologically and physically safe only when they live freely inside the forest. This very strong confidence in the forest is interpreted as an alienation status. Turnbull (1986:108), therefore, warns that, on both medical and psychological grounds, any plan for relocating the Mbuti and other forest-dwelling Pygmies outside the forest, or even in the unshaded enclaves of forest farmers, would have to be carefully weighed.

Another internal challenge seen from outside the Mbuti is illiteracy that results from non-access to education. The Mbuti cannot afford formal education for their children, education that is the backbone of the social infrastructure and development of a country, but they do not even mind about it. Actually, they seem to suffer from a kind of limited conception of life and the world to such a point that they isolate themselves within the evergreen forest from where they go to the Bantu only for elementary needs. For the Pygmy peoples in general and the Mbuti in particular, the world and life are limited to the framework of the forest. This limited perception of the world and the life results in the Mbuti Pygmies being underestimated by people outside of their community.

2.4.1.2 The social and economic isolation

Highlighting the challenge related to the isolation of the Pygmy peoples, IRIN (2006:36) points out that most of them live in areas that are remote from trading centres, and their skills are not considered very “marketable” in modern society. While they are well skilled in natural medicine and the ecosystem of their forest environment, they are ill equipped to assert themselves in a society that rejects them because of their lifestyle and culture. Such ethnic discrimination, combined with the economic weakness, has helped to isolate the Pygmies politically as well.

Another dominant feature of Pygmy economic practices is the sharing of goods and resources among the community.³⁶ Any extra commodities are merely split among several families. Most Pygmy groups, therefore, have no saving or investment capacity. They are neither consumers nor manufacturers of high-value-added goods. They are often geographically scattered into small communities where their capacity to accumulate capital or develop cash surplus as disposable income or savings is insignificant or extremely low. Consequently, with minimal economic weight or influence, they are effectively excluded from economic life (IRIN 2006:11). This is, in fact, the way the Mbuti Pygmies are economically isolated.

2.4.1.3 The nomadic way of life

Another major internal challenge facing the Mbuti Pygmies is their nomadic way of life. As they live in the campsites only for less than two weeks, their high degree of mobility strongly affects the whole of their life. This emphasises the assumption that the Mbuti Pygmies have a very limited conception of life shown

³⁶ Far from being a challenge, the sharing of goods and resources among community would be rather a modern definition of the concept of economy (cf. CL17 2012).

by their small and temporary huts, their carefree attitude to wealth and possessions, storing, development, the future, the conception of time which recognises only the present time, and work that is concerned only about their daily bread, etc.

When it comes to assisting the Mbuti Pygmies, the government and the willing non-Pygmy people tend to blame the nomadic way of life as a serious hindrance to any process of development. Actually, within a framework of such a high degree of mobility, which brings about instability in the everyday life of the Mbuti, it is not easy to set up sustainable development projects such as schools, medical centres, and other social facilities. This is a paradoxical issue. In fact, how can one assist the people who live and act differently, such as the Mbuti Pygmies, without harming their culture? Up to this point, the really challenging question above remains unanswered.

2.4.1.4 The demographic challenges

The Mbuti Pygmies demographic survival faces a twofold threat. On the one hand, their women have a very low level of fertility. Referring to the Efe Mbuti Pygmies, Bailey (2002:13) maintains that the average number of live births per woman is only 2.56 births. This low level of fertility is mostly the result of the Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), particularly Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia, which bring about tubal scarring and, eventually, occlusions in women. These STIs are quite widespread among the Mbuti only because they lack fully effective antibiotic treatments, while their traditional medicine fails to heal such diseases.

Another threat to the demographic survival of the Mbuti, as Bailey (:14-15) keeps pointing it out, is the dramatic fluctuations in fertility rates caused by high workloads and periodic poor energy balance. Even those women who are fertile experience periods of irregular ovulatory menstrual cycles. In actual fact,

Elison, Peacock, and Lager quoted by Bailey (:15), have shown that the fluctuations in energy balance cause changes in ovulatory frequencies in women. So, during lean seasons, when women lose a significant amount of weight, there is also a significant reduction in ovulatory frequency that, in turn, causes dramatic seasonality in birth. In addition to the low fertility, there is also a relatively high level of infant mortality. According to Bailey (:13-14), the average infant mortality rate is 14% in the first year of life, and 17.5% between one and five. Beyond the infant mortality threat, the squalid conditions in which the Mbuti Pygmies live within their forest homes are most likely to contribute to reducing their life expectancy to 40 years only (cf. Wheeler 2000).

2.4.2 External challenges

In addition to the internal challenges, which seemingly do not bother, the Mbuti Pygmies face many other challenges from outside their common settlements. These challenges are discrimination, which results from negative stereotyping; segregation and the denial of rights; exploitation, customary beliefs, and the negative effects of globalisation. These challenges, which are clearly seen and felt by the Mbuti themselves, are strongly experienced especially when the Mbuti are compelled to relocate from their forest, where they are used to living, in favour of living near to or among the villages of the Bantu farmers.

2.4.2.1 Discrimination

Stokes (Pray for Afrika: Day 29) maintains that, “Historically, the Pygmy [sic] have always been viewed as inferior by both colonial authorities and the village dwellers Bantu tribes. This has translated into systematic discrimination.” In the same way as an unfair treatment of other people because of their membership of a socially distinct group or category, such as race, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, or

disability (Dorsen & Lieberman 2005), the challenge of discrimination against the Mbuti Pygmies can be seen in negative stereotyping, segregation, and the denial of rights. This discrimination is mostly emphasised by the fact that the Mbuti Pygmies are quite different both culturally and physically from their neighbouring farmers. The degree of this challenge is closely compared to that of the Batwa Pygmies of the Great Lakes Region as Lewis (2000:13-18) describes it in the three following points.

Negative stereotypes

As in general, hunter-gatherers are closely associated with the wild, uncivilized bush or subhuman and animal-like people by neighbouring pastoralists and agriculturalists (Lewis 2000), the Mbuti Pygmies are not sheltered from these stereotypes. Because of their particular low status, culture and way of life, severe social discriminatory practices have become their fate, and many other abuses against them are justified on this basis. In the northeast DRC, almost all the bad behaviours in the society are attributed to the Mbuti Pygmies. They are labelled as beggars, thieves notably of farm products, dishonest, lazy with regard to their own future, naïve, stupid, poachers of protected animals, animal-like people whose sexuality is unrestrained by cultural prohibitions, who feed like insatiable animals, are unable to feel shame or a sense of decency, dirty, and good only for dirty or tedious jobs (cf. NP13 2012). Even the names “Mbuti” and “Pygmy” are often referred to in a very stigmatizing way, when bad behaviour is seen within the Bantu society. As a result of such negative stereotypes, a segregationist attitude has already evolved among the Pygmy peoples and the Bantu.

Segregation

The separation between the Bantu and the Mbuti Pygmies is clearly evident in DRC. This is likely to be justified in terms of the intimate link of the Mbuti with forest nomadism, which is perceived to be an animal-like existence. For this reason, the Bantu cannot eat or drink with the Mbuti, formally marry them, allow them to approach too close, sit with them on the same bench, or share the same shelter and cooking and eating implements with them. Even those who have been compelled to camp around the Bantu villages must, according to Lewis (2000), live apart from others, collect water downstream from others, remain on the margins of public spaces, and, when selling goods in markets, can sit only on the outskirts away from other sellers. Even the few Mbuti Pygmies who dare to go to the church of the Bantu people experience almost the same prejudices.

The Mbuti Pygmies are very conscious of their marginalisation by the Bantu. As a reaction against such a prejudice, they have lucidly developed a very cautious attitude towards the Bantu. When things are exaggerated, the Mbuti return to their forest home, where they quickly regain good relationships. The forest is not only the place of their livelihood, but also, to some extent, a real sanctuary.

Denial of rights

As a result of the discrimination that they experience in their everyday life, the Mbuti Pygmies have almost been denied their fundamental rights, namely the rights to hunt and gather related to the rights over land, the rights to the same standards of justice and equality with others, the rights to health care, and the rights to education, work, and political choice.

The rights over land

In line with IRIN (2006:9), one should notice that the issue of access to land and ownership, a crucial one in any agrarian society, is especially vital to the Pygmy communities, whose culture, belief systems, and livelihood all depend on their symbiotic relationship with the forest. Despite this, legal provisions concerning land and real estate are often unsuitable to the needs of traditional forest dwellers and are usually ignored in the case of indigenous groups. Their marginalised status means that they are likely to require more support than the other citizens to claim their right to ancestral lands. In many cases, and over many decades, they have been driven away from their territory without compensation or any prospect of an alternative livelihood. On this very issue, Musafiri (2007) denounces the DRC law according to which “lands are the exclusive property of the State”. He also denounces the International law, which is, first of all, a law of States not of individuals, and which gives the States the right over their national territories. Owing to these land laws, the Pygmy peoples cannot hope to be given any right over land from their own Government. On the contrary, they are more and more forced to release their forests where they find their livelihood, and, thus, their original cultural identity. In this respect, Musolo W’Isuka (2011:77) states that the Pygmy people have been evicted from some places and see their livelihood as well as their cultural and spiritual heritage transformed into national parks or simply destroyed. This is the sad case of the Ituri rainforest, which is currently privately owned by the Okapi National Wildlife Refuge, individuals and private companies, both local and foreign.

Because of the above situation, not only are the Mbuti being relocated and driven away from their forest-home by some NGOs that claim to assist them, but also the Ituri rainforest itself is strongly threatened by farming, large-scale logging, the making of charcoal, and mining activities. Likewise, the Mbuti Pygmies are being denied their legitimate right of hunting and gathering. This

situation brings about a climate of conflict between the Bantu and the Mbuti Pygmies who are conscious of uncertainty with regard to their future.³⁷

Referring to the issue of landless farmers from outside the Ituri region, Billy (2006:60) maintains that

Farmers move into the forest, often in the wake of logging developments. Generally they are driven by poverty and dispossession, like those made landless in the Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo who moved into the Ituri forest. They take up land (eventually causing deforestation) and bring a more commercial way of life. The Pygmies are increasingly drawn into the new world of immigrants, at first as hunters selling their meat, but before long reduced to working as labourers.

In addition, Bailey (2002:15) stresses:

The Efe also face challenges to their cultural survival by virtue of the depletion of the Ituri forest by onslaught of immigrants from other groups into the forest. These immigrants are attracted to the forest for its large areas of uncultivated land. The highlands to the east harbour some of the highest population densities in all of Africa. There is tremendous pressure on the land in these highlands, and people in those areas are now flooding down the western slope of the highlands into the Ituri. They come seeking available forest areas to clear and to grow crops, which they consume themselves. But they also clear large areas of forest for commercial agriculture. They transport their harvest in small trucks up to the highlands where they can fetch higher prices than they could in the forest. In addition to being more commercially minded, these immigrants tend to be better educated, more aggressive, and understand more about the politics of the region. The laws of the Congo are such that the Efe and the Lese do not have rights to their traditional lands so it is not difficult for immigrants to come into the area and for very little money, if any at all, lay claim to a patch of forest. In this way, immigrants essentially take ownership of traditional lands of the Efe and Lese and exploit those lands for their own ends with no regard to conservation.

³⁷ Cf. the incessant conflicts between the Mbuti Pygmies and the Bantu farmers since 2011, in Byakato, in the territory of Mambasa.

To minimise the effects of immigrants coming into the Ituri rainforest, the DRC government has taken several steps, among which is the creation of a large forest reserve, called Okapi National Wildlife Refuge.³⁸ Activities within this reserve are restricted, and now people are not permitted to clear the forest or to extract timber or gold. Only the indigenous Efe and Lese are permitted access to the reserve forest in limited ways, but in ways that, for the next several decades at least, probably will not change their lifestyle substantially (Headland & Blood 2002:15-16).

Besides the aforesaid threats, a number of militia groups, notably the National Army of the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) and the recent militias *Mai-Mai* led by Morgan³⁹, are currently transforming the Ituri rainforest into a battleground to such a degree that it is becoming unliveable for both the Mbuti Pygmies and the Bantu farmers.

The rights to the same standards of justice and to recognition of their equality with others

Commonly, the Mbuti Pygmies, as well as the Batwa (Lewis 2000:14), are not really acknowledged by the State in the same way as other citizens are. Though the African nation states in which the Pygmy peoples live have actually ratified international human rights conventions in order to protect indigenous culture, lands and livelihoods, relevant measures have not yet been incorporated into national law. All the Pygmy peoples have suffered intense pressure, first from colonial governments and then from the independent African states, to abandon

³⁸ According to *Les Parcs Nationaux et Domaines* (http://rdcongoturisme.webs.com/parcs_nationaux.htm), the ONWR itself measures 13 730 km² out of the 63 000 km² of the whole Ituri rainforest, that is 21.8%. In sum, the nine national parks and wildlife refuges occupy 90 960 km² of the DRC forest area.

³⁹ From the Radio Okapi listened to on Monday 25th June 2012 (cf. www.radiookapi.net), the militias *Mai-Mai* led by Morgan have invaded the ONWR of Epulu since Sunday 24 June 2012.

their forest life and become farmers, as a way of “integrating” them into the life of the nation (Billy 2006:60). The DRC, as one of those African nation states that has a large number of Pygmy peoples, has never taken effective measures to protect these hunter-gatherers without distinction so that they enjoy the rights and freedoms actually recognized for other Congolese citizens.

Though the DRC law seems to acknowledge the Pygmy peoples, the application of this law still poses a problem. For example, most of the neighbours of the Mbuti Pygmies have birth certificates for their children, and almost all of them have ID cards or passports and driving licences, health cards, and other documents pertaining to their relationship with the state. The Mbuti Pygmies, however, are regularly deprived of their human rights by the government, which seems not to consider them to be equal citizens. They have virtually no access to basic facilities, and they are denied socio-political development and minimum assistance. Apart from some very few who were involved in the 2005-2006 censuses, the Mbuti Pygmies do not only have ID cards, but they also remain almost unknown in local and national government as well as in public life, and even have no political representation. This unfair situation of the Pygmy peoples raises pertinent questions amongst the non-Pygmy peoples, such as:

How can one give ID cards to people like the Mbuti Pygmies who permanently move from place to another within the forest? What will these ID cards serve for? Are the documents pertaining to the relationship with the state necessary for them? What would be the best strategy to reach out to them with the gospel and how to assure sustainability once they are reached? (NP21 2013)

As for the Batwa (Lewis 2000:14), each Mbuti child is marginalized from birth, and, with each step in life, the discrimination, poverty and exclusion they suffer marginalise them further from the rest of society. Very often, without ID cards, without own lands, education or effective access to justice, many Pygmy peoples, especially those who live around the Bantu or interact with them have

become like “a stateless community within a state”. Such obvious inequalities show the extent to which the Mbuti do not have the same fundamental rights and freedoms as the other people groups in DRC have. Going to court against a neighbouring farmer, for instance, requires more courage, and financial means which most Mbuti cannot afford. In all the central African countries, the Pygmy peoples are almost threatened and abused with reference to their lack of official status. Because they are often voiceless, the Bantu usually claim that anything can be done to them and no one will listen to the Mbuti complaints. Regarding the above situation, Musolo W’Isuka (2011:77) brings to light that:

While the Burundian Constitution (Article 164 and 180) is the exception allowing Pygmies 3 seats in the Parliament and 3 others in the Senate,⁴⁰ the Constitution of the DRC simply states in its Article 12 that “All Congolese are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection of laws”. In its Article 203-25, it mentions the protection of vulnerable people. However, the Pygmy peoples of this country do not seem to enjoy these Articles in terms of respect and protection of their human rights. Contrariwise, the trend behind the Article 12 seems to be a polite denial of the existence of indigenous Pygmy peoples, which is indeed sustained by the conclusion, “in the country, there are only citizens”.

Indeed, although the new constitution of the DRC claims to guarantee the protection of fundamental rights and equality for all its citizens, the Pygmy peoples, who are indigenous to this vast and evergreen central African country, are still overlooked by the rest of the society (IRIN 2006:24). Lewis (2000:14) comes up with the following sad complaint of a Mutwa Pygmy from Burundi, who said, “When a Mutwa dies it is the same as if a dog had died. No one cares or does anything about it.”

⁴⁰ This is found also in ACHPR (African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights) and IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs) (2007:31-32).

Rights to health care

The vast majority of the Mbuti Pygmies depend entirely on traditional medicines. Unfortunately, traditional health techniques and herbal medicines do not heal all the diseases. Despite these difficulties, however, the Mbuti are still relying on their traditional healing skills. There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, traditional health techniques and herbal medicines are affordable, and they adapt very well to the nomadic culture within the forest. Secondly, the Mbuti Pygmies do not have any modern medical infrastructures inside their forest areas. The CEPAC Pygmy Project Health Centre, funded by Lakarmissionönen in order to provide health care to the Mbuti Pygmies of the Beni forest, is unfortunately built not in the forest where the Mbuti live but at Boikene in Beni town. On the question why this Pygmy Health Centre is built in the town instead of the forest, the nurses of this Health Centre interviewed on August 24th 2012 answered that the Centre serves not only the Pygmy patients but also the Bantu ones, and that the urban location was the best place to welcome everyone.

One could also say that the Pygmy peoples are deliberately left out of health programmes and projects such as vaccination campaigns and visits of the mobile teams of the Basic Rural Health project called SANRU (*Santé Rurale*).⁴¹ This is obvious discrimination even in the area of health development.

Thirdly, the Mbuti do not earn enough money to pay for modern medical consultations and treatments. Whereas traditional healers often accept goods or services, the system of barter that is commonly used among the Pygmy peoples cannot fit into the modern health care system. Even if the barter practice could be relatively accepted, the Mbuti feel ashamed when it is a matter of

⁴¹ SANRU is a strong Basic Rural Health Project created in the 1980s, and managed by the Church of Christ in Congo, in order to provide medical care for any remote area across the DRC. This Project has managed to attain its objectives, except for the Pygmy peoples.

encountering other peoples within their urban public infrastructures such as hospitals, churches, schools, and soccer stadiums, political and other social meetings. They fear to be humiliated by those who often underestimate them and consider them to be subhuman. Whatever one might say or do, the Pygmy peoples struggle strongly for their human dignity that they would like to protect forever. In Burundi, for example, where vulnerable people including the Batwa Pygmies have the right to free health care by means of official health cards, the Batwa Pygmies are rarely aware of these rights. Whereas vulnerable members of the other communities possess health cards required to obtain free treatments, none of the Batwa possesses health cards (Lewis 2000:14-15).

About the health care in favour of the Pygmy peoples in general, it would be appropriate to suggest, along with Lewis (2000:15), that the activities of community health workers could be combined with those of traditional healers in order to provide the Pygmy peoples with choices concerning their treatment when they are sick.

Rights to formal education, work and political choice

Because of their overall challenging context, the Mbuti Pygmies are almost completely denied the rights to formal education, work and political choices. Not only are they not involved in the management of the *res publica*, but they also lack almost all of the necessary skills that could enable them to enter into political, economic, and administrative debates. Accordingly, they merely put up with things as they are run by others, the overconfident and entrepreneurs, the Bantu. They live in such a way that they seem not to be part of the almost more than 250 main ethnic groups in DRC. The Mbuti, as well as all other Pygmy groups in DRC, seem to be not involved in any social and political organisations including churches. In a world where people are developing selfish attitude in all

domains and aspects of life, no one seems to care about them, not even in terms of formal education.

Access to formal education is indeed a major problem for the Pygmy peoples in general and for the Mbuti in particular. Since colonial times, the education enterprise has been the most important visible developmental activity of both the state and the churches. Because of this fine effort, schools have been established in all the more remote areas across the country, except for the areas where the Pygmy peoples live. A few attempts at transporting Mbuti children to the Bantu schools failed owing to the nomadic way of life of the Mbuti, but mostly owing to the fact that the Mbuti children are usually teased and bullied by their fellow Bantu students, and even disheartened by the teachers.

While the Pygmy children are often blamed for a lack of intelligence and aptitude for formal education and training, on 6 February 2010, the Catholic University of Graben in Butembo, in the North Kivu province, awarded the very first higher degree to a Pygmy. This is a medical degree awarded with distinction to the Mbuti Pygmy Samy Ingwabundo Bigabanota from the Ituri rainforest. This incredible event in the history of education in the DRC was widely broadcast across the country as if the Pygmy people were not worthy of a degree.⁴² In this regard, IRIN (2006:9) concludes, “The Pygmies of Central Africa are a vulnerable people, and discrimination is part of their daily existence.”

⁴² One of the popular radio stations in the DRC, the Radio Okapi, broadcast news of this event on February 7, 2010. According to PAP-RDC, one of the NGOs that sponsored the studies of the lucky Pygmy physician Bigabanota was interviewed on August 2012. He is now working in the general hospital of Isiro, in the Orientale province. Moreover, as the PAP-RDC has revealed, there are two other Mbuti Pygmies who are studying at university, namely Mokili Adodyanga Kanzoka at the ISDR (*Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural*) Beni, and Ramu Kaisi Musafiri at the ULPGL (*Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs*) Goma.

2.4.2.2 Exploitation

According to Cavalli-Sforza (2005), the maltreatment of a group of people is based primarily on cultural differences but also involves prejudice based on racial stereotypes. The obvious discrimination against the Mbuti Pygmies as described above leads to another major challenge, which is the exploitation by the non-Pygmy peoples. The Pygmy groups in almost all the central African countries still suffer from bondage. They are subject to heavy work and are paid unfair wages (Bahuchet 1991:24-28). Bondage is also seen in the exchange of labour and large quantities of game meat for irrelevant quantities of salt, food, soap, second hand kitchenware, second hand clothes often of larger size than needed, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, etc.

Considered as unvalued labour in the Ituri forest, where there are large-scale logging activities, the Mbuti Pygmies are wretchedly maltreated in transporting the heavy planks from the forest on their heads and for very long distances to the road, where they have to load them into trucks, and also serve the Bantu as forest guides. They are, in the same way, employed in farming, mining, making charcoal, transporting forest materials for the building of Bantu farmhouses, and for other heavy and dirty works. In the same vein, Mwenge (2010) reveals that, during the war, armed militias and rebel groups massively recruited the Mbuti Pygmies, but, at the end, these Mbuti were awarded neither high rank nor salaries. Instead of being respected at least because of their forest skills thanks to which they helped the armed groups as forest guides, they were pushed ahead onto the frontline where they were simply killed by the adversary loyal army.

Furthermore, the government and some NGOs involved in assisting the Mbuti Pygmies seem to exploit them as “business ventures” within the “forest-zoo”, rather than really trying to ensure their social well-being. The government and NGOs receive money from tourists, who come merely to satisfy their

touristic and scientific curiosity on the so-called “prehistoric peoples” by shooting photos and videos (cf. Mwenge 2010; MP3 & MP4 2010). The Pygmy peoples have, therefore, become a show that awakens the interest and not the conscience; and their innocent smiles before the foreign cameras have made them subjects of exploitation rather than respect. As the Pygmy peoples as a whole have become increasingly conscious of the fact that they are being exploited, they have become very demanding with regard to the use of cameras and visits by tourists. They, never receive whoever dares to try to visit them without paying money to them beforehand. From this new behaviour that the author himself experienced while conducting the fieldwork, the Mbuti Pygmies have been transformed into a community, which considers itself to be “a commercial business” (MP3 2010).

Insofar as the Pygmy peoples are known as the best dancers in the DRC, they are also used in public events to entertain the public, but, in the end, they are rewarded with only a few pieces of bread (Musolo W’Isuka 2011:78). Describing such a situation, Bahuchet (1991:29) holds that some countries, without considering development programmes for the Pygmies, indulge in the “tourist temptation”, and consider their Pygmies as assets, along with wildlife reserves and spectacular waterfalls, allowing travel agencies to advertise and organise tours in the forests closest to the capital. On account of such behaviour against the Pygmy foragers, Musolo W’Isuka (2011:79) warns that the Pygmy peoples are being considered as “museum people” or “zoo people”⁴³ rather than really being considered to be full human beings created in God’s image, after His likeness, and entitled to enjoy a full life equal to all other people.

Finally, yet importantly, the Pygmy groups in general seem to be exploited even with regard to the humanitarian assistance provided in their

⁴³ The perception of Pygmies as a “museum people” or “zoo people” dates back to the earlier colonial times. According to Stokes (Pray for Afrika: Day 29), “One early example was the capture of Pygmy children under the auspices of the Belgian colonial authorities, who exported Pygmy children to zoos throughout Europe.

favour. For instance, where humanitarian NGOs receive \$10 000 USD from generous outside people for the assistance of Pygmies, these NGOs may make \$1 000 USD available for the real needs of Pygmies, while the rest is used for salaries, logistics, maintenance, and other administrative charges. What is especially peculiar is that, according to Mwenge (2010), these NGOs never employ Pygmy human resources, not even for low class services such as being security guards or, at least, as cleaners. They often want to assist the Pygmy people without seeking any cooperation with them. Against such regular and distressing exploitation of his fellow Pygmy citizens, Mwenge and his associate, Joseph Itongwa, have created a legitimate Pygmy NGO, called PIDP (*Programme d'Intégration et de Développement du Peuple Pygmée*), which primarily employs Pygmy human resources.

2.4.2.3 Customary beliefs

The Mbuti Pygmies also face some challenges with regard to customary beliefs from outside people. This is owing to the fact that the non-Pygmy peoples fear the forest and all its inhabitants, and consider it to be a hostile place. They think that, if the Mbuti are really human beings but manage to live easily within the forest and even master it despite all its threats, it must mean that they have supernatural power. This mystic belief is further nourished by the fact that, from their herbal healing skills, the Mbuti Pygmies manage to treat several common diseases, fractures, and even snakebites. Because of such beliefs, some curious Bantu and other people who are envious try to acquire the so-called supernatural power of the Mbuti Pygmies by means of sexual intercourse, rape, false marriage, murder, and, even, cannibalism (cf. MRG & RAPHY 2004; Musafiri 2010; Musolo W'Isuka 2011).

The MRG and RAPHY (2004) report that, during the time of war in DRC, the Mbuti Pygmies in Ituri were massively tortured, murdered, raped, killed, and

their flesh “eaten” by armed troops because these fighters believed that the Pygmies, owing to their origins as forest-dwellers, had a mysterious power of protecting them against disease, snake poison and death. The most common expression of this was the stated belief according to which back pain and having sex with the Mbuti women, a frequent justification for rape, would cure other ailments. The AFP (2009), among many other humanitarian NGOs working in DRC, maintains that even the government troops of the DRC sodomised Pygmies in the eastern part of the country, believing they would gain supernatural powers and protection.

Moreover, the Mbuti are not only victimized by rape and false marriage of their daughters, but also by venereal diseases and HIV/AIDS. In fact, the other common belief is that the sexual intercourse with a Mbuti woman heals one from HIV/AIDS and all related venereal diseases. In this regard, the Mbuti are threatened and targeted by both civilians and soldiers, and so HIV/AIDS and related venereal diseases are rapidly spreading among them. One would say that the STIs are almost pandemic among these people because they do not have access to any antibiotic treatment and do not make use of condoms and other related means of protection.

2.4.2.4 Globalisation effects

Another major external challenge facing the Pygmy peoples, and the Mbuti Pygmies in particular, consists of the effects of globalisation. As Tabb (2005) has noted so well, although most people continue to live as citizens of a single nation, they are culturally, materially, and psychologically engaged with the lives of people in other countries as never before. Distant events often have an immediate and significant impact, blurring the boundaries of one’s personal worlds. The items common to one’s everyday life such as clothes, food, and cars, are the products of globalisation, which have both negative and positive

effects. Among the negative effects, on the one hand, are the rapid spread of diseases, illicit drugs, crime, terrorism, and uncontrolled migration. Among globalisation's benefits, on the other hand, are a sharing of basic knowledge, technology, investments, resources, and ethical values.

Though the Mbuti Pygmies still live in remote and isolated areas within the forests, they are not exempt of the globalisation effects, as Tabb (2005) explains. What is currently evident among the Mbuti is that they all need clothes and other supplies from outside the forest, and this results in interaction with other peoples as never before. In this context, they often collide with external cultures and behaviours, to such an extent that they have lost their linguistic identity and some of them have been infected by STIs and taken up the culture of alcohol, tobacco, and drug addiction. Coming back to the STIs, Turnbull (1986:108) reveals that in the 1950s, when the interaction between the Mbuti and village farmers was still limited, venereal diseases were rare among the Mbuti. However, the more the Mbuti tend to enter into the global community in one way or another, the more they introduce into their inner community many good and bad external cultures and behaviours. The impact of globalisation is a reality among both the Mbuti Pygmies and the non-Pygmy peoples. Hummel and Telaumbanua (2007:357), therefore, consider globalisation to be a borderless world that forms a process of interrelations and interdependence amongst countries and societies in a variety of cross border activities.

Within the trading area, for instance, the Mbuti, who have never been taught to calculate and read, are almost lost and very often swindled. Unless they are trained in advance, their survival economy based on the barter system cannot adapt at all to the market economy based on privatisation and the calculation of numbers that globalisation imposes. Despite the threats of the negative effects of globalisation, however, Turnbull (1983:158) considers that the Mbuti are cautiously advancing into the dangerous waters of modernisation, with its increasing focus on independence, competition, inequality, and material

wealth. Thus, in order to prevent against what could occur if nothing is done to protect the Mbuti Pygmies, Duffy puts forth the following sensitive warning:

There will be no known date, no witnesses, and no fanfare when, in the name of progress, the last Mbuti nomad finally leaves the forest. When he does, an entire people will be gone forever, and there will be none like them to take their place. The vast interior of the great forest, which may have been the birthplace of humankind itself, will be empty of laughter, dance, and song for the first time since human life began there. A natural way of living that all people once knew in an innocent age will have vanished from the face of the earth as the Mbuti pass into history. We should remember them well, for the Mbuti mirror our past. They are the living spirits of our not so distant hunting and gathering ancestors. (Duffy 1996:177)

2.4.3 Poverty and vulnerability

The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, as quoted by Carino (2009:16), recognizes that poverty constitutes a denial of human rights and defines it as a human condition characterized by the deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security, and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. Because of this, with reference to the previously mentioned challenges, the Mbuti Pygmies may be considered as poor and vulnerable. As they live within precarious natural conditions, and are severely discriminated against and exploited, without any rights over lands or independent means of sustaining themselves, without access even to basic human rights such as food, water, adequate shelter, health care, formal education, and justice, these Mbuti forest-dwellers undoubtedly live in extreme poverty. When one comes to think of their place on the scale of the human races, one realises easily that they are inferior people and the poorest of the poorest amongst human beings, if, of course, poverty is defined only in terms of material wealth and possessions.

In contrast to other poor ethnic groups in the DRC, the Mbuti, as well as all other Pygmy peoples, live in poverty illustrated by the lack of access to health care, education, land, and employment as if they were “second-class citizens” or “second-hand citizens”. The evident aspect of their extreme poverty, as Lewis (2000:15) has noticed, is actually the fact that they typically depend on the efforts of every family member to obtain daily food and that, even the children, especially the teenagers, are often important providers. As they lack the barest minimum for well-being, even political patronage, with their children and their aspirations submerged under extreme poverty, their desperate condition makes them very vulnerable. Owing to such situation, IRIN (2006:9) says, “The Pygmies of Central Africa are a vulnerable people, and discrimination is part of their daily existence.” Mwenge maintains that his entire community in the DRC is facing a very particular poverty that affects all the aspects of life, psychological, cultural, economic, security, and expectations, as follows:

In our historical hunting and gathering culture, everything was free. Now we are facing the currency culture without being prepared in advance about it. In addition, our cultural skills and crafts are neither considered, nor fairly valued, but on the contrary, they expose us to all kinds of dangers: rape, murder, exploitation, and other distressing threats. To make one’s own experiences marketable in this selfish and capitalist world, one needs to have a name. Unfortunately, my Pygmy community does not have any marketable name for its well-being, whereas its extreme poverty is very marketable for the well-being of the others. We are living not for ourselves, but for the well-being of the others who are building their future thanks to our desperate situation! (Mwenge 2010).

This heartfelt and distressing cry of Mwenge, on behalf of his Pygmy community, should be understood, not by the contemplative ears alone, but rather by the compassionate ones.

2.5 Attempts for assisting the Pygmy peoples

Considering that the government, the local as well as the international humanitarian NGOs, and the churches are conscious of the critical situation of the indigenous Pygmies in the DRC, the major question to be underlined is twofold. How can one encounter or get in touch with Pygmy people? How one can share or bring any assistance to them? This section is about these two pertinent questions.

2.5.1 By the Government

Among the duties of a Government, as defined by public policies and rules, are the protection and promotion of the people for their well-being. Indeed, the primary responsibility of a state and all its leaders is to make their people successful (Nobilis 2010). The implementation of this goal as part of assisting the Pygmy peoples in the DRC has always consisted of persuading them to leave the forest and become sedentary farmer-villagers. On this very issue, Musafiri (2007:9) notes that many African governments, especially that of the DRC, are tending to apply the development paradigms that focus on assimilation approaches intended to transform indigenous people into sedentary farmers. This is the result of a hypothesis according to which the lifestyle and culture of the indigenous people should change, because they are “primitive”, “backward”, and destroy the environment. This is the reason why, in the 1970s, the former President Mobutu tried to relocate the Mbuti Pygmies by providing them with well-built villages and all necessary supplies (Turnbull 1983:6,146-151). Owing, however, to the assumption that all these new implements were meant to take the place of forest supplies for the Mbuti Pygmies, in the course of only three months the Mbuti villages were abandoned by their inhabitants who simply regained their usual way of life within the forest. It is clear that this

“development project” was conceived and carried out for the Mbuti without consulting them and, primarily, studying their real needs. In fact, a development project should not be imposed on people.

Despite this dreadful failure for an overconfident President who was used to settling such issues only by means of enormous funds, the current Congolese authorities are still convinced that the dire circumstances for many Pygmy communities would improve if they set their traditions aside and were assimilated by the majority (cf. IRIN 2006:24). As a result of this understanding, instead of protecting them, the DRC state seems rather to encourage all the efforts that attempt to drive the Pygmy peoples away from the forests in favour of creating national parks and wild reserves, and allowing the running of logging, mining, and farming activities all of which threaten the forest. Government efforts that consist only of relocating and integrating the Pygmy peoples into the environments and cultures of the non-Pygmy peoples, where they could equally benefit from all necessary facilities, appears to be an obvious denial of their dignity, rights, and cultural heritage. Unless one uses force by trying to ignore fundamental human rights, it is very difficult and even impossible to withdraw a group of people from the cultural environment where they have lived for millennia.

From the above undeniable failure, the pertinent concern about how to provide effective humanitarian aid to the Pygmy peoples so that they also find their account in belonging to the DRC remains unresolved. That is why, owing to the government failure with regard to some of its legitimate duties, and especially within the context of war and ethnic conflicts, there has been a mushrooming of several NGOs that dare to intervene in diverse areas of activity, including humanitarian aid to the Pygmy peoples.

2.5.2 By the NGOs

The local and international NGOs involved in providing aid to the Pygmy peoples in the DRC make use of diverse strategies. The main objective that almost all of them claim to want to achieve is the development of the Pygmy peoples by means of integrating them into active Bantu society, protecting their human rights, and providing food, non-food supplies and clothes, basic formal education, and health care.

According to the Mbuti groups encountered in the MPCs of Epulu and Lolwa (2010) in Ituri, however, the said aid is not only very rare and often inadequate, but is also dependent on the acceptance of moving from the forest to the MPCs set along the main road. Even the issue related to formal education and health care is linked to the objective of relocating these people from the forest to villages. Both the government and the NGOs assume that schools and health centres cannot be established permanently among nomadic people. For this very reason, almost all the NGOs involved in providing aid to the Pygmy peoples are devoted to relocating them from the forest to the Bantu villages or at least creating, for them, the MPCs along the main roads. This is the case of the Pygmy Rescue Outreach (PRO) along the main road, which links the town of Komanda to that of Mambasa, the Seventh Day Adventist Church along the main road that links Beni to Mambasa via Mangina, and the *CEPAC Projet Pygmées* along the main road that links Beni to Komanda.⁴⁴

The relocated MPCs consist of four-sheet metal tiny houses, which measure about 4 m square. It is in these small Pygmy villages consisting of

⁴⁴ As observed during the field-research, the *CEPAC Projet Pygmées* has established some Mbuti Pygmies camps far from the main road in the territory of Beni. According to the CAMV field animator in Beni (NP19 2012), the *CEPAC Projet Pygmées* has even managed to acquire from the government some portions of forest as Pygmy-owned properties. The CAMV and the PAP-RDC are also trying the same deal in order to guarantee lands for the Mbuti Pygmies.

small houses that the NGOs meet the Mbuti Pygmies to provide them with humanitarian aid.



Figure 2.10: Mbuti Pygmies delocalised camp of Ndeisa, nearby Lolwa in Ituri



Figure 2.11: Mbuti Pygmies delocalised camps of Takumanza, nearby Lolwa in Ituri

The reasons behind the requirement for delocalizing the Mbuti Pygmies are that no one dares to enter deeply into the forest where these people live. The so-called “modernisation” has nearly all been effected by employees of the NGOs as well as other workers, all of whom limit themselves to areas accessible by car, as if the remote needy peoples do not deserve to be encountered within their

natural settings and contexts. So the Mbuti Pygmies are really victims of their own culture and ways of life. In fact, almost all of those who were surveyed in Epulu, Lolwa-Mandimaboche and Lolwa-Ndeisa, in 2010, complained strongly against what they call “the alienating aid from the NGOs” that they see as demonstrating a lack of respect towards them. In line with this, these Mbuti Pygmies, when they are compelled to gather at the roadside in expectation of aid, feel themselves to be unoccupied and deprived from hunting and gathering. They also feel humiliated when they are compelled to become something akin to goods that are displayed and made accessible to every nosy traveller and tourist who often shoot photos and videos for their own businesses.

As a further comment relative to probably justified concern of the Mbuti Pygmies is that external observers have noted that most NGOs involved in providing aid to the Pygmy peoples are often settled in towns, within air-conditioned offices, far away from the Pygmy forest homes. Most of them are established in Bunia, Beni, Butembo, Oicha, Goma, Bukavu, Kisangani, Kinshasa, or even abroad. As a result of this, once projects planned for the Pygmy peoples are funded, these projects are often set up in towns instead of the forests where the beneficiaries live. This is the case with the Medical Centre of the *CEPAC Projet Pygmées*, previously mentioned in connection with the town of Beni. Moreover, these NGOs spend too much money on administrative costs and for transport to reach the Pygmy peoples compared to what they spend on providing for the real needs of the beneficiaries. The Mbuti Pygmies who have known the anthropologist-researchers such as Schebesta, Turnbull, Wheeler, Duffy, Bailey who have themselves devoted considerable time to them within the forest are not able to trust in the irregular and conditional aid from NGOs of today.

Assisting the Pygmy peoples as a whole has, finally, become a large and lucrative business that creates employment, and then wealth, not for the Pygmies but rather for the providers (Mwenge 2010). The paradoxical issue is that those

who are called to work for the poor and vulnerable people live in very good homes and have very spacious offices in cities, and most of them drive expensive cars. For this reason, the Mbuti Pygmies, who are very clever and aware of such things, are very cautious about the NGOs. They accept any aid from the NGOs because they are needy. At the same time, they often do not trust these providers. So, another major challenge the Mbuti Pygmies seem to face is that of not being satisfied by the efforts being made in providing them with assistance. The more they are assisted, the more they are put into a situation of uncertainty and complaint. Providing humanitarian aid to the needy Mbuti Pygmies, however, is better than not doing anything for them, provided that the humanitarian aid be given by taking into account the real needs of the Pygmies and by respecting their culture and way of life.



Figure 2.12: The delocalized MPC of Ndeisa expecting assistance within their “Temple”

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter, which helps explore the broad context in which this study is grounded, should have been of a great interest for all those who need to experience mission encounter among peoples who live elsewhere and who have different behavioural patterns from the norm, such as the Pygmy peoples. On the question “Who are the Pygmy peoples”, different answers have been given in the course of world history, depending on whether the perceptions one has of one’s own humanity and the humanity of others. Those who assert their humanity by getting rid of other people have not failed to assert that the Pygmies are not full human beings. This obvious controversial denial of the humanity of the Pygmies propounded over the years has certainly created a deep gap between the Pygmies and the non-Pygmy peoples.

Despite several explorations by anthropologists, ethnologists, and other scholars who have testified to the humanity of the Pygmies by living with them and devoting their findings to significant writings, misconceptions about the Pygmy peoples have been maintained through generations and ages. What is absurd to the non-Pygmy people is that, on the one hand, when it comes to satisfying their own needs, non-Pygmy people search for workers from the so-called “non-human beings”. When it comes to enjoying life as a result of a well-achieved work, on the other hand, all the other contributors, including the labour of the Pygmy peoples, are forgotten, rejected, or simply rubbed out. This is in fact the sad fate of the forager Pygmy peoples in the DRC. The diverse services that the non-Pygmy peoples request from the Pygmies through exploitation and bondage, however, remain a vivid acknowledgment of their humanity. In fact, a true human being cannot cooperate to this extent with a non-human being. Furthermore, the large number of humanitarian NGOs involved in assisting the Pygmy peoples proves that they are really human beings, who deserve to be aided and protected.

Why are the Pygmy peoples as a whole so forgotten, discriminated against, rejected, exploited, and made so poor and vulnerable by the non-Pygmies including Christians? This pertinent question has often had more than one answer. Some of them are, “Pygmies are a minority people in the DRC, they are too greatly adapted to the forest life as if they were animal-like, they are unintelligent and stupid, lazy, beggars, thieves, poachers, dishonest, naïve, dirty, and cursed persons.” These stereotypical justifications are all groundless, insofar as throughout the current chapter, it has been shown clearly that the Pygmies are fully-fledged people, useful, and capable of being more useful for themselves and for Congolese society as a whole, if only they were placed in more favourable conditions. This is also the perception of the *Centre d’Encadrement et Développement des Pygmées* (CENDEPYG 2012) which maintains that the Pygmies are capable of doing everything, provided that they are given freedom of expression and of action.

About the size of the Pygmy population, for instance, it has been shown that the Pygmy peoples in DRC do not compose a minority at all, but that they rank in the third position, after the Bantu and Sudanics, and before the Nilotics and Hamitics, and the foreigners and refugees. So the challenges they are facing are simply the result of the fact that they are not well known because no one dares to relate to them in their traditional way of life and context. The challenges the Pygmy peoples are facing are also the result of arrogance, selfishness, spitefulness, and intolerance of the non-Pygmy peoples, all of which can be considered to be a sin. Because of such attitudes, it is not difficult to find those who are supposed to provide aid to the Pygmies lacking in their responsibilities. Moreover, as pressures intensify (SOWIP 2009:34); the Pygmy peoples are suffering increasing poverty, racial discrimination, violence, and cultural collapse. Throughout Central Africa and the DRC as well, their traditional ways of life and culture are disappearing, and their incomparable knowledge of the forest is also being lost.

Given that both the government and the humanitarian NGOs have not effectively tackled the desperate situation of the Pygmy peoples, what has been the role of the church, which is called to carry out mission to all the nations from all cultures and contexts? How has the Christian mission, which has been the source of sustainable development throughout the DRC, worked with and among the Pygmy peoples, especially the Mbuti Pygmies? These questions will be addressed in the next chapter that provides an historical overview of mission among the Mbuti Pygmies.

Chapter Three

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW ON CHRISTIAN MISSION AMONG THE MBUTI PYGMIES

3.1. Introduction

After providing some knowledge about the Pygmy peoples in the previous chapter, the present chapter outlines the history of missions in the DRC with a particular focus on the Mbuti Pygmies. By the end of the 15th century, the DRC was introduced to Christianity through the Portuguese Roman Catholic missionaries who, along with explorers, opened this country to the Western world. During the 18th century, a new awareness arose among the Protestant denominations in Europe and North America, and led to the formation of several mission Societies whose main goal was to spread the gospel and Western civilisation to the different parts of the non-Western world.

Through many mission expeditions, the DRC became one of the biggest mission fields worldwide, where both the Roman Catholic Church and different Protestant mission Societies were deeply committed to spreading the gospel among several people groups. It is in this broad context that the mission among the Mbuti Pygmies can be addressed. How have the Mbuti Pygmies been affected by Christian mission in the DRC? What are the results of the mission endeavours among the Mbuti Pygmies and for the Christian mission today in the northeast DRC? Today, how do the local churches in the area of research minister to the Mbuti Pygmies?

Answering these questions in order to verify whether encountering the Mbuti Pygmies is or is not a challenge to Christian mission in DRC, this chapter examines:

- the historical background of mission in DRC, which in turns provides the historical context which can help understand the way the Mbuti Pygmies have been or have not been targeted by the missionary action;
- the mission attempt among the Mbuti Pygmies;
- the reasons behind the lack of mission encounter with the Pygmy peoples; and
- the consequences of the oversight regarding Christian mission towards the Pygmy peoples, through which their obvious status of being an unreached and unchurched population group is highlighted.

3.2. Historical Background of Mission in DRC

Christianity in DRC is fundamentally the result of the effort of the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant mission societies, and the Kimbanguist Movement (cf. Sundkler & Steed 2000:768). Though these three Christian movements began their activities in the same area, the former Kongo kingdom, their mission approaches have been quite different. Their mission approaches can be referred to as dominion mission, mission struggle for survival and integration, and mission struggle against Western slavery and colonial Christianity. This section provides an historical background that gives a better understanding of the way Christianity was established in the DRC through these three Christian movements, and of what was the place of the Pygmy peoples within that Christianity.

3.2.1. Dawn of Christianity through the Roman Catholic Church

The DRC came into contact with Christianity thanks to the European explorations in the former Kongo kingdom (Cummins 1997:237-57). Established around the mouth of the Congo River, in Central Africa, the kingdom of Kongo was the most important early Congolese state. The Portuguese had had some contact with this kingdom since 1482, when the navigator and explorer Diogo Cam⁴⁵ visited the mouth of the Congo River and claimed the surrounding region as Portuguese territory. Through his voyages, between 1482 and 1491, Diogo Cam has been known as the first European to explore the western coast of Africa as far south as Cape Cross, near what is now Walvis Bay, in southwestern Africa. The Portuguese named the Congo River *Rio de Padrão*, that is, Pillar River. At its height, the Kongo kingdom extended from the present-day northwestern Angola to Gabon (cf. Fegley 2005). When Diogo Cam returned to Portugal for the first time, in 1483, he took along with him four Kongolese to learn the Portuguese language in order to serve later as the first interpreters in the Kongo kingdom. It was on Diogo Cam's second visit in 1491 that evangelism began in the kingdom (Sundkler & Steed 2000:49). This pioneering mission was indeed undertaken by the Roman Catholic Church, the only emerging mainline Church in Europe at that time, beside the Orthodox Catholic Church in the Middle East. Both Churches derived from the Great Schism between the Eastern or Byzantine church in Constantinople and the Western church in Rome, in 1054 and before the Protestant Reformation within the Western Roman Catholic Church from 1517. These are indeed the two great divisions that have occurred in Christianity.

Diogo Cam himself was not a missionary but, through him, as commander of the expeditions, the first group of missionaries from Portugal, one of the early

⁴⁵ This is also read "Diego Cão".

Roman Catholic leading powers in the world,⁴⁶ arrived in the Kongo kingdom in 1491. Among those first missionaries were masons, carpenters, and other skilled artisans, who came to build the capital of Mbanza Kongo. Sensitive to the relationships with the Portuguese, the king N'zinga Nkuwu, his wife and his oldest son, Alphonso, together with six leading noblemen, were baptised on May 3, 1491. N'zinga Nkuwu took the baptism name of Joao 1st. To emphasize the significance of the baptism, the king N'zinga ordered all idols and fetishes to be brought together and burnt (Sundkler & Steed 2000:50). His son Alphonso became the governor of the province of Nsudi in 1504, and welcomed a new group of missionaries.

In 1506, Alphonso sent his son Henry to Portugal for studies. As a Christian, Alphonso devoted his efforts to the development of his country, and he supported the work of missionaries by enabling new groups to arrive from time to time. A significant development took place in the Kongo during Alphonso's reign. There were at least six churches in San Salvador, and other churches and schools could be found in other provinces of the kingdom. In 1518, the young Henry, formerly sent for studies in Portugal, had been consecrated as the very first African bishop, and he was appointed as apostolic vicar of the Kongo. He unfortunately died early in 1530, but other Africans were later ordained as priests. Apparently, however, the effort to create an indigenous clergy was unsuccessful. Even though Alphonso energetically supported the Christian mission, and many people were baptised, very little evidence of radical change among the people could be seen. Unfortunately, after his death, the kingdom declined rapidly (Musolo W'Isuka 2008:32).

A number of Roman Catholic societies served with great success in the Kongo kingdom during the 16th century. Through these mission societies, a

⁴⁶The Catholic popes had validated Portuguese and Spanish claims to control the non-European world (Robert 2009:41). So, it is in accordance with this expansionist goal that the Portuguese came to Central Africa. One may also read Bosch (1991:302).

significant part of the kingdom was brought under Christian influence for more than two centuries. There was a great turnover, however, among these workers because of tropical diseases, the death rate among missionaries, and ill health. Furthermore, the Portuguese did not maintain the quality of the effort to evangelise and bring European civilisation to the kingdoms of Kongo and of Angola, which were both under their rule. The deep involvement of Portugal in the slave trade, the diminished interest in missionary work, and the unwillingness to allow missionaries from other countries to come into these parts⁴⁷ certainly led to the collapse and death of Christianity in the two kingdoms (Lagergren 1970:32; cf. Molyneux 2000:266; Roy 2000:63). Paas (2006:55) makes it clear by saying that, in addition to the slave trade, many Portuguese missionaries were sexually immoral. According to him, when the Benin kings stopped selling slaves, in 1516, the slave trade shifted southwards to the Kongo kingdom. The king Alfonso, who had become very dependent on Portuguese, then produced from his wars of conquest many captives whom the Portuguese could use as a trade commodity and in their plantations of São Tomé. As a matter of fact, Nelson (1961:32) considers that the close connection between Portuguese political influence and the missionary effort caused the decline of Christianity, which had kept pace with the decline of Portuguese power. In the same way, Falk (1979:80) maintains that even though external factors contributed to the failure of Christianity, the main reason for this sad outcome of several centuries of Christian presence is probably the life of the Catholic Church itself. In any case, even though a few men were trained for the priesthood in Portugal, Falk goes on, priests were not trained in proportion to the large number of people who were baptised. As a result, baptised people were not thoroughly

⁴⁷ A constant problem was that of the inexorable rule of *Padroado* according to which “His Holiness had once and for all assigned Africa to the Portuguese – and that was that!” The Portuguese authorities insisted that according to their *Padroado* rule, only missionaries of Portuguese nationality were acceptable in Kongo (Sundkler & Steed 2000:52-3).

educated in the Christian faith and easily deserted it. Thus, Christianity did not become a part of the life and culture of the people.

In addition to the above reasons, the Roman Catholic mission venture also collapsed in Central Africa and elsewhere because both Spain and Portugal were no longer the leading powers in the world. So from the 1600s onwards, the Protestant powers, such as England,⁴⁸ Holland, and Denmark, began to enter what the Roman Catholic nations had regarded as their exclusive lands (Nyasulu 2004:54).

During almost two centuries, from the end of the 17th to the second half of the 19th century, there was almost no Christian activity in the Congo. The later exploration of the Congo by the Anglo-American journalist and explorer Henry Morton Stanley from 1876-77, however, opened a new door to the interior of Africa, and led to the establishment, in 1884, of the Congo Free State (Dwight, Tuppe & Bliss 1975:193). Stanley's work played an important part in bringing about the Scramble for Africa, the frenzied seizing of African territory by European powers, where the most important prize was the Congo territory. In fact, conflicting territorial claims advanced by various nations, notably Portugal and France, around the mouth of the Congo River led to the Berlin Conference in 1884. The representatives of all European powers that had colonial interests in Africa attended this conference. As a result, the Berlin Conference outlawed the slave trade, established rules for the division of the continent of Africa and the boundaries of the Congo Independent State (CIS), and later, in 1885, permitted the Belgian king Leopold II to assume the title of "sovereign" over all

⁴⁸ Originally (Paas 2006:69), commercial interests, rather than territorial ambition, dictated the growth of the early British Empire. England in the 16th century was a poor country, lacking the wealth of Portugal and Spain. Unlike the Spaniards and Portuguese, mission or colonisation originally motivated the English less. In the 17th century, the English began to realise the huge commercial potential of overseas acquisitions, starting with the lucrative exploitation of sugar and other products from the West Indies. The union of England with Scotland as Great Britain, in 1707, added to the power for expansion overseas. This historical background helped greatly the British to become the most powerful colonisers and missionaries all over the world.

this vast territory. Henceforth, the CIS became the personal property of the Belgian king Leopold II.

The king Leopold II quickly occupied his new territory with Belgian soldiers, traders (Fegley 2005), and commissioned the construction of railways around non-navigable sections of the Congo River. As a faithful Catholic believer, Leopold II fervently lobbied Belgian Catholic missionaries to come to Congo, and this commitment was first officially recognised in a concordat signed between the CIS and the Holy See in Rome in 1906 (Covington-Ward 2007:75). Paas (2006:117-8) puts emphasis on the fact that the king Leopold II did not prefer any religion, but he wanted Belgian missionaries in the first place, which practically excluded the Protestants. According to him (2006:119), “The ruling elite consisted of the ‘colonial trinity’ of *State, Roman Catholic Church, and the agro-industrial companies.*” To this end, the king Leopold II even made an agreement with the Vatican, which gave way to the newly Catholic *Society of Scheut* and to Belgian Jesuits. Owing to the above, MacDonnell (1969:181) says, “There never was a promise more fully or more conscientiously performed than that which King Leopold made to spread Christianity in the Congo State.”

By the way, the main motives of the king were, first of all, an economic conquest. So anyone who seemed to be not able to contribute to the achievement of this economic goal, such as the Pygmy peoples withdrawn within the evergreen forests could not be taken into consideration for any interest and assistance. In line with this understanding, the church workers in the CIS and the following Belgian Congo were at the same time concerned with both mission and the economic goals of the State. To this end, some church leaders, without ceasing to work for the church, were appointed as administrative and political leaders.

3.2.2 The Protestant mission Societies

Protestant mission Societies intervened in the DRC several centuries later alongside the Roman Catholic missions. Rooted from the Reformation that took place in 1517, Protestant officials were involved in mission outside the Western area during the course of the 18th century. The British William Carey pioneered a successful mission endeavour in India from June 1793 by means of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) (cf. Stanley 1992:15), while Hudson Taylor, from the same country, did the same in China, where he established the China Inland Mission (CIM) in 1865. These two early successful mission endeavours carried out outside the West, formerly the so-called natural “cradle of Christianity mission”, opened the vision for mission in the African continent.

Coming back to the Congo Independent State, which had almost become a Roman Catholic estate, it is necessary to point out that the Belgian Roman Catholics were unable to fulfil the need for missionaries whereas the rapid spread of Protestant missionaries could not be stopped (Paas 2006:118). Accordingly, in January 1878, George Grenfell and Thomas Comber from the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), which had already been well established in Cameroon since 1843, became the very first Protestant missionaries to explore the mouth of the Congo River at Banana. Having been prevented by the approaching rain season from reaching San Salvador, the capital city of the Kongo kingdom, these first missionaries returned to Cameroon (Lagergren 1970:33-4). In the meantime, in February of the same year, Henry Craven and the Danish mariner, Ström, from the Livingston⁴⁹ Inland Mission (LIM), arrived in Matadi, inwards on the Congo River bank, from where they opened the very

⁴⁹ The name “Livingstone” was given to the Congo State by H. M. Stanley in memory of the Scottish missionary David Livingstone who pioneered upstream the Congo River (Lualaba), assuming that it was the Nile River. So the LIM likely means “Congo Inland Mission” (Braekman 1961:60). For Lagergren (1970:35), however the name “Livingstone” was given to the Congo River rather than to the country. In this understanding, the LIM denotes the mission along the Congo River.

first Protestant mission station in Palabala. Later that year, Craven and Ström began, with other newcomers, a second station in Mbanza-Manteke. On July 30, 1878, Grenfell and Comber came back to the Kongo again at San Salvador, which became their foothold to continue north to Stanley Pool and Leopoldville (Kinshasa). They reached these places successively in 1881 and 1882. This was the beginning of Christian ministry in the Congo by Protestants and of the effort to penetrate the country with the gospel and establish a chain of mission stations along the Congo River, in order to link up with the ministry that had already been established in East Africa. Such an effort was also the implementation of the will of Guinness⁵⁰ who, from Hudson Taylor's successful endeavour in establishing the Chine Inland Mission, wished to see missions in Africa to penetrate inside the continent instead of limiting their activities to the coasts (Braekman 1961:59-72; Falk 1979:375; Stanley 1992:117-139 & Paas 2006:55). The first mission Society in Congo, the Livingstone Inland Mission, thus derived from the missionary perspective of reaching the interior of the Congo.

In the Congo Independent State as well as the Belgian Congo, which succeeded it, Protestant missions were working under the control of a "Roman Catholic State". They could not work freely and establish mission stations wherever they wanted. In this respect, Sundkler and Steed (2000:780) refer to the Belgian Congo as "a primarily Catholic country". Falk (1979:394) puts emphasis that, "Helped by the government, the Roman Catholic missions worked in close collaboration with the state... Until 1960 the Catholic missionaries regarded the Protestants with disfavour." Sundkler and Steed describe the situation in the following terms:

The church in Belgian Congo was structured into three tiers: Catholic, Protestant and the Prophet movement... At the top of pyramid in Belgian

⁵⁰ Grattan Guinness, along with Henry, is the founder of the "East London Institute for Home and Foreign Mission" in 1782, which provided missionaries to the mission Societies, including the Livingstone Inland Mission (Braekman 1961:59).

Congo was the dominating Roman Catholic Church. Its position was emphasised by King Leopold in the concordat of 1906, and maintained by the Belgian state when it took control from the king in 1908. Church and State in the territory were definitely all-Belgian in character. King Leopold had insisted that Catholic missions should have exclusively Belgian staff. They were referred to as 'national missions', an ironic term in the African context... The dominant Catholic position in Belgian Congo was evident in regard to both land grants and educational subsidies. Both policies were developed from the concordat of 1906. A comparison of land grants in 1932 to two Catholic and two Protestant missions is revealing. The Jesuits received 37 000 hectares, and the Scheut Mission 16 000, while the American Baptists were granted only 209 hectares, and the British BMS 226 hectares!

Below the Catholics in the three-tiered pyramid were the Protestants (...) the majority of them Baptists. ... Officially, they were 'foreign' missions, operating on the periphery of the Catholic colonial society. Seen as outsiders and intruders, they were either scarcely tolerated, or vigorously pushed from a precious foothold, as in Shaba and the Kasai regions. The Belgians realized that their small European country ruled a very large Africa colony, and that their precious possession was possibly in danger of being appropriated by other countries with imperialist designs. Protestant missions tended to be suspect representatives of such countries. They lacked the privileges granted to the Catholics, particularly with regard to government support for mission schools. Given these handicaps, it is surprising that the Protestants managed to persevere and progress so well.

In addition to being political irritant, Protestant missions also supposedly posed a religious danger to the souls of Africans... The danger to the souls applied even more to the third group in the three-tiered system: the Prophet movement, an unfortunate offspring, it was held, of the Protestant *libre examen* – the free and unchecked study of the Holy Scriptures. From that dangerous practice of Bible study no good would come – only unwanted questioning and ambition in the Africans masses.⁵¹ (Sundkler and Steed 2000:768-70)

Relating to the above attitude towards Protestants, as previously and clearly depicted by Sundkler and Steed, Mpereboy, cited by Musolo W'Isuka (2008:34), maintains that the Roman Catholic missionaries generally sponsored with regard to everything by the Belgian State, occupied cities and all other suitable places across the country, and did not allow Protestants to undertake

⁵¹ See also Delvaux (1945:103-119) for further information on this issue.

any Christian activities in urban places. On the contrary, Protestant missionaries were brought to work in rural areas among introverted ethnic groups, where they developed a greater spirit of tribalism, contrary to the Catholic missionaries. By so doing, Protestant mission efforts in the Belgian Congo have been described elsewhere as generally characterized by a “rural romanticism”, whereas the Catholic missions enjoyed privileged access to working among urban populations (Nelson 1989:90).⁵² In addition to their discrimination by the Catholics, Markowitz justifies the rural romanticism of the Protestants and its tendency to tribalism in the following terms:

Many Protestant missionaries, especially those from the United States, had grown up in an evangelical tradition that favored pietistic Christianity and eschewed rationalism and cosmopolitanism. Although they rejected many aspects of their own cultures as un-Christian or corrupt, they nonetheless retained an ethnocentric view of African civilization... Their own antiintellectualism and antic cosmopolitanism also led many missionaries to become exponents and supporters of African provincialism. They idealized African village life and rejected such aspects of modernity as urbanization and industrialization. To them, rural life was the epitome of virtue while the city was filled with evil and atheism. In its extreme form this rural romanticism led to the rejection of the accoutrements of Western civilization and cultural asceticism. One missionary described rural life as simple, primitive and Christian and noted that “the coming of any external influences into Arcadia strikes us as almost indecent.” The Protestants in particular tended to shy away from the cities and towns and to center their efforts on the countryside. (Markowitz 1973:13)

In addition to rural romanticism, the Protestant missionary organisations working in the same field suffered from doctrinal differences amongst themselves, which also led to a strong denominationalism. Compared to the Catholics, the endless polemical weaknesses of the Protestants might have contributed to the meagre progress of their activities in Congo (cf. MacDonnell

⁵² With regard to Catholic and Protestant rivalry in the early Congo state, one can broadly read Markowitz (1973:38-51).

1969:220-232). As a result of this fact, Protestant denominations in the DRC are identified either in connection with the places of their first establishment, or the ethnic groups among which they were first established. There are, for instance, the *Community of Gareganze Brethren in Christ*; the *Mambasa Community*; the *Kwango Evangelical Community* from the *Evangelical Mission among the Bayaka*, etc.⁵³

Actually, Protestant missionaries were brought to start their activities in the rural areas among tribes, and they created what has been known as “the missionary fields system”. This means that the country was divided into several parts, according to the number of the mission societies, and also (Paas 2006:172) in line with the generous idea of Peter Cameron Scott, who projected the establishment of a chain of Mission Stations across Africa, from the West (Congo) to the East (Kenya-Mombasa),⁵⁴ and (Braekman 1961:59) of Guinness who advocated reaching the interior of Africa and the Congo as well. In this perspective, the activities of Protestant missions, which were timidly but successfully launched within the “missionary fields” among rural tribes, were at the same time the most privileged to work among the Pygmy peoples who are the most rural dwellers. Why then does this opportunity for reaching out to the Pygmy peoples appear not to have been implemented, as the mission activities were carried out among the rural ethnic groups living inwards of the country? Why is it that there have been no successful mission activities among the Pygmy peoples in the DRC? These issues will be examined in the following sections. Before coming to those sections, however, it is fair to examine also what the place of the Pygmy peoples was within the Kimbanguist Movement.

⁵³ In these examples, the names *Gareganze* refers to a village in the province of Katanga, *Mambasa* to a territory in Ituri, *Kwango* to an area and *Bayaka* to an ethnic group both in the province of Equateur.

⁵⁴ In 1891, Peter Cameron Scott was sent to the west coast of Congo to be a missionary for the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA). In 1895, he created the Africa Inland Mission (AIM), which carried out its work from Kenya to North East Congo.

3.2.3 The Kimbanguist Movement

Simon Kimbangu founded the Kimbanguist Movement, called the “Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through the Prophet Simon Kimbangu”, in 1921.⁵⁵ Simon Kimbangu was baptized in one of the local churches of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), the mainline Church of his province, the Lower Congo (*Bas Congo*), and he was nurtured in this Baptist mission where he also served as a schoolteacher and catechist (Sundkler & Steed 2000:781). With his small amount of biblical knowledge gained from his Baptist church, Kimbangu claimed to have been miraculously visited and sent by the *N’Zambi a Pungu* (the Almighty God) to release his people (his fellow Black inhabitants of the former Kongo kingdom) from European slavery and colonial Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant. Sundkler and Steed (2000:769) hold that, “In addition to being a political irritant, Protestant missions also supposedly posed a religious danger to the souls of Africans”. As liberation was a common desire and expectation among the Africans at that time, Kimbangu’s new religious movement was speedily supported by masses across the Congo and the neighbouring countries as well. Sundkler and Steed refer to the Kimbanguist Church as “a Protestant revolution from below” (2000:770).

The platforms for the new religion were, thus, not only the evangelisation of masses, but also anti-colonialism and the nationalism (Sinda 1972:62). Thanks to these platforms, a strong consciousness was awoken among the masses of Black people about their fate, which, among other things, led to the independence of the Belgian Congo in 1960. About this, Paas (2006:120) asserts, “The Kimbanguist Movement was instrumental in preparing Congo for independence. Kimbangu inspired nationalist leaders like Joseph Kasavubu.” Chomé (1959:98), on the other hand, says that religious liberation prefigures

⁵⁵ For more information about the Kimbanguist Movement, one may also read Martin (1968) and Wauthier (2007:49-64).

political liberation and frees the Blacks from all kinds of inferiorities that colonisation created. More clearly, Covington-Ward (2007:75) adds, “The ill treatment of the indigenous population over all was one among several key factors that spurred the arrival of the prophetic movement in the Lower Congo”.

The Kimbanguist Movement possibly marks the early starting point of the Independent Churches and Revival Churches in DRC. In support of this contention, Markowitz (1973:138) says, “Stimulated by Kimbanguism and partly in response to its proscription, similar movements developed in the Lower Congo region”. According to Irvine (1971:1), the Kimbanguist Movement was officially recognised by the Belgian Congo government as a mainline Church beside the Catholic and Protestant Churches later, on December 24, 1959. Ten years after this, i.e., in 1969, it was admitted as a member Church of the World Council of Churches (Sundkler 2000:968). The new Christian movement did not have any connection with the Pygmy peoples from its beginning, for two main reasons. Firstly, Pygmy peoples never settled the province of Bas-Congo, the cradle of the former Kongo kingdom, the Christianity in DRC, and of the Kimbanguist Church. Secondly, the Pygmy peoples who were basically confined within the forests were not directly affected by the European slavery and colonisation against which Simon Kimbangu and his adherents struggled.

Against the above view about Christianity in DRC with regard to the Pygmy peoples, there have, all the same, been some mission attempts in the north-eastern part of the country. These will be dealt with shortly. Before that, however, it is important to be reminded, as concluding remarks to this section, that the Catholic, Protestant and Kimbanguist Churches have greatly contributed to the development of the DRC in almost all domains, education (primary, secondary and professional schools, and universities), health and sanitation, providing employment, promoting self-reliance among believers, supporting the struggle against extreme poverty, etc. Their social works are very noticeable across the country concurrently with those of the government. This prompts the

question of what the place of the Pygmy peoples is within such developmental achievements by the churches within an African country well known as being fundamentally Christian. How have the Mbuti Pygmies been taken into account in terms of Christian mission? Are these people really benefiting from the assets of Christian mission? Attempting to answer these questions is the task that the following section embarks on.

3.3 Mission Attempts among the Mbuti Pygmies

In line with the previous historical background to mission in DRC, Christian mission among the Pygmy peoples is not shown to be significant within the overall history of the church in the DRC. Some snippets of reasons relative to this issue have been already been given, and this section will try to explore the mission attempts among the Mbuti Pygmies of the northeast DRC by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Congo Pygmy Mission – US (CPM-1), the Immanuel Mission (IM), the Congo Pygmy Mission – UK (CPM-2), and the attempts of the MEPA and of the AMN. From a description of these mission attempts, one is able to create a broad picture of mission among the Mbuti Pygmies in the identified area. Though the Roman Catholic Church is the most important Church in the area that is the subject of this study, it will not be taken into account in this section because of the already identified reasons relative to its non-rural romanticism involvement.

3.3.1 The Church Missionary Society (CMS)

The very first mission attempt among the Pygmy peoples in DRC is attributed to the CMS through the work of a heroic Black missionary from Uganda called Munubi Apolo Kivebulaya who, in 1921, pioneered the work among the Mbuti Pygmies of Boga in the Ituri forest. Born in 1864, he grew in an environment

where he was “adversely influenced by heathen practices, Islam, drinking, and smoking” (Wild-Wood 2010:280). Apolo was converted to Christian faith in 1894 by the CMS, which had earlier (in 1877) been established in Uganda. He was baptised on January 10, 1895.⁵⁶ Six months later he became a church teacher, and began his work at Toro in western Uganda. Then Apolo was chosen to take over the work at Boga in the Belgian Congo, where he ministered as an evangelist from December 1896 until he was recalled to Uganda in 1899, because of troubles arising from the dispute over Belgian or British administration of the territory (Irvine 1978:65 cf. Lloyd 1931:61-82).

Apolo was ordained as a deacon in 1900 and a priest in 1903, installed as a canon of Namirembe (Kampala) Cathedral in 1910, and made rural dean of Toro Cathedral in 1927. In 1915, he returned to Boga and started to rebuild the life of the church. From 1921, he made a concerted effort to reach beyond the Hema people group of Boga and to preach to those with whom they had client relations. He formed relationships with the Mbuti Pygmies, preaching to them and spending time in the forest with them. They perceived this as his graciously showing a great interest in and affection for the so-called formidable and despised forest people. While many of his peers had returned home to assume hereditary chieftaincies, Apolo managed to learn the Mbuti culture by living among the Mbuti Pygmies and practising their songs and dances, as they are known as the best of dancers. He also managed to teach them new songs; basic hygiene, self-discipline, and he initiated them into some crafts that could help them to survive. He also translated the Gospel according to Mark into the Pygmy language. Apolo’s last effort helped put an end to the linguistic debate about whether the Pygmy peoples had a language of their own.

⁵⁶ Named Munubi at birth, Apolo chose the name “Apolo” at his baptism in 1895. The name “Kivebulaya” was given at about the same time. It means “the one from” (Kive) “Europe” (bulaaya). (Lloyd 1931:22 cf. Wild-Wood 2008a:105). For more information about both Apolo Kivebulaya and the origins and expansion of the Anglican Church in Congo (DRC) as a whole, one may also read Wild-Wood (2008b).

Apolo's commitment, mostly dedicated to the Mbuti Pygmies until his death on May 30, 1933, was understood by the CMS missionaries as a fulfilment of the ideals of the missionary society of forming local churches (cf. Irvine 1978:65; Wild-Wood 2008a:107). Wild-Wood stresses that Apolo's successful ministry was attributable to his ability both to associate himself with Europe and also to respond to African concerns. Though many aspects of his life and mission were closely associated with Europeans, to such an extent that his given name of Kivebulaya means "the one from Europe", and was most likely given because of this connection. Apolo never ceased to work among his converts as a permanent "face-to-face neighbour". He also never treated them as "an object of his religious conquest", but he listened to the message that they could have for him (cf. Kritzing 2008:768). This was about learning from the others, one of the outcomes that are expected from the mission encounters.

Despite his evident heroism, however, Apolo has not been accepted among those who benefited from his work as a true missionary, probably because the only ones known to be true missionaries at that time were White people from the West. In spite of this ungratefulness which he endured in addition to persecution and dislike from the *Omukama* (the chief) Tabaro who commanded people to beat him almost to death and set his house on fire, torture, deprivation, rejection, and many other distressing sacrifices related to his work among the Mbuti Pygmies within the forest, Apolo did not surrender. On the contrary, he carried out a very successful mission that has awakened consciousness and challenged more than one person within the whole mission enterprise in the Congo and abroad as well.

The epitome of the work of Apolo among the Mbuti Pygmies can be seen in the fact that he who was a Ugandan requested before his death that his body be buried in Boga, in DRC, among his converts, with his head turned west, as a testimony to his spirit of kenosis towards the Mbuti. Apolo's work among the

Mbuti Pygmies, however, survived only from 1921 to 1933.⁵⁷ While White missionaries from the West established almost all the other mainline churches in the Congo, Apolo who created the mission station of Boga in Ituri, is the one who established the Anglican Church in this country. This may make one wonder why Boga has remained the only missionary station of the CMS in the Congo from 1896 to 1960 (65 years), and the first but only station in Ituri (Bunia) up to 1972 (77 years). Is this due to the fact that a Black missionary initiated the Anglican work? How is it possible that, after the death of Apolo Kivebulaya in 1933, no one else succeeded to carry on his work among the Mbuti Pygmies, and that the first mission field of Boga became exclusively involved with the Hema ethnic group? Was the mission among the Mbuti Pygmies of concern only to Apolo Kivebulaya, because later the Anglican Church developed elsewhere in the Congo without any more involvement with these forest dwellers?

It is important to draw attention to the fact that, after the establishment of the first mission station of Boga in 1896 (Irvine 1978:65), the second mission station of the CMS was established faraway in Lubumbashi in 1960, the third one in Bunia in 1972, the fourth one faraway in Kisangani in 1973, and so forth. All of these are urban places situated very far from the settlements of the Mbuti Pygmies. This clearly reveals that the more the Anglican Church moved away from the first people it targeted, the more its vision and objectives for mission shifted up until the present time where almost the whole Church in the DRC is more inward looking than outward looking, what Bosch (1991:376) calls “static conception of the church”. In this respect, the population groups who do not have their own church leaders among them remain less targeted and so unchurched; Christian mission becomes a case of the possession of “lucky” ethnic groups or families.

⁵⁷ For further information about Apolo, read Sinker (1950).

In spite of the lack of care of the CMS with regard to the Mbuti Pygmies, some Western mission Societies fell into step with the Black missionary Apolo Kivebulaya. This is the case of the Congo Pygmy Mission 1, the Immanuel Mission, and the Congo Pygmy Mission 2.

3.3.2 The Congo Pygmy Mission 1 (CPM-1)

In 1929, the very first independent mission Society dedicated to Pygmies, named the “Congo Pygmy Mission”, was opened near Oicha in the territory of Beni, the southern part of the Ituri forest, by the Reverend and Mrs James W. Bell among an estimated number of 25 000 Pygmies occupying more than 60 000 square miles of territory. This couple from the United States of America (USA) previously served with the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) and the Unevangelized Africa Mission (UAM). Mrs Bell was the daughter of C.E. Hurlburt of the AIM and the sister of Dr Paul Hurlburt of the UAM. The AIM was established northwards in the regions of Ituri and Haut-Uélé in 1912, whereas the UAM was established southwards in Kivu in 1928 (Irvine 1978:47, 90). Both mission Societies stemmed from the same origin and so worked on the basis of the same doctrinal rules.

The CPM-1 extended its activities to Biasiko and then to Lalia in the territory of Mambasa.⁵⁸ Dr and Mrs Carl Becker from the AIM, who pioneered medical work among the Mbuti Pygmies in Oicha, reinforced its activities. Becker’s medical work later became established as an important medical centre, currently one of the rare reference Hospitals in the territory of Beni. When the Bells retired to the USA, the work of the CPM-1 was carried on by Miss

⁵⁸ CL18 (2012) of Lalia, whose elder brother served in Biasiko from 1946 as an evangelist, makes it clear that the mission station of Lalia was created in 1957 after the collapse of the station of Biasiko. For now Biasiko does not exist anymore.

Margaret L. Clapper⁵⁹ who, in turn, handed it over to the AIM (Irvine 1978:72), which, in 1932, took over the station of Oicha and its extensions of Biasiko and Lalia. From then onwards attention by the mission was no longer paid to the Mbuti Pygmies only, but also and mostly to the other population groups around Oicha. Therefore, the more the need to set up a strong extroverted mission venture increased, the more the CPM-1, as an autonomous mission entity, was absorbed within the AIM until it disappeared completely in 1937. In the meantime, the Mbuti Pygmies, realising that they were being considered less by the Bantu church leaders, were bound to withdraw into the forests one after another.

As the AIM, whose local church Denomination in the country is the *Communauté Évangélique au Centre de l'Afrique* (CECA-20), took control of the mission activities of the CPM-1, the Mbuti Pygmies have become almost merely the “others” and are often referred to only in connection to satisfying entertainment and touristic curiosity. Some Mbuti Pygmy individuals have been taught to play trumpets in order to entertain masses rather than really to evangelise.⁶⁰ It is often a real pleasure for the CECA-20 to present its brass band, which includes some Mbuti Pygmies for public or evangelisation crusades. Reverend CL8 (2010) of the CECA-20 maintains that his denomination does not want to focus on a particular Christian commitment in favour of the Mbuti Pygmies only, or even create particular local churches for them. In comparison to the non-Pygmy members, the two local churches of the CECA-20 in Biakato and Lalia have a few Mbuti Pygmy members (cf. MP12 2012).

⁵⁹ For more information about Margaret L. Clapper, see: <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/480.htm#1>.

⁶⁰ Among those Mbuti Pygmies is Baloyi Abingandula of Lalia who, in addition to playing trumpet, has been trained at Bible school. He is currently pastoring together with non-Pygmy pastors the local church of the CECA-20 at Biakato.

Owing to this stand, the CECA-20 does nurture the Mbuti Pygmies in their home areas of Komanda-Beni, Beni-Mangina, Mangina-Lalia and Lalia-Mambasa on the basis of the teachings due to all the other people. The missionary view of the CECA-20 seems to ignore the fact that the Mbuti Pygmies, who live in particular contexts with particular ways of life and cultures, need to be targeted and fostered in very particular ways. The major issue for the mission workers here is that, if they need to undertake a suitable mission work among the Pygmy peoples, they should first be able to understand the specificities of these peoples.

3.3.3 The Immanuel Mission (IM)

The other mission Society concerned with the mission among the Mbuti Pygmies is the Immanuel Mission. This mission Society was first founded in Nyankunde, in 1918, by C.G. Hurlburt, the son of C.E. Hurlburt, as a property of the AIM. In 1925, the IM was handed over, as an independent mission Society, to the AIM missionaries Dr and Mrs Roy C. Woodhams and Mr Gordon Searle, who were associated with the "Executive" Brethren in North America. With the arrival of Mr and Mrs Robert Deans and their family who came to work at Lolwa (1929), and were associated with the "Open" Brethren supported by the North American "Christian Mission in Many Lands, Inc.", the Nyankunde AIM station was transferred to the IM⁶¹ (Irvine 1978:103). In 1930, William Alexander Deans,⁶² the son of Robert Deans, opened the mission station of Lolwa, which, with Nyankunde, became the two focal mission stations of the IM (Braekman 1961:262 cf. Blandenier 2003:406).

⁶¹ The name *Immanuel Mission* was adopted to satisfy the Belgian Government regulations, which required registration of a named organisation rather than the simple connotation "Brethren" (Irvine 1978:84). The "*Open*" Brethren was therefore the African branch of the overseas "*Christian Mission in Many Lands, Inc.*"

⁶² For more information about William Alexander Deans, see: <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/586.htm>.

From the new mission station of Lolwa, which is situated in the central part of the territory of Mambasa, the cradle of the Mbuti Pygmies, William A. Deans started to work among both Mbuti Pygmies and Bantu. In 1940, he opened the mission station of Mabukulu with the centre of Babofi among the Mbuti Pygmies (Ngbami 2010). As the mission focus, however, was directed more towards the Bantu than the Mbuti Pygmies, and owing to the fact that Deans and his colleagues targeted merely the accessible areas of the Mbuti Pygmies with no willingness to build inside the forest, there has been very little commitment to the Mbuti Pygmies by the IM. So, the mission among the Mbuti Pygmies has become as “a second hand mission”.

The two realities below, among many others, illustrate the noticeable disparity between the Pygmy Christians and the non-Pygmy Christians.



Figure 3.13: CE Temple of the Mbuti Pygmies within the forest at Bandimaboche in Lolwa

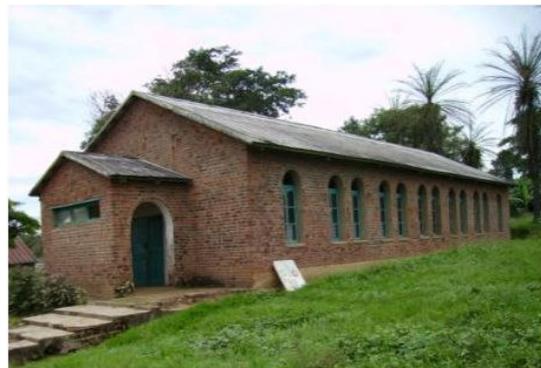


Figure 3.15: CE Temple of the non-Pygmy peoples in Lolwa central along the main road



Figure 3.14: House (the 1st) of the Overseer Pastor of the Mbuti Pygmies church of the CE at Bandimaboche in Lolwa



Figure 3.16: House of the Overseer Pastor of the non-Pygmy peoples church of the CE in Lolwa, along the main road

One thinks of two different denominations, one wealthy and set up along the main road, with many members, and the other poor, out-of-the-way within the forest, with very few members. The non-Pygmy church has power over the Mbuti Pygmy church, while that Mbuti Pygmy church is not allowed even the possibility of knowing what is going on outside of it. The Pygmy pastor of the Emmanuel Community local church of Bandimaboche in Lolwa complains about the many requirements sent to him from the headquarters of the Community, including the Pygmy contribution to the annual budget (MP4 2010).⁶³ While the two local churches belong to the same church denomination, the Immanuel Community, there is almost no exchange of members in terms of sharing worship services or other local church activities.

These two local church properties which represent two quite different realities are separated from one another by only 1500 m. Situated inside the forest, the church of the Mbuti Pygmies dates from 1980, and moves from one place to another as its members do. The latter, which dates from 1930, is a real missionary centre with all kinds of social works, such as hospitals, primary and secondary schools, Biblical and medical schools, and many other social workshops. While the overseers of these local churches are equally ordained pastors, their treatment appears to be quite different. So the Mbuti Pygmy Pastor who has led his local church since 1980 (MP4 2010) is very sensitive, and believes that he is not serving the same Living God than his colleague of the other side. Such complaints are often heard, not only from the Bandimaboche congregation, but also from almost all the Pygmy congregations.

⁶³ Pastor MP4 bears testimony that he has been working as a pastor since 1971 but with no remuneration. He is not able even to get soap for washing, and is often ashamed to stand before the people, as he is always dirty and badly dressed. Expecting a contribution to the denomination budget from his church members who do not produce anything, he says is little more than to laugh at the Pygmy groups.

3.3.4 The Congo Pygmy Mission 2 (CPM-2)

The UK version of the CPM was founded in 1934, in Alambi near Mambasa, the central part of the Ituri forest, by Mrs M.A. Robinson from England. After reading about the work of the CMS Canon Apolo Kivebulaya among the Mbuti Pygmies at Boga, Mrs Robinson also decided to work among the Mbuti Pygmies through an independent mission Society. She was joined by Mr William Hardy, and later by Mr Fred Dunbar from the “Heart of Africa Mission” (HAM). Irvine (1978:71) bears witness to the fact that the Mbuti Pygmies built a hut for Mrs Robinson in Alambi, where she worked until she died before the outbreak of World War II. As Mr Hardy returned to England after the sad event of Mrs Robinson’s death, the CPM-2 was carried on by Mr Dunbar, who resigned from the “Worldwide Evangelization Crusade” (WEC/HAM)⁶⁴ in 1944, and who took charge of the “Mambasa Mission” (MM) in 1958 from Dr R.C. Woodhams who also returned to the USA. The CPM-2 was then merged with the Mambasa Mission under Mr Dunbar’s control, and ceased to exist as a separate mission entity after 23 years (Irvine 1978:72, 89).

As for the CPM-1, the CPM-2 appears to have lost its first vision for mission as it shifted from one leader to another and from one mission Society to another. The last owner of the CPM-2, the “Mambasa Mission”, is the only mission Society whose entire area of activity is the cradle of the Mbuti Pygmies, that is, the huge territory of Mambasa in Ituri. In that territory there are only a few groups of non-Pygmy peoples namely the Bira, Lese, and Ndaka, and some immigrants such as the Nande. For this reason, the promotion of the Mbuti Pygmies through Christian mission should be more noticeable within this “Mambasa Mission” with its local denomination, the Mambasa Community (CM). It is, therefore, astonishing to observe that even within this close and

⁶⁴ *HAM* is the African branch of the *WEC* (Braekman 1961:258).

privileged denomination, the Mbuti Pygmies are also almost absent and neglected the same way as they are within the other surrounding denominations.

3.3.5 The MEPA and the AMN

Besides the four mission Societies and the churches that they have initiated, one may also mention the mission attempts of the MEPA (*Ministère Evangélique des Pygmées en Afrique*) or Evangelical Ministry of Pygmies in Africa and of the AMN (*Action Minssionnaire pour les Nations*) or Missionary Task for Nations. These are not churches, but rather Christian NGOs among several NGOs involved in assisting the Mbuti Pygmies in the northeast DRC.

Based in Komanda, in the territory of Irumu, the MEPA-Ituri is an evangelistic organisation initiated by the International Centre of Evangelism in collaboration with the International Centre of Missiology and the Department of Evangelisation and Life of the Church of Christ in Congo. The motives behind the creation of the MEPA were the need to evangelise all the unreached people groups, including the Pygmy peoples, in Central Africa (CL13 2010). This evangelistic organisation includes staff members from virtually all the mainline churches of the research area. In practice, however, it is only its leader, the Reverend CL13 who is working. Observations made during the writer's field research and the testimony of Reverend CL13, were that the MEPA has no office, human resources, or budget. On the one hand, this Ministry has very good objectives and its task is very huge. On the other hand, the socio-political and spiritual needs of the Mbuti Pygmies are very demanding and beyond the capacity of the only leader CL13. The churches that are supposed to support the task of the MEPA have the same careless attitude as they have towards the Mbuti Pygmies themselves. Is the MEPA-Ituri a way forward to reach out the Mbuti Pygmies? This remains a challenging question.

Unlike the MEPA, the AMN is an initiative of an individual, CL4. It is located in the town of Beni, in the territory of Beni. Visited by the writer twice, in 2010 as well as in 2012, the AMN is more or less well organised. It has an office and the human resources of some 10 workers called “missionaries”. As activities, the AMN organises a training centre for local missionaries and evangelists who have to work mostly among the Mbuti Pygmies, two local churches, one for the non-Pygmy people in Beni town, and the other for the Mbuti Pygmies alongside the main road at Eringeti within the forest, evangelism and various outreaches among the Mbuti Pygmies, from Beni town to Eringeti, a primary school for Pygmy children, and some agricultural development projects (CL4 2010 & 2012; AMN staff members 2012). As a private organisation, the AMN has no substantial support from either the churches or the government. It simply survives thanks to some local fundraising. In the same way that the MEPA struggles, so does the AMN which is still far from achieving its objectives because there is still a gap between the hugeness of the task among the Mbuti Pygmies and the availability of financial, material, and human resources.

The evaluation of MEPA and AMN is that these two Christian NGOs could be good ways to encounter the Mbuti Pygmies if only their objectives and activities were taken into account by the churches within a framework of collaboration. Pastor CL14 (2010), a church leader in Beni, recognises that a sustainable mission among the Mbuti Pygmies requires that Christians should go and establish themselves among them within the forest. Unfortunately, he says, nobody is willing to take such a risk. This reaction of CL14 spells out clearly the general negative attitude towards the Pygmy peoples, which itself creates obstacles to the mission encounter with them.

As an assessment of this section on the mission attempts among the Mbuti Pygmies in the Congo, a relevant remark needs to be highlighted. In fact, it is surprising that among the large number of Pygmy groups scattered throughout

the nine provinces of the DRC, only the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri Forest have been encountered, in a more or less organised manner, by mission Societies. Of course, the earlier mission efforts among the Mbuti Pygmies were undertaken thanks to some charismatic missionaries who dared to engage in kenosis⁶⁵ so that they might encounter these forest dwellers. Unfortunately, these pioneers failed to prepare native Mbuti believers who could carry on the work on their own within their communities. As the pioneers passed away or retired, the work among the Mbuti Pygmies also vanished. While the mission efforts among the other ethnic groups have survived until they are handed over to the native church leaders as a result of the independence events in 1960, there was nothing to hand over to the native Mbuti leaders who did not even exist. Moreover, the native Bantu church leaders who have obtained church autonomy chose to focus on their own ethnic groups rather than on the Pygmy people groups. CL20 (2012) identifies this failure of the Congolese church leaders towards the Pygmy peoples as a sin that must be confessed. Over time, the mission efforts directed only towards one's own ethnic group has led to a kind of maintenance Christianity in the DRC, according to which churches are almost referred to in relation to well-identified ethnic groups (cf. Musolo W'Isuka 2008). This has also led to a strong and competing denominationalism, which is one of the major challenges to Christian mission in DRC.

The client-centred government has somehow encouraged the denominationalism and the maintenance mode of conducting Christian mission, which functions according to the will of some chosen persons. For these reasons, the Pygmy peoples have been given no attention, both by the church and by the state. In addition to the denominationalism and the maintenance Christianity, some other obstacles or reasons behind the lack of mission encounters with the Pygmy peoples also deserve to be examined.

⁶⁵ From the Greek language, "kenosis" is the action of emptying. The theological meaning of this term will be dealt with in connection with the Incarnation of Jesus in the forthcoming chapter four.

3.4 Reasons behind the Lack of Mission Encounter with the Pygmy peoples

In order to check out the assumptions according to which churches in DRC have not taken the Pygmy peoples into account as much as they do for the non-Pygmy peoples, it is important to examine the strategies, methods, attitudes, and behaviour of the missionaries that are often considered to be the reasons behind the lack of mission encounters with the Pygmy peoples. Among those reasons are the association of the missionaries with the colonial system, paternalism, prejudices, discrimination, the early common beliefs against the Pygmy peoples, cultural and religious imperialism, the focus on selective mission fields, and the inadequate preparation of the missionaries.

3.4.1 The missionaries association with the colonial system

As has been said previously, the DRC first made contact with Christianity thanks to European explorations in Africa, which were followed by the slave trade, and later by the colonisation. The slave trade called the “Atlantic slave trade” began as a trickle in the 1440s and grew slowly through the 17th century. After 1700 the trade grew much more rapidly reaching a peak in the 1780s, and then fell off more slowly until it declined quickly after 1850 (Wright 2005a). Later, in 1884-5, the Berlin Conference that dealt with the scramble for Africa outlawed the slave trade, and colonisation that had already begun slowly⁶⁶ was given official recognition. As a result of the Berlin Conference agreement about colonisation, Congolese were victims of a slave labour system and other abuses of human rights, including social classification into three groups, namely the *évolués* (civilised), the *indigènes* (uncivilised), and the “non-classified” (cf.

⁶⁶ Covington-Ward (2007:75) notes that the opening of the Lower Congo to colonial exploitation began with H. M. Stanley’s travels there starting in 1877, which led to the establishment of the Congo Independent State as a fiefdom of the king Leopold II of Belgium.

Markowitz 1973, Kongolo 2005, Vanthemsche & Sartre). The *évolués* were a tiny minority of Black Congolese who would approach the Whites (the Colonists), as they were able to speak a few French words and eat by using forks and spoons. These people were treated with some regard, as they were utilised as facilitators of the Colonisers. The *indigènes* were all the rest who should undergo the pitiless cruelty of the colonial system. The third group, mostly not talked about, consisted of those who were not taken into consideration, such as the madmen. The Pygmy peoples were counted among this last group of disabled and useless persons for the economic purposes of the colony.

It is within these circumstances of trade and colonisation that the modern wave of missions came into Congo. The mission enterprise was seriously compromised by the colonial system to such an extent that missionaries, both Catholics and Protestants, were accused of association with colonisers who were involved in trading, enslaving, and exploiting the native populations. Covington-Ward (2007:75-6) explains the mission association with the colonial government in Congo in the following terms: "... the relationship between the missions and the colonial authorities wasn't unidirectional; missionaries were also engaging in activities that would aid the colonial government". This is also supported by Markowitz (1973:17-18) who holds:

The Belgian colonial system operated on the basis of an interdependent triumvirate of missionary, administration and commercial interests. The missions provided the government with a measure of social and territorial control, and they educated and trained Africans for work on the plantations and in the mines. In return they received subsidies, protection, and land. At their behest, the state would at times introduce laws that the missions felt they needed to further evangelization, for example, a law designed to discourage polygamous marriage by taxing surplus wives. The collaboration between the missions, especially the Catholic missions, and the administration was mutually satisfactory.

Talking about the mission-state collaboration in general, Aguwa also says:

The missionary and colonial enterprises were intended to transform African society and culture. The missionary efforts, which were carried out through preaching the gospel and other activities, focused on undermining the indigenous religion. The colonial agents, on the other hand, imposed a new socio-political order intended to suppress the indigenous institutions. Yet, colonial agents and missionaries mutually exchanged *avant-garde* roles, and they collaborated in other ways in the pursuit of their respective aims. There are reasons for this collaboration. First, their respective goals sometimes traversed each other. Second, they shared a common religious and cultural background. Third, they shared the same ideologies about racial differences, as well as stereotyping. Both considered their subjects and potential converts barbaric, and so it was justified to use any means available to subdue them into accepting Western notions of civilization along with the Christian faith. Fourth, in the mission and colonial lands, missionaries and colonial agents faced common traits of resistance and physical dangers. (Aguwa 2007:131)

It is important, however, to keep in mind that the “marriage” between mission and colonisation did not originate in the Congo or in Africa. The very origin of this phenomenon should be rather traced back to the emergence of the Western powers in overseas territories during the 16th century. In keeping with this point of view, Bosch (1991:302-3) believes that the very origin of the term “mission”, as it is still tended being used today, presupposes the ambience of the West’s colonisation of overseas territories and its subjugation of their inhabitants. He puts emphasis, therefore, on the fact that, since the 16th century, if one said “mission”, one in a sense also said “colonialism”; and modern missions originated in the context of modern Western colonialism. As a matter of fact, it is also important to draw attention to the fact that almost all the 14 Western nations that attended the Berlin Conference, namely Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States were states that sent out missionaries. This link between colonisation and the sending out of missionaries is very important, as it did not prevent the mission workers who were, above of all, citizens

of their home nations, from facilitating also the colonial interests of their home countries.

Though the mission enterprise has been accused of simply serving as the religious side of 19th century colonialism, as an attempt to impose “Western religion” on especially Asia and Africa along with political and economic dominion, some relevant truths deserve to be highlighted. At times, missionaries arrived before colonisers, at times with them, and at times later. At some times, they lived in uneasy tension with colonialism, having quite different goals, and, at other times, they believed that European control over Asia and Africa brought the best hope for peace, stability, and the protection of the native populations (Pierson 2000:208). So there was an obvious ambiguity between serving as fully independent missionaries, and being missionaries simultaneously serving the Church and the colonial states. In this respect, Hiebert gives evidence that:

Exploration and trade led to foreign settlements, missions, and eventually Western colonial rule. Encounter led to growing awareness in the West of the otherness of peoples, cultures, and religions in other parts of the world. The first response of Western traders and officials to these racial and cultural differences was a sense of personal superiority. Western science and technology were becoming increasingly powerful, and their superiority to the sciences and technologies of other cultures seemed self-evident. Moreover, Western governments were conquering other nations and making them colonies. Missionaries, too, were affected by the spirit of their times. They equated Christianity with Western culture, and the West’s obvious superiority over the other cultures proved the superiority of Christianity over pagan religions... Later, missionaries sought to end slavery and came to believe that commerce was the only lasting solution. Christianity, civilization, and commerce became the “threefold flag under which the missionary ship sailed for the next generations”... Given the sense of racial superiority that pervaded their times, they often kept themselves apart from the national Christians. (Hiebert 1994:54-55)

The early colonial policies, which have become norms in contrast to a newly acquired culture, have strongly affected both the mission Societies and the

visions of young churches up to now. This is a very challenging issue, which should definitely be tackled, as Christian mission should be freed from the historical legacy that has harmed it. Indeed, instead of doing mission with reference to the sad side of the Church history, the Church in Africa needs rather to refer to the Scriptures and interpret them with regard to its current contexts and challenges. The gospel, cleansed from egocentric feelings and ambitions, is the only norm that should guide the Church in its way of participating in God's mission throughout the world. In this respect, Osei-Mensah says, "If missionaries and national Christians witness freely and together, the universal character of the Gospel will become evident in the community" (Sookhdeo 1987:20).

In fact, the Pygmy peoples succeeded in escaping the cruelty of the colonial enterprise, because they were not settled in the area of the Kongo kingdom where exploration, slavery and the slave trade, and the exploitation of the natives took place. In addition, they were not well known as fully human beings, because they were hidden far away in forests, far from the Bantu peoples. Finally, because of their very small stature, forest lifestyle and culture, and the assumptions according to which the Pygmies were devoid of intelligence, they were not worthy of being regarded as being individuals who could contribute to European economic goals. The same way, missionaries who were already contaminated in one way or another by the colonial system, could not easily target those Pygmy peoples.

The Hiebert's non-exhaustive review about mission and colonialism reveals another suspected behaviour, which is not the least important. This is paternalism, which also has been practised by many missionaries as a legacy of the colonial era.

3.4.2 The paternalism

The paternalism, which is a kind of authoritarianism or oppression over individuals, is a very complex issue. Oduro, Pretorius, Nussbaum and Born (2008:5) help to understand the concept of paternalism by saying that:

In the early years, the people who converted to the Christian faith were gathered to live at the mission stations. The missionaries did this, as they said, to protect the new converts from their heathen background. Missionaries acted as the “fathers” to their “children”. We call this *paternalism*: the missionaries gave the converts everything they needed, but gave them very little responsibility or freedom of choice.

“Paternalism” is defined as a style of government or management, or an approach to personal relationships, in which the desire to help, advise, and protect may neglect individual choice and personal responsibility (Encarta 2005). Western missionaries, therefore, with knowledge, skills, wisdom, funds, power, and the status of so-called “civilised people” made use of these assets to get new churches to follow their will, even if this was contrary to the gospel. In some cases, paternalism has meant a mission keeping control of work because it felt that the natives were unqualified and would themselves be the cause of harming Christ by taking leadership (cf. Neumann 2000:730). The African was considered as a “child” who must be brought to maturity under the tutelage of the missionary parent (Shaw 1996:209). Markowitz (1973:13) highlights this by maintaining that:

The attitudes that the missionaries brought with them to a great extent determined their approach to the African, to his culture and society, and to the entire question of social change. These attitudes easily allowed them to act as agents of social control for a Colonial Administration that viewed Congolese as children.

Moreover, Luzbetak (1977:334) speaks of paternalism as an attitude of pity driving a missionary to do everything for his people rather than to teach them how to help themselves. For him, paternalism is not charity but rather a disguised form of racial superiority. Why, for instance, did missionaries spend endless hours bandaging wounds and distributing medicines to the people instead of teaching them how to avoid the wounds and sicknesses they came to have healed? As a result of these paternalistic attitudes, most of mission workers failed not only to be efficient and accepted by the local people, but they also failed to recognise the work of the Holy Spirit in young churches and their leaders (cf. Neumann 2000:730).

Native church workers, on the other hand, have made use of the same paternalistic attitudes as a mode of carrying out mission. In the specific case of the churches initiated by the six aforementioned mission Societies, namely the CMS, UAM, AIM, IM, WEC/HAM, and MM, it has been observed that the pastors, who were trained by, or worked with, the White missionaries, were also ministering in the same ways as their older missionary-pastors were ministering. It is out of the question, today, to continue blaming the early missionaries of this or that, because all that they did not envision in their missionary agenda is still not envisioned by the current church mission agenda. Against the paternalistic attitudes, Chavan warns that the term “missionary” should not be interpreted as “father” or “mother”, but rather as “friend” (cf. Lindsell 1968:182-3). He also maintains that a missionary should lead the native Christians to be dependent not on the mission Agency, but on God alone, and avoid all those things that can hinder the growth of the indigenous church, by affecting its confidence in itself and so weakening its testimony.

3.4.3 The prejudices and discrimination towards native people

Two noticeable forms of behaviour similar to paternalism ought also to be examined. These are prejudice and discrimination, two veiled but really negative attitudes that have also been destructive in the mission field. The concepts of prejudice and discrimination, which are often used interchangeably, relate to behaviour or attitudes common not only in colonialism and in missionaries life, but also in the life of any human being. Wan (2000:324) says that these two vices come from the ethnocentrism, a belief that one's own people group or cultural ways are superior to others. He also maintains that ethnocentrism, which is an internal orientation, may be manifested in individual action or practised as an institutionalised policy towards others.

Wan (2000:324) elucidates the difference between the terms “prejudice” and “discrimination” by pointing out that, in a scientific sense, they can be both positive and negative. In the social sciences, including missiology, he makes it clear that prejudice and discrimination are generally used with a negative connotation. Prejudice is an attitude, the subjective prejudgement of the others to be inferior, whereas discrimination is an action or social interaction unfavourable to others on the basis of their religion, or ethnic or racial membership. Discrimination seems thus to be the logical action that comes from the attitude which is prejudice. Banton (1994:36) suggests that the best protection against discrimination is that in the heart of people who believe discrimination to be wrong.

Focusing on prejudice, Dittes (1973:17-18) notes that one of its meanings is that people set boundaries around themselves and between themselves and others. For him,

Prejudice represents the wall between oneself and a particular group of persons. The one wall is really part of an entire stockade some of us find is necessary to build, not only against a group but against all groups, a protective wall

encircling our lives, section by section, until we are totally and safely closed in as much as possible, and the threats of life are closed out. (Dittes 1973:33)

The image given above by Dittes sheds light on the fact that a prejudicial attitude in its prejudgement of others is a very big obstacle to missionary encounters. It harms the gospel so much by making it “a poisoned gift” rather than “good news”. Musolo w’Isuka (1999:108) says that prejudice blinds individuals about the true advantages of foreign cultures to the point that their valuable elements are despised and refused.

It has been also observed, during the San Antonio WCC Conference 1989 on the theme “Your will be done: Mission in Christ’s way”, that prejudices and ideologies of missionaries led to situations of injustice, oppression, poverty, and dependence within mission fields. This is what has happened in the denominations concerned with the issues relative to the Mbuti Pygmies in the northeast DRC. Not only were there conflicts among native Christians and foreign missionaries, but also more, long-lasting conflicts among the local leaders which have led to internal divisions, poverty, and the dependence status of churches. On the ground, prejudice has also led to a lack of trust among communities, each one of them believing that they possess the most efficient tool to carry out mission. So, churches work in such a competitive manner as to cause the very cautious Mbuti Pygmies around not to put trust easily in anyone who dares to address them on behalf of such churches.

Prejudice, along with all its manifestations of discrimination, superiority or inferiority complexes, pride, segregation, mistrust and disdain of the other, intolerance, and a refusal to respect the cultural values of the others, is often two-pronged. It harms both its perpetrators and those towards whom it is directed equally. Accordingly, Dittes (1973:35) states that “a prejudiced attitude tells us much more about the person who holds it than about the one at whom it is directed.”

3.4.4 The early common beliefs against the Pygmy peoples

It was mentioned in the previous chapter that up to the 19th century, the century of the decisive start of Christian missions in Africa, the humanity of the Pygmy people was still a matter of controversy. There were those who denied that the Pygmy peoples were full human beings, arguing that they were simply evolved monkeys, or, at least, intermediate creatures between human beings and monkeys. Among the negative beliefs recorded, Trilles (1932:2) denounces two false theories one being that the Pygmy people were regenerated people, and the other that they were the remainder of primitive human beings. This second theory was supported by the German Schweinfurth, who arrived in the Ituri forest in 1870 and saw the Pygmy people as “the remnants of a declining race” (Bailey 1991:6). Father Bahuchet (1979:13) mentions the anatomist Edward Tyson who, in 1699, concluded, “Our Pygmy is not a man, and he is not even a common monkey, but a kind of mixed animal. Even though he is biped, he is rather one of the animals whose members end with hands.” Bahuchet (1979) also mentions Buffon who, in 1775, took into account Tyson’s conclusions by asserting that Pygmies were really monkeys with a strong waist.

These negative opinions were most likely sustained by Darwin’s (1809-1882) modern theory of evolution with his concept of the development of all forms of life through the slow-working process of natural selection. Darwin’s popular theory has been a major influence not only on the life and earth sciences and on modern thought in general, but also on Christian missions and their theological thinking. With the assumption that the Pygmy people were evolved monkeys, it is possible that some mission Societies have been influenced to ignore the Pygmy peoples in their agenda. As the Pygmy people were not well known and so considered as a blank blackboard on which anyone could write anything, all kinds of beliefs could be retained about them.

3.4.5 The cultural and religious imperialism

Another reason close to that of the association of the missionaries with the colonial system is religious imperialism⁶⁷ and its intolerance of African culture and religion. About this obstacle, Hiebert (1994:45-6) maintains that Western missionaries were convinced that their belief systems were true, and they failed to differentiate the gospel from their own cultural patterns. In other words, they were too confident about the wholesomeness and goodness of their culture to see the pagan flaws in their own social and political structures. As a result, Shaw (1996:208-9) sees that they were so blinded by the doctrine of Christ's uniqueness and supremacy as Lord, and the assumption of Western cultural superiority that they were almost incapable of seeing anything positive and valuable in the lives and cultures of the African people. To be Christian, as Mugambi (1992:25) has observed so well, meant "abandoning African life which was described as 'primitive' and 'savage'." In the Congo, for instance, colonists as well as missionaries used to reprimand Congolese who were guilty of certain faults by using the term *macaque*, which means monkey. This insult, that meant that those who were guilty of certain faults were acting like the wild animals, the monkeys, has remained a common way of insulting people.

Mostly, cultural and religious imperialism has led to the long-lasting status of 'strangeness' of the gospel in so many mission fields. On this very issue, Hiebert (1994:46) asserts that:

Little attention was given to the local culture and to the felt needs of the people. Consequently, the gospel was unnecessarily foreign. In a sense the gospel is foreign to every culture, for it is God's prophetic voice to sinners and the cultures they create. But to this was added the foreignness of Western culture with its dress, buildings, pews, hymns, leadership styles, and technology. Those who became Christians were often seen as agents of the West.

⁶⁷ The term "religious imperialism" means "Western Christianity".

In addition, the anthropologist Beidelman (1982:25) notes that the combination of contempt for African culture and religion with a conviction of the superiority of Western civilisation led to a crusade of aggressive evangelism that did irreparable damage to African tradition. For him, the most poignant and destructive aspect of evangelism in Africa was the failure of the missionaries to fully appreciate the integrated quality of traditional African life. All of these attitudes and beliefs, in the mind of many African critics, were “a working religious imperialism”. As such, Western Christianity has remained an alien religion in many African cultures. Volf (1996:39-40), however, reacts against this when he maintains that it is a mistake to complain too much about Christianity being alien in a given culture. For him, there are wrong ways of being a stranger, such as when an alien culture is idolatrously proclaimed as the gospel in another culture. But the solution for being a stranger in a wrong way, Volf goes on, is not full naturalisation, but being a stranger in the right way.

Cultural and religious imperialism as a negative side of the efforts of the Western mission in the Third-World, especially in Africa, has, among other things, brought about a new terminology in missiological language. The adjective “missional” which is not formally quite different from “missionary”, has been coined, from the missiological writings of Newbigin and Bosch as an alternative way to avoid the specific unpleasant and offensive history ascribed to the usual adjective “missionary” (Saayman 2010:5-16). Though the new concept of “missional” cannot completely relieve the long-lasting malaise with regard to the early Western mission venture in the Third-World, it is at least a revealing sign that points out that the cultural and religious imperialism is still a concern in missiological thinking.

Against all the aforesaid practices, attitudes, and beliefs of the missionaries, which can be considered to be the cause of missionary negativism, one of the major obstacles to mission encounters,⁶⁸ Luzbetak claims that:

If the Church would have only a negative goal in the non-Christian world, the basic policy of accommodation would indeed be out of place. The fact is that the Church sends out her missionaries with a positive goal, rather than with a purely negative one. The modern apostle, true to his vocation, will see his task in the same light as Christ saw His, Who came “not to destroy but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). A missionary whose mind is completely occupied with the “pagan” culture's “falsehood”, “immorality”, “darkness”, “depravation”, and “blindness”, who sees among his adopted people nothing but “spiritual misery”, “sin”, and “the night of heathenism” – such a missionary ought to have his spiritual eyes examined. His vocation and the task for which he was commissioned by the Church is something quite positive: to make the beautiful in the so-called “pagan” heart even more beautiful, to seek out the naturally good in order to make it supernaturally perfect, to present Christianity not as an enemy of the existing way of life but as a friend possessing the secret that will enable the non-Christian culture reach its God-intended perfection. To see nothing but a depraved nature in a non-Christian heart may have been consistent with the teaching of the Reformation but is definitely not in accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church. ... As Christ assumed a real human nature, so too the Church takes to herself the fullness of all that is genuinely human, wherever and however she finds it, and transforms it into a source of supernatural energy. (Luzbetak 1977:351-2)

3.4.6 The focus on selective mission fields and people groups

Though the obvious discrimination of the Catholics against the Protestants is historical damage that should be repaired, it has served to facilitate the spread of the gospel in many remote areas of the DRC. Instead, however, of thinking of all the rural areas as mission fields, the missionaries focused rather on some selective mission fields and people groups. While the Catholic missionaries were working in urban areas and the main villages among almost all the ethnic

⁶⁸ In Luzbetak's writings, mission encounter would mean “accommodation”.

groups, the Protestant mission Societies were focusing on specific ethnic groups in specific rural areas. The Protestant mission stations were established on the basis of the same principles of selective areas and people groups. That is why in Ituri, for example, the CMS only targeted the Hema ethnic group of Boga, the IM the Ngiti in Nyankunde and the Bira in Lolwa, the AIM the Alur in Mahagi, the Lugbara in Aru, the Lendu in Rethy, the Zande in Dungu, the Nande and the Mbuba in Oicha, and the MM the Ndaka and Bira in Mambasa. In this regard, Love (2008:32) says, “In the past, the world was neatly divided into sending countries and mission fields”. In fact, in the 19th century, the missionaries who went to India, China, Africa, and other world countries, seem to have divided these countries into “mission fields” according to their denominations.

Focusing on appropriate mission fields and peoples is, by itself, a suitable mission strategy. Jesus made use of this strategy as he went from one village to another and from one people to another. The apostle Paul also made use of the same strategy during his four missionary journeys. When, however, this strategy means to close one’s eyes definitively to the neighbouring areas and peoples, it ceases to be a suitable mission strategy. When the former Pygmy mission station in Oicha (the CPM-1), for instance, was handed over to the AIM by the UAM, the AIM focussed on the Nande and Mbuba ethnic groups to the detriment of the first group to be addressed. Both the UAM and the AIM failed to maintain a missional balance with regard to the three population groups (Pygmies, Nande and Mbuba) living in the same geographical area.

The practice of selective mission fields seems to have been justified chiefly by the fear of running the risk related to harsh and dangerous habitats such as the dense forests. It is possibly true that the fact that Pygmy peoples are withdrawn and live within the dense rainforests where there are no “organised societies”, roads, houses, and all other social facilitations, resulted in the perfectly human fear of the Western missionaries about running the risk, especially in a country where many of their fellow missionaries had lost their

lives. As a result of such a natural attitude, most of mission stations were established, not in the interior of the country, but rather all along the main roads, or at least in some accessible areas inside the country. So, if mission is to be carried out only in accessible and safe places, what will be the fate of those who live outside these accessible and safe places? Are the people living far from the accessible and safe areas worthy of mission encounters?

The problems relating to a harsh habitat, because of the climate, the physical features of some areas, the seas and the forests, have always been big and persistent challenges to the missionary calling. Does one run away from challenging circumstances and conditions? If mission encounters can take place only in accessible and safe places, one should constantly keep in mind that those places themselves have been made accessible and safe by someone else who dared to run the risk. The main roads along which the mission stations were established in the Ituri region and elsewhere were surely built by some pioneers who accepted the risks they had to run. Is not the mission enterprise itself a pioneer venture? On this very issue, Luzbetak (1977:329-30) recognises that the physical environment may set a certain limit to experience, knowledge, contact, and interaction with other groups; but this is not an insurmountable obstacle. For him, a human being is never a submissive slave of his habitat, but rather he/she tends to become the master of the nature. Though the environment helps to mould the human being's way of life, it is also true that the human being moulds the physical world in which he lives. To support this opinion, Luzbetak convincingly states that:

Thanks to our present-day technical knowledge and skill, explorers and scientists are able to live in the Antarctic in relative comfort, despite the subzero weather and the icy blasts sweeping across the world's most lifeless continent. European settlers and officials in tropical Africa and the Pacific may enjoy the comfort of electric appliances, such as frigerators, and air conditions. Whether man has at his disposal advanced applied science or only simple implements, he is somehow able to answer with confidence even the challenges

of the severe physical environments of the frozen North and the arid deserts of Africa and Australia. The loss may indeed be great and the battle difficult, but somehow man, not the environment, turns out to be the victor. (Luzbetak 1977:330-331).

Whatever the conditions and the means, risks are a natural fact linked to all activities undertaken in new lands. Accordingly, learning to run the risk for any circumstances and conditions is a key means of success in mission endeavours. In other words, doing mission leads to running a major risk. In this understanding, Jesus' incarnational mission remains a major and fundamental risk for the salvation of humanity. Bearing this in mind, any area and people throughout the world should fairly be considered as worthy of becoming the "mission field". This is what the meaning of Matthew 28:19-20, which defines the geographical limits of the mission, is all about.

3.4.7 The inadequate preparation of prospective missionaries

Another obstacle or reason behind the lack of any mission encounter with the Pygmy peoples is possibly the inadequate preparation of the early missionaries. The preparation of the mission workers includes not only the acceptance of God's calling for mission, training and theological education, the clear and precise awareness about an appropriate mission field, and the availability of appropriate tools for the work as well as the necessary financial means, but also the personal aptitudes that can help to accommodate new cultures and contexts. It includes also one's integrity towards God and the Scriptures. In other words, integrity towards God and to the Scriptures should shed light on all the other elements that constitute the preparation of missionaries. If the mission of the Church is acknowledged as participation in God's mission, the mission workers should not refer, first of all, to the mission Agencies, the political and

administrative leaders, but, rather, to God himself, the owner and initiator of mission.

All the obstacles or reasons behind the lack of mission encounters with the Pygmy peoples identified above obviously result from the inadequate preparation of missionaries. In fact, a good preparation for a given project is a key means for success. The more one is well prepared, the more one will be able to focus on well-thought-out projects. In support of this, Bosch (1991:5) says that an inadequate foundation for mission and ambiguous missionary motives and aims are bound to lead to unsatisfactory missionary practice. Good preparation for mission encounters is indispensable.⁶⁹ It can help to prevent many blunders, such as the failure to train and educate the native church leaders. Establishing that the greatest weakness of the missionary movement was the failure to train and educate leaders for the national churches (Kane 1980:301), Kane is also well aware of the fact that “churches progress or regress according to the kind of the leadership they have”, and that “No church will last long without well educated, spiritual, dynamic leaders” (1980:263).

All the obstacles recorded as being accountable for the exclusion of the Pygmy peoples from the mission outreaches have serious consequences on the whole life of the Mbuti Pygmies, and this remains a challenge to Christian mission in the DRC. For more information, the following section deals with some of the consequences of this oversight with regard to mission towards the Pygmy peoples.

⁶⁹ About the preparation of the missionaries, also read Moreau, Crown and McGee (2004:172-189). Not only do these authors present the preparation as necessary for the missionary candidates, but also they talk about it as a fundamental Biblical principle for the Christian mission success. For them, the overall goal of the missionary training is to equip the prospective missionary to be a godly person who is both competent and effective in his/her missionary service. This involves a blend of the following: the genuine growth towards spiritual maturity; the ability to carry out one’s assigned task; the ability to interact well with people in the new cultural setting; the ability to adjust well by coping effectively with culture stress and dealing with the adaptation process; the ability to facilitate adjustment and manage stress for family and significant others; and the ability to develop genuine partnership with national Christians in which both parties have something to offer to each other.

3.5 Consequences of the Oversight regarding Mission towards the Pygmy Peoples

If the early attempts of mission among the Mbuti Pygmies have failed, this might be as an obvious consequence of oversight with regard to mission towards the Pygmy peoples. This oversight regarding mission towards the Pygmy peoples in the DRC has resulted in certain consequences including the negative attitude of churches towards the Pygmy peoples, the Pygmy peoples' mistrust towards the non-Pygmy peoples, the total lack of socio-political development among the Pygmy peoples, the government's inattention towards the Pygmy peoples, the fact that the Pygmy peoples remain an unknown population group, the fact that the Pygmy peoples are considered as outsiders, and the fact that the Mbuti Pygmies remain unreached people groups.

3.5.1 The negative attitude of the churches towards the Pygmy peoples

Churches in the northeast DRC have very little concern about the Mbuti Pygmies in their daily activities. Not only are the Mbuti Pygmies almost completely absent within the whole life of the churches, but they are also almost forgotten in the agendas of social as well as developmental projects. Given that churches run some social and development projects even for those who are not their active members, one wonders why the Mbuti Pygmies are not considered in this way. Due to the endless war with its consequences of ethnic conflicts and the emergence of uncontrolled armed troops and militias, there have always been many destitute and distressingly displaced peoples in all the eastern DRC. Churches usually collect food, worn clothes, and kitchen implements to help

these displaced people. But such initiatives⁷⁰ have never been taken to help the Mbuti Pygmies who also remain seriously destitute people.

The negative attitude of churches is also observed in terms of evangelistic crusades that are usually directed to almost all the ethnic groups, especially the urban ones, except for the Mbuti Pygmies. Some denominations in Ituri that have some so-called “Pygmy local churches”, such as the *Communauté Emmanuel (CE)* and the *Communauté Mambasa (CM)*, do not care about those Pygmy local churches as they do for the Bantu local churches. As has been previously shown with regard to the *CE* in Lolwa, all the so-called temples of the Mbuti Pygmies, in comparison to those of the Bantu, are scarcely able to be considered to be temples, since they are built of some four sticks covered with some three palm-tree branches. So are the huts of their Pygmy pastors. It is not necessary to speak of the wages of these Pygmy pastors, which do not exist at all. With regard to the outcomes of the missionary endeavours in DRC, it is certainly true that, throughout the country, the Church has many noticeable assets. One may mention huge temples and cathedrals, health centres and hospitals, orphanages, schools (primary, secondary, professional, Bible schools and seminaries, and universities), training centres for development in agriculture and crafts, organised villages and towns established as a result of mission effort, for example, Katwa and Butembo, Beni, Mbau, Oicha, Eringeti, Mangina, Byakato, Mambasa, Lolwa, Komanda, Nyankunde, Bunia, Boga, Blukwa, Rethy, etc. Nothing among all these assets has been done in favour of the Mbuti Pygmies who are simply talked about in connection with the unoccupied forest areas. Even the Christians apparently equate the forests and their trees and wild

⁷⁰ Of course, the Seventh Day Adventists Church and the *CEPAC Projet Pygmées* are trying to assist the Mbuti Pygmies by building tiny houses for them along the main roads or nearby Bantu villages. But these initiatives are undertaken only within the framework of the humanitarian aid of the NGOs, not of the churches. The only mission initiatives by the AMN in Beni and the MEPA in Komanda are still of a very little influence, because they are not yet supported by the mainline churches. The animators of these Christian NGOs, pastors CL4 (2010) and CL13 (2010), bear witness that they are still coping by using their own means.

animals with the Mbuti Pygmies. So, if the aforesaid church assets have been acquired thanks to the Western mission efforts, why can the local churches not provide equivalent assets for assistance to the Mbuti Pygmies, if they consider them to be equally worthy of divine graces? What place do the Mbuti Pygmies hold within the churches mission agenda? If the Western missionaries for the aforesaid reasons have mistakenly forgotten the Mbuti Pygmies, should they remain forgotten forever? Should Christian mission always be carried out in terms of the same boundaries and paths established by the Western pioneers?

As answers to these pertinent questions, Bosch (1991:5), in reference to Lesley Newbigin, has found so well that, “The young churches ‘planted’ on the ‘mission fields’ were replicas of the churches on the mission agency’s ‘home front’, ‘blessed’ by all paraphernalia of those churches, ‘everything from harmoniums to archdeacons’.” From this thoughtful remark of Bosch, it is possible to maintain that all the aforesaid challenges to mission with regard to the encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies involve the whole Christian mission in the DRC. From association with the government which generally seems to care less about the Pygmy peoples, to the attitudes of paternalism, prejudice and discrimination, and the challenges regarding the customary beliefs against the Pygmy peoples, religious and cultural imperialism, the focus on some selective areas and ethnic groups, and inadequate preparation for the church mission, churches in the DRC are nothing less than “replicas” of the Western churches and mission Agencies. Not that the Western churches and mission Agencies cannot be imitated, but things are run from replica to replica as if that way of doing things had become a novelty for mission implementation, because, in terms of targeting the Mbuti Pygmies, even the Revival and Independent churches are not less replicas of the mainline churches. The more Christians do not care about the Mbuti Pygmies the more the Mbuti Pygmies withdraw themselves far from them and develop an attitude of mistrust. This is what the following point deals with.

3.5.2 The Pygmy peoples' mistrust towards the non-Pygmy peoples

The Pygmy peoples who are not as stupid and unintelligent as they are always assumed to be are in contrast very cautious and clever. In the same way that they are very sensitive about what happens within the forest in terms of weather, game sanctuaries, hunting, mushroom, fruit and honey seasons, dangerous and safe places, hunting ferocious animals, and medicinal plants, in the same way they are very sensitive to what happens among their neighbouring Bantu. Usually the Mbuti Pygmies blame the Bantu for various attitudes and patterns of behaviour that they consider being negative as well as inhuman. These shortcomings of the Bantu include egoism and egocentrism, arrogance and a superiority complex, the accumulation of wealth, the endlessly adversarial culture, wars, and the possession of weapons, the sedentary way of life that leads to the environmental depredation, the bondage and exploitation of the Mbuti Pygmies, the destruction of the forests by transforming them into arable lands, the looting of the forest products such as timber and through mining operations, the culture consisting of chasing the Mbuti Pygmies from the forest homes and depriving them of their livelihood. The Bantu villages and towns, according to the Mbuti Pygmies, are undeniably a vivid proof that the ideal forest homes for Mbuti Pygmies have been destroyed. Because of all of these blunders, the Mbuti Pygmies do not trust the Bantu, including Christians who are mostly Bantu. The same way as Luzbetak (1977:335) has found that in the relationship between the early missionaries and the young churches, young churches willingly accept the gifts from the missionaries but hate them for those gifts, the same way the Mbuti Pygmies willingly accept the gifts from the Bantu but hate them for the gifts.

About Christian mission among the Mbuti Pygmies, there is a paradoxical issue pertaining to the fact that the church workers that can be sent to the Pygmy people groups belong to the same groups as those that the Mbuti Pygmies consider to be invaders (cf. MP14 2012). And so, it seems clear that the Mbuti

Pygmies have no problem with the Church and the gospel. On the contrary, they have a very clear notion about God, the Almighty, Creator, Provider and Master of the forest. From this minute but implicit knowledge about God, it is possible to witness to them by using the example of the apostle Paul in Athens (Acts 17:21-31). The only problem that seems to prevent the Mbuti Pygmies from embracing the gospel is probably a lack of confidence in the church workers and Christians in general. The same way as Christians and other Congolese blame the Western people for having been invaders of the Congo, in the same way the Mbuti Pygmies blame all the Bantu of being invaders of their forestlands (cf. MPC Epuu 2010; MPC Undesiba 2012, MP14 2012). Even though the Pygmy people are scattered across the DRC, within the forests and several separated Pygmy camps from one another, they hold the same opinions. From Epuu through Nduyi, Mambasa, Lalia, Byakato, Beni/Mavivi, Mbau, Oicha, Eringeti, Komanda, and Lolwa to Mambasa one notes that all the Mbuti Pygmies of these areas that cover several thousand kilometers squares, without consulting one another, have the same demands about their Pygmy identity and fate. A true effort of encountering these Mbuti Pygmies should, thus, take into account their claims, hopes and expectations.

Another consequence of society's oversight with regard to mission towards the Pygmy peoples is the total lack of socio-political development of the Mbuti Pygmies.

3.5.3 The total lack of socio-political development among the Pygmy peoples

Christian mission is accountable of superior achievements in many countries and lands (Bosch 1991:5). This includes, in the DRC, not only the access to the gospel, but also to basic developmental facilities such as housing, food, clothes, health care, sanitation, education, communication facilitation, justice, and land ownership. One does not need to compare these achievements to those of other

countries, but what is true is that, thanks to Christian social works, the non-Pygmy peoples in DRC have an acceptable minimum lifestyle, according to them. They are not all rich, but equally nor are they extremely poor. Among the assets the non-Pygmy peoples depend on the most in the DRC is education. This is the key starting point of any sustainable development and it opens doors to the understanding of oneself and the world. Thanks to education, low or average though it may be, the non-Pygmy people in the DRC have managed, in one way or other, to master the multiple challenges created by the endless wars and ethnic conflicts.

The Mbuti Pygmies, as well as all other Pygmy peoples all over the DRC, in contrast, lack minimum socio-political development. Not only do they not have access to basic developmental facilities such as those listed above, but they are also the true “others” or outsiders, seldom talked about or considered. One would be tempted to think that they do not even exist, or even if they do, their life does not deserve any attention. This is the reason why it was said in the previous chapter that, on the scale of human population groups, the Pygmy peoples are not just poor and vulnerable, but they are the poorest of the poorest people of humanity. This is the kind of challenge that should not allow the Church to maintain the *status quo*. Indeed, as Nyasulu (2004:19) states, the Church is a missionary church, a church “on the way” or “on the move”. The church can never be static and established, but always on the ‘go’, never satisfied with the *status quo*.

3.5.4 The government’s inattention towards the Pygmy peoples

Since the colonial era in the DRC, the Church has been a real working tool through which the government achieves its goals for the people. By pioneering many remote and rural areas, missionaries and other church workers have awakened government interest in inaccessible peoples. In the DRC, which is

among the “so-called most Christianised countries in Africa,” irrespective of how committed Christians may be, the government has had it made easier to establish its policies where the churches are already established. One might even be tempted to think that the churches had prepared the people for the government and made possible its path to them. Similarly, in many colonies and many independent countries as well, there was a time when the authorities enthusiastically welcomed missionaries into their territories. So, from the point of view of the colonial government, the missionaries were truly ideal allies. They lived among the local people, knew their languages, and understood their customs. Missionaries were thus better equipped to persuade unwilling “natives” to submit, for example, to the *pax Britannica* or the *pax Teutonica* (Bosch 1991:303).

Bosch has also pointed out clearly that missionaries were reliable educators, health officers, agricultural instructors, cultural, political, and economic agents, achieving far more than the straightforward religious missionary purpose for which they were dedicated. As far as this is concerned, it is true that in the DRC, where the missionaries did not establish their interests, neither did the government establish its interests. In the same way, those whom the missionaries did not take into account in their mission agenda were also not taken into account by the government in its agenda. As the missionaries did not succeed in influencing or ministering to the Pygmy peoples because of their culture, way of life, and forest and nomadic orientation, in the same way, the government, which has depended so much on the role of the missionaries in influencing the indigenous peoples, has failed to care about the Pygmy peoples.

The government’s lack of attention with regard to the Pygmy peoples can be seen in the current Constitution of the DRC, which is generally ambiguous in relation to these forest dwellers. Not only does the concept of “Pygmy peoples” not exist in the Constitution, but also the Constitution, in its Article 203-25, simply refers to the protection of vulnerable people groups in general. If,

according to the Constitution, the Pygmy peoples are included among the “vulnerable people groups”, unfortunately they do not enjoy the benefits bestowed by this article in terms of respect and the protection of the basic human rights. In addition, Article 12 of the same Constitution, which reads, “All Congolese are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection by the law”, appears to be farcical because all the Congolese people have never been equal before the law. Unless Article 12 implies a denial of the existence of the Pygmy peoples, their entire situation and their place in the life of the Congolese nation makes a mockery of the Article’s assertion.

To confirm the reality of governmental lack of attention with regard to the Pygmy peoples, during his field researches the writer found that all government departments that deal with social affairs, in Goma, Beni, Oicha, Bunia and Mambasa, confessed that they did not have any records related to the Pygmy peoples. All the information they had about the Pygmy peoples were some reports from the NGOs involved in the Pygmy issues, to which they referred all those who needed more information about the Mbuti Pygmies (cf. NP3 2010; NP18 2012). As the Mbuti Pygmies are fully part of the group of the Pygmy peoples, they are not spared any of the government’s lack of attention towards the Pygmy peoples in general. On the contrary, they are also considered to be one of the virtually unknown people groups of the DRC.

3.5.5 The Pygmy peoples as unknown people groups

Having lived among the local people, knowing their languages, understanding their customs and cultures, sharing their experiences, and worshipping with them, the Western missionaries greatly helped to know the peoples among whom they were working. Thanks to these Western missionaries and through their writings amongst many other things, many people in the DRC and elsewhere have succeeded in discovering who they themselves are, and who

their neighbours are. Missionary achievements, such as the establishment of denominations (Christian Communities), schools, health centres and hospitals, and many other forms of development, have really opened the doors for interaction and exchanges that help people to know one another inside the country and abroad. Up until now, however, the Pygmy peoples who have had less or no interaction with the Western missionaries are still not well known. The little that is known about the Pygmy people in the DRC is merely the result of courses in human geography taught in primary and secondary schools, films and books, and the few occasions of exchanges of trade in the areas where these people live. There are many who have never seen a Pygmy face to face, even in the areas where the Pygmy peoples are living.

Pygmies are still considered to be mythical people, and this belief makes the effort of mission encounters with them difficult. Because the Pygmy people are still not well known, even among Christians, those who have attempted to evangelise them have not often found a right and understandable evangelical message for them. Two examples, among many others, can help to understand the consequences of the misconceptions about the Pygmy peoples. Firstly, in the Ituri forest, a couple of evangelists saw all the Mbuti Pygmies to whom they were preaching the gospel fleeing from them suddenly, because in their preaching they said that they were bringing the “good news of Jesus Christ who died on the cross”. According to the Scriptures, there was no mistake in the message they were preaching. But a problem arose as a result of the evangelists’ lack of knowledge of the culture of the Mbuti Pygmies. For the Mbuti and all the Pygmy peoples in general, death is never good news, but on the contrary, death is the worst and greatest evil that exists. When one of them dies, therefore, as said in chapter two, the MPC to which the dead person belonged must immediately move from that place.

The second example consists of a Roman Catholic priest who, one Good Friday in Boende, in Equateur province, gathered together a number of Twa

Pygmies, among whom some were baptised by him. In his preaching, the priest recommended that on Good Friday no one should eat meat. This is indeed a standard religious rule in the Roman Catholic Church. As, however, meat is the basic daily food of the Pygmy peoples, the preaching of the priest became an unacceptable word of God for them. As a result, the entire group of Pygmies withdrew from the priest forever, and he suddenly found himself alone. All other attempts to gather the Twa Pygmies have been vain, since the priest was considered to be one who, along with his church, wanted the Pygmy people to eat no meat, which for them meant to deny them the means of life.

To know a people does not consist simply of knowing how they look and the place where they live, but it further implies having a good idea about their culture and ways of life, their worldviews, and the way these contexts and values can be addressed. The historical accounts, books and the media can enable to have a good idea about exotic peoples, but ultimately the face-to-face encounters remain the only effective way of knowing clearly about other people. Indeed, even reading the writings of those who have collected primary data by means of personally living among a given people group, such as Schebeta, Turnbull, Duffy, Bailey, and Wheeler did among the Mbuti Pygmies in the Ituri forest, cannot fully assist one in knowing that population group properly with regard to finer details. It cannot even help one to have the same affection and compassionate feelings towards that group of people in the way those who have physically stayed with them had. A movie and a live event never have the same impact on human feeling. So, as far as there are no true face-to-face encounters with the Pygmy peoples, they will remain unknown and unrecognised, and will continue to be considered as the “others” or “outsiders”.

3.5.6 The Pygmy peoples as the “others” or “outsiders”

While the non-Pygmy communities of the DRC, a country where more than 460 ethnic groups are sharing an almost common cultural heritage,⁷¹ the Pygmy groups are almost outside this circle, and their otherness appears to be noticeable. In the same way, the Pygmy peoples are almost completely outside the life of the Congolese society as well as that of the Church. The Pygmy groups, among all other Congolese peoples, are thus considered as the outsiders. They are seldom paid any attention. One would be tempted to think that in the DRC there are the “people”, i.e., the non-Pygmies people, and the “others” or “outsiders”, i.e., the Pygmy people. This is not just an impression but a poignant reality that dates back to historical times. If the non-Pygmy Congolese are increasingly being released from the sad side of their past, for the Pygmy peoples the whole past still weighs heavily on their shoulders. The social challenges they face, both internally and externally, which have been examined in the previous chapter are an obvious proof of their unique status that deserves an appropriate therapy.

The “otherness status” of some people in the world is a reality that needs to be talked about. In philosophy, for instance, Fichte helps to understand the concept of “otherness” by opposing it to that of “ego” or “I”. He considers the otherness as the “not-I”, the “non-ego”, and suggests that there should be an encounter between the “I” and the “not-I”, or the self and the otherness. For him, consciousness is a dynamic encounter between the “I” and the “not-I,” in which the self and the world are interactively defined and realized (Fuss 2006).

Fichte’s theory is important in mission ventures in the sense that the implementation of mission relies basically on the encounter between the

⁷¹ The almost common cultural heritage of the non-Pygmy peoples can be considered through the ways of life that generally imply the social organisation found within organised villages and towns, dependence on agriculture, trade exchanges and remunerated works, and the sharing of the same religious, cultural, socio-political, and economic advantages.

missionary, who is the “I”, and the people to whom he/she is sent, that is, the “others” or the “not-I”. Consequently, a non-encounter between the “I” and the “not-I” involves the exclusion of one another, what Volf (1996:125) considers as the “empty space of neutrality”. The “I” does not take an initiative towards the “not-I”, and vice-versa. This courteous phrase of Volf, the “empty space of neutrality”, completely fits the exclusion relationships between the Pygmy peoples and the non-Pygmy peoples in the DRC, where the term “exclusion” is not explicitly in use. In the same way, no one says that he/she excludes the other, but the reality is that the non-Pygmy peoples exclude the Pygmy peoples and the latter react by excluding the former.

About global mission, on the other hand, Arias says that the central question is that of the “other”, and that the recognition of the other is an opportunity not for fighting with him, but embracing him and mixing with him (like the wheat and the tares) until the kingdom of God embraces all humans. Regarding the encounter with other cultures, the effort for global mission today can be assessed with regard to the following questions posed by Snyder (2001:60), “How do we deal with ‘the other’, those we name ‘non-Christian’, ‘pagan’, ‘unbeliever’, ‘unreached’ or ‘unchurched’? How do we treat them – as objects or subjects? As people to battle with or to embrace? As folk to be conquered or to be loved and accepted as companions in God’s mission?” In an attempt to answer these questions, Karecki (2000:10-11 cf. 2002:140) suggests that the “other” should be seen not as a problem or an enemy, but as a mystery. She then holds:

We need to be aware of our perceptions of people and how we respond to them. Differences do not have to be barriers if we see them in the context of the other as mystery, as holy ground, which we must approach with respect. Differences in people do not have to be threatening if we see the other person as an image of God who is a revelation of some aspect of God that is not in us. Diversity is built into the nature of the created world and we are part of that diversity. It is our differences that make us interdependent because none of us has all the gifts

and talents necessary to build societies that reflect the values of the Gospel. (Karecki 2000:10-11)

In the light of Karecki's response to the issue of the otherness, it is worthwhile to point out that no one should consider Christian mission as his/her own business that he/she must share only with the people of his/her choosing. Mission is, above all, God's business, and everyone is called to be both a recipient and a bearer of it. No one can really be a mission bearer without first having been a mission recipient. If missionaries play the role of the "I" or mission bearers, it is simply because they have been made mission recipients. So their chief role is to make the others mission recipients so that they also can be mission bearers. If the Pygmy peoples are the "others" because of their slight height and the fact that they live within an environment where they depend only on what a day's roaming in the forests offers them through hunting and gathering, the non-Pygmy peoples are also the "others" because of their struggle for socio-economic development and political ambitions that create in them the "empty space of neutrality". The status of the Pygmy peoples as the "others" or "outsiders" is thus a twofold consequence of the neglect with regard to mission that the Pygmy peoples in the DRC have experienced.

Because the Pygmy peoples are considered to be the "others" or "outsiders", they likely are also to be the "unreached people groups" in the DRC, that is, the "domestic unreached people groups".

3.5.7 The Pygmy peoples as "domestic⁷² unreached people groups"

As a result of the consequences of the neglect with regard to mission towards the Pygmy peoples, namely the negative attitude of the churches towards the Pygmy

⁷² When churches (Christians) in the DRC talk about "unreached peoples", they often refer to faraway people and foreigners or non-evangelised outside population groups. Here the term "domestic unreached people groups" is used in opposition to this misconception about the concept of unreached population groups.

peoples, the Pygmy peoples' mistrust towards the Bantu, the lack of minimum socio-political development among the Pygmy peoples, the government's inattention towards the Pygmy peoples, the fact that the Pygmy peoples remain as unknown people groups, and the fact that the Pygmy peoples are considered as the "others" or "outsiders", the Pygmy peoples may also be considered to be "domestic unreached people groups" in the DRC. This is not to be understood with regard to the Almighty God who is, by His very nature, omnipresent and omniscient, and the one who calls everyone to Him, but rather with regard to a complete understanding of Christian mission. This is just another way of spelling out the fact that, in the DRC, the Pygmy peoples do not profit from the advantages of mission. Furthermore, as Lewis (1994:8.7) says, "Unreached does not mean unreachable".

If the Pygmy peoples are considered to be part of unreached people groups in the DRC, one should explore the meaning of the concept of "unreached people groups" more broadly. By so doing, the assumption that the Pygmies are "unreached" people can be validated. To this end the following questions need to be posed and examined: How does the meaning of the concept of "unreached people groups" affects the idea about mission and its purposes? Why is it important to make use of the concept of "unreached people groups" in connection with the Pygmy peoples of the DRC? What is thus the origin of this concept of "unreached people groups" in missiological discourses?

The concept of "unreached peoples" stems from an understanding about the implementation of the Lord's Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) according to which the gospel should be carried to all nations. The development of this concept took place in the climate of anti-colonialism following World War II, through which an identity crisis occurred when nationalistic church leaders, especially in Africa, called for a moratorium on missions. In responding to this call for a moratorium, Evangelical leaders within the Lausanne movement made use of the new concept of "unreached people groups" (Haynes 1994:133-4).

This meant that, despite the moratorium claimed in relation to traditional mission-fields, mission was still needed for those who were not yet reached. In line with this actuality, Edward R. Dayton, one of the editors of the directory called “Unreached Peoples” that emerged from the Strategy Working Group (SWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation (LCWE), holds that:

The Church is multiplying its witness around the world. On every continent men and women are gossiping the gospel to their friends, to their neighbours, to the village or city within which they live. However, in addition to these local witnesses, God has set apart certain men and women to go forth from where they live to reach those villages, towns, and cities where there is no witness. (Wagner & Dayton 1978:15)

Shenk (1984:67) puts it in other words when he says, “The Great Commission forces us to face outwards, beyond the concerns and welfare of our own congregations”. In emphasising this, Lausanne rejected the idea that, because a church had been planted in a nation-state, the church worldwide had fulfilled its evangelistic mandate for the peoples within that country. For this reason, Lausanne called the Church back to its primary mandate of proclaiming the gospel to all peoples everywhere (Wagner & Dayton 1981:25-6). Accordingly, the first objective of Lausanne is, “To advance biblical evangelization as reflected in the Lausanne Covenant among all the peoples, including those unreached people groups where the church has not taken root indigenously” (Haynes 1994:144).⁷³

Closely related to the above, the phrase “unreached peoples” was first popularised at the International Congress of World Evangelisation held at Lausanne in 1974, which, in connection with the preceding Berlin World Congress on Evangelisation (1966), recognised that over three billion people had not yet heard about Jesus and responded to his love (Wagner & Dayton 1978:7). So the term “unreached peoples” derived from the preceding concept of

⁷³ Read also Dayton & Wilson (1984:129).

“Remaining Unevangelized Peoples (RUPs)” advocated by Leslie G. Brierly in 1941, the writings of Donald McGavran in 1955 through which he called attention to “People Movements”, the conference of Pierce Beaver in 1972 on the “Gospel and Frontier Peoples” (Wilson 2000:745), and the more recent concepts of “hidden people group” or “frontier people group” coined by Ralph D. Winter, who claimed that the vast number of people groups within which there was virtually no Christian group were “unreached”. The term “unreached peoples” can thus be defined as a people or group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians capable of evangelising them without outside assistance (Sookhdeo 1987:146; Haynes 1994:13). Similarly, the Strategy Working Group (SWG) of Lausanne defined the “unreached” as the result of the absence of a viable Church capable of carrying on the group’s evangelisation (Wilson 2000:745). From then on, the SWG of Lausanne sought to absorb this valuable concept as it further developed a hierarchy of unreached peoples in four stages between 0 and 20 per cent (Wagner & Dayton 1981:23-7), as follows:

- if there are virtually no Christians within a population group, it is a *hidden group*;
- if there are as many as 1%, it is an *initially reached group*;
- if there are up to 10%, it is a *minimally reached group*; and
- from 10 to 20%, it is *probably reached people*.

Beyond these four stages, specifically, from 20% and more, the population group should be considered as normally reached and evangelised.

On the worldwide level, most of those who are identified as the “unreached people groups” live in the vast area called “10/40 Window”. The 10/40 Window, along with many other Christian networks for the World

Evangelisation such as the “AD 2000 and Beyond Movement”, the “GCOWE (Global Consultation on the World Evangelisation)”, the “Joshua Project 2000”, the “MARC (Mission Advanced Research and communication Centre)”, is an innovation that aims at exploring the concept of “unreached people groups”. Far from intending to deal with all these Christian networks,⁷⁴ the focus here is rather an attempt to help create a better understanding of the new concept of “10/40 Window” and its origin.

At the 1989 Lausanne II Conference in Manila, Luis Bush put forward a new orientation on the number of unevangelized countries that he called the “Resistant Belt”. In 1990 the so-called Resistant Belt referred to those regions of the eastern hemisphere located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator, a vast area that was purported to have the highest level of socio-economic challenges and the least access to the Christian message and Christian resources in the world. Luis’ wife, Doris, recommended renaming the “Resistant Belt” the “10/40 Window” (Roux 2011:43-45 cf. Wikipedia).

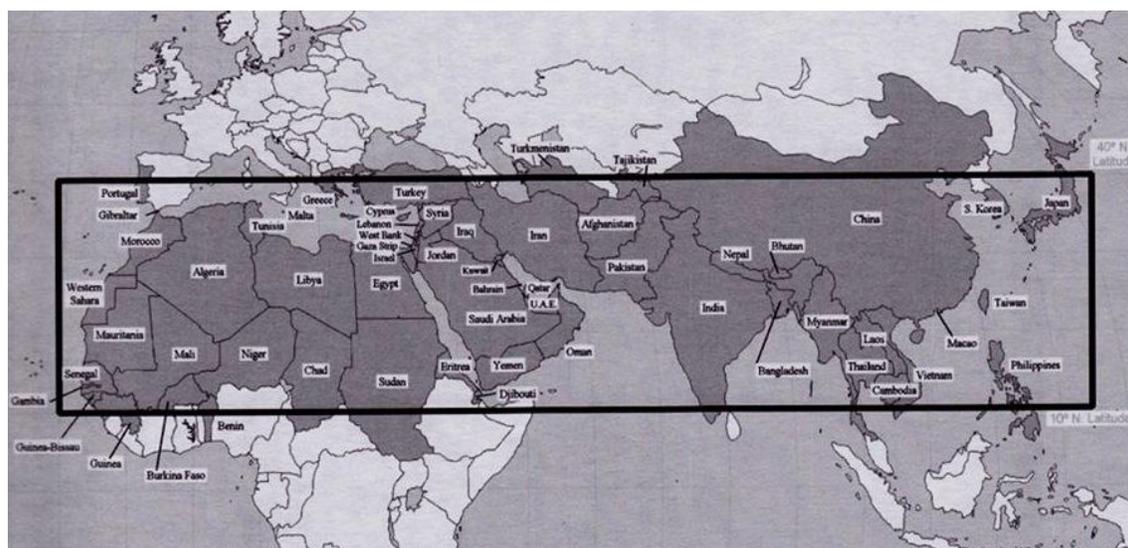


Figure 3.17: The 10/40 Window

Source: Moreau, Corwin & McGee (2004:296)

⁷⁴ For more information about the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, the GCOWE, the Joshua 2000 Project, and the MARC, read Moreau (2000).

Before being called "Resistant Belt," the Islamic portions of this region, as well as selected unreached Buddhist and Hindu areas, were referred to as the "unoccupied fields" by Zwemer (1911:260). Indeed, the idea has evolved from this concept to the present "10/40 Window". As such, the concept of "10/40 Window" highlights three main characteristics. Firstly, as a vast region north of the Equator that includes over 60 countries,⁷⁵ the 10/40 Window is home to the world's non-Christian religions, namely Islam, including 36 countries with over 1.2 billion Muslims; Hinduism, including two countries with over 1.1 billion Hindus; and Buddhism which includes seven countries with 367 million Buddhists.⁷⁶ Secondly, the 10/40 Window is home to the poorest of the poor in the world. The coincidence between poverty and the great majority of non-evangelised peoples in this vast area, led Bryant Myers to conclude, "The poor are lost and the lost are poor". Thirdly, there has been a lack of missionaries working among the peoples of the 10/40 Window. In this regard, Roux maintains that fewer than 2% of the churches go to reach the peoples of the Window. Probably because of the three religious blocs in this belt, namely Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, the famous 10/40 Window has been considered to be a "resistant belt" (Love 2000:938; Roux 2011:43-44).

When the churches in the so-called Christian countries pay too much attention to the virtual "10/40 Window", there is a great risk of shying away

⁷⁵ According to <http://www.ad2000.org/1040coun.htm>, as shown in *Figure 3.17*, the countries within the 10/40 Window are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chad, China, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Gibraltar, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Korea North, Korea South, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Macau, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Western Sahara, and Yemen.

⁷⁶ The concept of "10/40 Window" ought to be used by taking into account the following remark: the well-known Christian countries such as the South Korea, the Philippines, and Portugal are included within the Window, while the largest world Muslim country, i.e., Indonesia, is out of it.

For additional information about the 10/40 Window, read through <http://www.gmi.org/products/maps/1040-window/>; "Definitions" on <http://www.joshuaproject.net/definitions.php>; and the "Global Frontier Missions" on <http://www.globalfrontiermissions.org/unreached.html>.

from identifying so many domestically unevangelized people groups. The most paradoxical case is indeed that of the DRC where, on the one hand, churches are almost introverted, focusing too much on their own ethnic groups in a maintenance manner; and, on the other hand, there are churches initiating mission outreaches in some Muslim countries within the “10/40 Window” and forgetting the Pygmy peoples who are also needy among and around them. With reference to this paradox, can the Pygmy groups in the DRC be considered to be unreached people groups? Does one have to understand the concept of “unreached people groups” only in link with the virtual “10/40 Window”?

Coming back to the working definitions that highlighted the lack of indigenous churches and church leaders capable of evangelising groups without outside assistance as the characteristics of an unreached people group, the Outbound Life (2010) adds to these shortcomings the lack of Bibles in local languages, a lack of access to Christian radio, television, and books. To the definitions that focus only on spiritual aspects, the Outbound Life provides a very significant reminder that enables to assume that all those who do not have any access to education, health care, justice, and all the other social facilities, are, and remain, unreached people groups. Being a “reached people group” should mean being satisfied at least in terms of both spiritual and socio-political needs, because salvation according to Jesus Christ involves the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. Otherwise, how one can, for example, read the Scriptures without having been taught to read? In line with Jeganathan (2000:163-164), mission focus on both spiritual and physical needs means that the *word* and the *deed*, or *proclamation* and *participation*, are inseparable.

Considering the various challenges that the Pygmy peoples are facing with regard to their culture and lifestyle within the forests, and the way they do not have access to any Christian resources or governmental social facilities, there is no doubt that one can assume that they are really the “unreached people group” within their own country. As such, the Pygmy peoples are the domestic

unreached people groups in the DRC who deserve missionary attention. As Johnstone and Mandryk (2001:201) emphasise, “The Pygmy peoples have long been despised and humiliated by Congolese and largely neglected by indigenous denominations, yet about 30% are nominally Christians.” Considering the fact that nothing among the above criteria of being reached people groups has been achieved, even the statistic of about 30% nominal Christians among the Pygmy peoples is very questionable. Seen within their natural setting, the Pygmy peoples, and especially the Mbuti Pygmies of the northeast DRC, are still living in a very primitive state, culturally, socially, and spiritually. Some attempts by the Bantu of encountering these Mbuti Pygmies have revealed themselves to be more frustrating confrontations than genuinely attractive attempts that could help these peoples to decide to become Christians.

If the “10/40 Window” is considered as a “resistant belt” because of the three prevailing strong religions of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, the Pygmy peoples should not be considered as “resistant people groups”, because they do not all together belong to any prevailing religion or political persuasion. Rather, they should be considered to be merely a “domestic unreached population group”. In support of this, Wilson (2000:746) says, “While ‘they’ are unreached (i.e., no such church exists) the nature of our obedience calls us to obedient going. Until then, ‘they’ are and will remain ‘unreached people groups’.” However, as each people group is unique before God, the Pygmy peoples will be reached only when they are approached as a unique population group with their own culture and sense of unity (cf. Lewis 1994:8.17). This is what the missional encounter that is being studied here is all about.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has briefly surveyed the history of missions in DRC, trying to find out the ways the Mbuti Pygmies have or have not benefited from the Christian mission. It has been seen that, though the Pygmy peoples have been of a very little interest within the entire mission enterprise in DRC, there has been an attempt at mission among them. Unfortunately, this mission attempt ended up quickly as a result of an obvious lack of care that led to many challenges among these peoples. Some historical reasons for such mission carelessness towards the Pygmy peoples were identified.

Firstly, it was observed that from the start, the mission enterprise in the DRC was involved in both evangelical goals and colonial economic ambitions to such an extent that the latter seemed to absorb the former. Because of their physical features, lifestyle and culture, the Pygmy peoples as a whole did not qualify to be part of the colonial empire within which the early Christian missions were emerging. In the DRC there was the slave trade, the extensive exploitation and horrific cruelty of people, the division of people into artificial social classes of the *évolués* and the *indigènes*, the colonial goals consisting of civilising the Congolese, and the training and education of some chosen individuals, but the Pygmy peoples have not experienced any of these. In line with the above, can one assume that the advantages and the disadvantages of colonisation provided a prerequisite for a people to benefit from Christian mission? This is, of course, a very challenging issue for Christian mission in the DRC that should be tackled.

Secondly, the early Christian missions in DRC gave birth to churches that are compliant copies to those missions in all things, worldviews, methods and strategies, visions for mission, liturgy, etc. If, for instance, a given mission Society was dedicated to working among a population group in a given area, the church that grew out of that mission Society will also limit all its mission efforts

to work with the same population group in that same area. This means that the expansion of the church in other areas will not necessarily target the natives of those areas but rather the members of the same population group who have migrated there. This is another kind of challenge to Christian mission in the DRC, because the population groups that have not been targeted remain non-targeted, as if mission was to be limited to a few chosen people groups and areas. Against this way of perpetuating the old perceptions of mission, Aubert (2005) says that mission can no longer be thought in terms of colonisation or neo-colonialism, but rather in terms of challenges because of globalisation. In this respect, Covington-Ward (2007:73) makes use of a Kongo proverb says: “*Nsinsa wa ngoma wusobele, soba makimu maku* (When the rhythm of the drum changes, change your dance).” This means that the current churches in the DRC need to change their “dance” in terms of reaching out their neighbouring “unreached Pygmy peoples”.

Thirdly, the particular and unique challenges that the Pygmy peoples are facing within their natural environment and with regard to the other peoples are a vivid proof that they are a very large and empty mission field. This is indeed a paradoxical issue. According to Molyneux (2000:267), the DRC, despite all its socio-political and economic problems, has a church vitality which puts the country within the top ten non-Western nations sending out their own missionaries for cross-cultural ministry both within and beyond their borders. If Molyneux’s point of view is verified, why do churches in the DRC seem to shy away from mission to the Pygmy peoples? Are these churches aware of the opportunity for mission among the needy Pygmy peoples? If so, how should these churches carry out mission among these Pygmy peoples?

It is with the aim of tackling this major challenge and all the other challenges to Christian mission in the DRC that the following chapter deals with the issue of mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology.

Chapter Four

THINKING CHRISTIAN MISSION AS ENCOUNTER AND MISSIOLOGY AS ENCOUNTEROLOGY

4.1 Introduction

After the exploration of the context of the Mbuti Pygmies and the historical overview on Christian mission among them in chapters two and three, it is now appropriate to devote this chapter to a theological reflection on mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology. This is in line with the assumption that the approach of Christian mission as encounter derives from God himself who, from the beginning, encounters human beings. Because God created human beings in his image and after his likeness, God was willing to keep in touch with them, even after the fall in Eden. God's initiative of encountering humankind is, in fact, what brings depth to Jesus Christ whose face-to-face encounters with humans were the practical approach through which he announced the good news of God's Kingdom and served and redeemed people. Consequently, the four Gospels and the book of Acts refer to Jesus as a missionary whose mission activities were deliberately devoted to encountering people within their daily lives, cultures⁷⁷ and contexts.

Encountering people was also the essential missionary approach of the apostle Paul during his entire ministry undertaken in the four missionary journeys. Paul encountered not only different people in different countries,

⁷⁷ Even though Jesus worked mostly within his Jewish culture, he was also concerned about foreign people such as the Samaritans (John 4 cf. Mark 7:25-30).

cultures, and contexts, but also many difficulties, to such an extent that he has the right to claim to be the imitator of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1).

In order to undertake this theological reflection on mission in a more understandable and practical manner with regard to the case study of the Mbuti Pygmies, this chapter consists of three main sections. First, the chapter explores the overall understanding of the concept of mission as encounter by underscoring its general and missiological meaning. Next, it puts forward the theological foundations for thinking mission as encounter, and it ends by drawing attention to some of the practical implications of thinking mission as encounter.

4.2 Understanding the Concept of Mission as Encounter

As a key concept of this study, the term “mission as encounter” needs to be examined in order to discover whether it is worthwhile building a missiological theory on it that could help in the perspective of reaching out to the Mbuti Pygmies. This section, therefore, consists of defining the term “encounter” and the way it is applied to the Mbuti Pygmies in the study, and then it provides a basis for its missiological usage.

4.2.1 The term encounter

In the Britannica Online Encyclopedia, the verb to encounter means to meet someone as an adversary or enemy, to engage in conflict with, to come upon face-to-face, to come upon or experience especially unexpected difficulties, to meet especially by chance. The idea of meeting, followed by a word or phrase that shows the purpose of the action, appears to be the predominant and common idea, which runs through all the four meanings of the verb “to encounter”. This would mean that “to encounter” is closely synonymous to “to meet”.

From an analysis made by Mijolla-Mellor (2005) in this regard, the term “encounter” designates the coming together of two elements, fortuitous or not, which have an impact on each other. This notion is central to the theories of Aulagnier (1975:2) who wrote that, "To live is to experience in a continuous way what results from the situation of encounter". This way of understanding the notion of encounter in the wider sense of the word concerns everything that has the character of an event, when it seems as if it is not predetermined (Mijolla-Mellor 2005). From this perspective, one may conclude that whatever the motives and ends, the relationships of human beings are fundamentally encounters. Human beings relate to one another through, and by means of, encounters. However, the real issue remains relative to the way those encounters are lived among humans. Do they take the form of confrontation or interaction, exploitation or mutual assistance, dispute or solidarity, discrimination or tolerance, separation because of differences or living together in spite of differences, egoism or romanticism, imposed or heartfelt and wanted encounters? The answer to these questions naturally determines the nature of the encounter and the way it is experienced among human beings.

Mijolla-Mellor (2005) tries to place the initial event of an encounter through Aulagnier’s writings in the following clear terms:

Piera Aulagnier, however, accorded the notion of encounter a more fundamental meaning, that of a permanent rapport established between the body and the psyche, or between the subject's psyche and that of the mother. The relation between the psyche and the world is born at the time of the primordial event of the encounter.

Aulagnier opted to situate the inaugural encounter at the beginnings of the rapport between the mouth and the breast, a prototype of what she called the "complementary object-zone" (1975/2001, p.19). "At the moment when the mouth meets the breast it meets and swallows a first mouthful of the world" (p.15). The representation that the psyche has of itself will be a function of further encounters, either the encounter of the psyche with the body, on the one hand, or with the productions of the maternal psyche on the other.

In concurring with Mijolla-Mellor, the quintessence of the concept of encounter can be perceived also through the fact that life originates from the encounter, is shaped through it, and that it needs to be lived as a result of it. In this sense, Gaston Bachelard maintains that “the encounter creates us” (Buber 1969:9). If then life comes from, and depends on, the encounter, the notion of the encounter is twofold: the starting point and the end point, that is to say, the centre and the periphery. Through a stirring speech on the notion of the encounter with the other to the “Peace Congress Movement” in France on November 11, 2005, Albert Jacquard (2005) described the two dimensions of the encounter by highlighting the dynamic between the “I” and “others”. From the assumptions that human beings share the same origin and nature with all that exist in the universe, Jacquard pondered on what the specificity of the human would be. As an answer to this pertinent issue, he said:

But what is the human specificity? Our uniqueness is that we are able, not only to be, but we are aware of being. What does "to be able to be aware of being" mean? A human being is able to say "I". ... If I am able to say "I", where does that come from? It is not my genetic heritage that allowed me to say "I". If I am able to be aware of being, it is because I encountered the others. I was made of all the encounters that happened to me since my birth, or even before; the encounter with my mother, the encounter with my family, then the encounter with all the others. Finally, a human adventure is a series of encounters. (Jacquard 2005)

In the same vein of the philosophy of the encounter, Martin Buber talks about the “I and Thou”. By the relationship “I and Thou”, Buber (1969) means that human beings relate to human beings. They are humans only among the humans. Prefacing Buber’s legendary book entitled “I and Thou”, Bachelard (Buber 1969:10) makes an interesting comment on the relationship between the “I” and the “Thou”, saying that the “Thou” is the closest and the most fundamental attribute of the “I”. For him, “I am a person if I join with a person. By detaching myself from my brother, I wipe out myself. By losing the interest of my brother,

I abandon God.” This means that the encounter between the “I” and the “Thou” or one person and another, is fundamental to being a person. In this sense, Buber (1969) talks about reciprocity, the relationship involving mutual exchange. In sum, Buber shows that the encounter between the “I” and the “Thou” creates the community of human beings, because one cannot say “We” without having said “Thou”. From the preceding understanding, one can maintain that the encounter among people produces life, knowledge and community. Consequently, human beings are responsible to one another in all the aspects of life.

"Encounter" is an overarching term, which is full of diverse meanings according to different contexts in which it is used. As is shown in the chart⁷⁸ below, the word “encounter” has a large variety of synonyms.

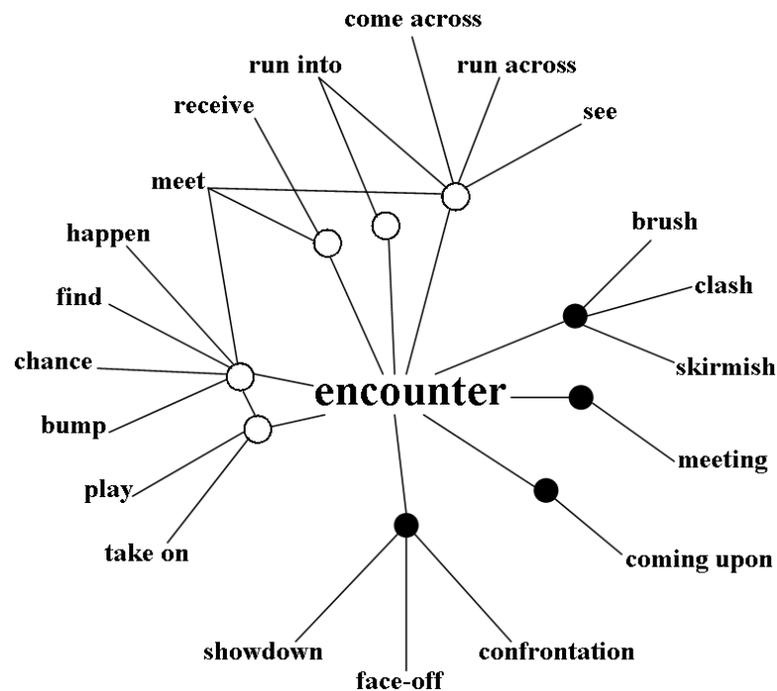


Figure 4.18: The term “encounter” and its different synonyms

Source: Adapted from “Encounter”. <http://www.visualthesaurus.com>

⁷⁸ Without intending to comment on the different synonyms and links of the term “encounter” within the chart, a work that should be done in a more appropriate semantic study, the following chart is just a panoramic view through which the different occurrences and the importance of the keyword “encounter” are highlighted.

Each one of its synonyms also has many other meanings both linked to one another and to the root word “encounter”. This undoubtedly means that life, from birth to death, is a complex series of encounters and that human society itself is made up of all kinds of encounters. This study is, therefore, an attempt to identify the kind of encounter that should be applicable for the Mbuti Pygmies in terms of the Christian mission venture.

As the term “encounter” is used in this study in connection with the prospective missiological strategy that can be applied to the neglected and voiceless Mbuti Pygmies, such an effort can be understood through the neologism “encounterology”. In this way, mission can be thought as encounter and missiology as encounterology.

4.2.2 Which kind of encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies should be envisaged?

As discussed above and shown in *figure 4.18*, the concept of encounter consists of two main understandings, a positive understanding and a negative understanding. In *figure 4.18*, these two dimensions are shown by means of two colours, the white colour for the positive connotation of the term encounter with the central idea of meeting, and the black colour for its negative connotation with the central idea of confrontation, dispute and conflict. These two dimensions need to be highlighted clearly in order to justify the use of the concept of encounter through this study.

The assumption that encountering the Mbuti Pygmies is a challenge to Christian mission in the DRC does not mean that there have never been encounters between these neglected peoples and the non-Pygmy peoples including Christians. There have been, and still are, encounters with the Mbuti Pygmies, but always within the framework of a negative connotation. In fact, most of the challenges facing the Pygmy peoples in general and the Mbuti

Pygmies in particular, result from confrontation, conflicts, dispute, discrimination, and the spirit of exploitation, all of which constitute the negative dimension of the encounter. Focusing on the positive dimension of the encounter in this study is also, therefore, a way of remedying this specific problem. That is why in the following section the positive dimension of the concept of encounter is dealt with as a missiological understanding of the term. Even there, however, the possibility of confrontation is still present but with no destructive effects. Indeed, encountering peoples of quite different cultures from one's own is very often a matter of confrontation.

4.2.3 Missiological understanding of the term encounter

The term encounter is also packed with meaning in many areas of study, such as history, sociology, religion, and missiology. In missiology, for instance, the verb “to encounter” involves the intentional meetings with other people, including the expected or unexpected cultural shocks. As such, the mission enterprise during the last centuries has been a real venture of encounters with the exotic peoples all over the world, through which difficulties and successes have been experienced, and confrontations and face-to-face meetings have taken place.

Apparently, the verb “to encounter” denotes the goal of the action of being sent, from which the term mission derives. The fact, therefore, of being sent would logically mean to encounter somebody else or something outside oneself. In this respect, Jesus sent out the twelve disciples not only to encounter the lost sheep of the house of Israel as individuals, but also to encounter their distressing situation through healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and casting out demons (Matt 10:5-8). Mission and encounter are thus typically two complementary concepts. Karecki (2009:32, 34), therefore, concludes that “mission indeed begins with encounter”, and that “in each encounter we open

the way for the Reign of God”. Giussani (2006:91), on the other hand, has the same understanding as Karecki, and states the following:

The word “encounter” implies, first, something unexpected and surprising. Second, it implies something real, that really touches us, is of interest to our lives. Understood in that way, every encounter is unique and its determining circumstances will never again be repeated because each encounter is a particular example of the “voice that calls each one by name.” Every encounter is a great opportunity offered to our freedom by God’s mystery.

This means, in other words, that each encounter in which God is involved is a great and unique opportunity for mission. Mission starts, thus, with an encounter by means of God’s redemptive plan, which, of course, includes the contribution of human beings. Since the contributors to God’s redemptive plan are called missionaries, Nida (1978:7) agrees that efficient missionaries will always seek to penetrate the ways of life of those people among which they are called to work. Nida also maintains that it is only when the missionaries deeply integrate with the foreign culture that they will be able to announce the message of the new life. As regards human life in general, Christian mission involves a series of encounters, without which human life would be, or would remain, an empty package.

Though the term encounter means, among other meanings, confrontation in the sense of fighting, Christian mission encounter should not be confused with what Alan Tippett has called “power encounter” in missionary undertakings. For Tippett, the “power encounter” refers to a phenomenon commonly experienced by the peoples of the South Pacific as they converted to Christianity after a major confrontation that tested the power of their gods against that of the Christian God, resulting in an evident victory of the latter (Hesselgrave 2005:175; Kraft 2000:774-5). From then on, the concept of power encounter has been used in the missionary enterprise discourse as a paradigm for approaching indigenous and exotic peoples. To support such an approach to

mission, Warner (2000:904) wrote: “Evangelization is a kind of power encounter, and converts need to understand clearly that they are moving from one realm of spiritual power to another.” Wagner (2000:876) asserts also that the Pentecostal perception of God’s signs and wonders is that healings, deliverance, and power encounters are part of the gospel message.

While acknowledging that the power of the Holy Spirit⁷⁹ is the starting point and even a valid component of mission, the paradigm of power encounter, as that has been understood and applied in the fields of mission, is not free of criticism. Here the important thing is to avoid the danger that would consist of confusing the mission efforts to the mere emanation of signs and wonders, in other words, thinking that there where there is no visible manifestation of signs and wonders, there would not be any mission achievement. If it is written that signs or wonders will accompany those who believe (Mark 16:17-18), this does not mean that signs or wonders are the obligatory vanguard of any mission action. Is not the conversion of those who come visibly or secretly to Jesus Christ also a sign of God’s wonders?

The concept of power encounter connotes another paradigm, which is “With Christ to others”.⁸⁰ As a consequence of this latter concept, missions have become dramas within which two kinds of role have been played, the role of missionaries considered to be bearers of divine grace, and the role of heathens considered as empty containers that should be filled by the missionaries. Actually, the “With Christ to Others” approach to mission practice is likely part of what Verkuyl considers to be the imperialist motive of mission (Bosch 1991:5). This approach is also reminiscent of the medieval Crusades that were a

⁷⁹ On this issue, Newbigin (1989:119) believes that God is acting in the power of his Spirit, doing mighty works, creating signs of a new age, working secretly in the hearts of men and women to draw them to Christ. Moreover, it was recognised in the Conference of the IMC of San Antonio 1989 that the Holy Spirit is the creative power in mission (Zorn 2001:218).

⁸⁰ Among those who conceive Christian mission as going *with Christ to others*, is the South Hill Christian Church (SHCC) that maintains this approach to mission in its Mission Statement and Motto. Cf. <http://shccweb.org/477211.ihtml>.

series of “Holy Wars” launched by the European Christian states against the Moslems, against which Raymond Lulle died as a martyr for having pleaded for the conversion of Muslims through dialogue rather than through military force. Finally, this is a kind of an expansion model in mission endeavour.

Reflecting on the various models commonly used by Christians regarding the peoples of other faiths, Frederiks (2005:212-3) engages in a debate about the expansion model, pointing out that this latter model is capable of criticism both for its close association with power and its basically unilateral communication perception. For Frederiks, in the expansion model, the messenger has a pre-conceived message for the other, and the other is only a person to be evangelised. In addition, she makes it clear that there is no room for a real encounter with the other, as a person who already has a religion and has a grasp of God.

Against the power encounter and all other related paradigms, it should be noted that Christian mission is designed for all peoples (all the nations), and that it takes into account all their contexts, traditions, and cultures. As an alternative to the expansion model in mission, which is paralleled in the “Power Encounter” and in the “With Christ to Others”, Frederiks (2005:213-217) suggests four other practical models as worthy of missionary encounter, namely presence, *diakonia*, dialogue, and kenosis.

The model of “*diakonia*” stands for the fundamental choice of the church to identify itself with God’s ministry of reconciliation with the world in word, deed, and attitude. In this model, “the other”, Christian or not, is first of all conceived of as a person who is included in God’s mission of reconciliation and, therefore, a fellow human being to be served. The model of “presence” interprets witness as the silent testimony of living and working with, and among people in the name of Christ, as a sign of Christ’s involvement and presence in the world. The model of “dialogue” advocates an attitude of openness and respect to people of other faiths and the willingness of Christians to be

challenged and changed in the encounter with people of other faiths. This model sees the 'other' first of all as a fellow pilgrim in the journey of life. On this view, Spindler (2001:207) defines Christian mission as a way of encountering the other in order to launch a dialogue about salvation in the name of Christ. Jansen (2009:55), on the other hand, argues for the dialogue model, saying: "We need conversation and ongoing interaction with others, who live elsewhere and act otherwise, if we want to find Christ as the one who reconciles humanity." Finally, the model of "kenosis" means the ability to identify with the other person. This model enables people to establish contacts where contact is difficult or suspicious, and represents a willingness to be challenged and changed by the other in order to be with the other.

The four models of presence, *diakonia*, dialogue, and kenosis described above provide a clear and fundamental understanding of the notion of mission as encounter. These models involve the way the mission action among, and with, other peoples should take into account local ways of life, contexts and cultures. In so doing, an effective mission encounter is a way forward to prevent mission from being affected by the spirit of superficiality and of ethnocentrism that, in addition to anything else, engenders discrimination, prejudice, the superiority complex, and the stigmatization of the 'others'.

In short, the missiological understanding of the concept of encounter should unmistakably result in the conclusion that mission is by itself:

- an encounter with God himself through the Holy Spirit and the gospel;
- an encounter with the church as the one that is called on and sent out throughout the world to serve and bear faithful witness to the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ;
- an encounter with new realities, peoples, cultures, and contexts; and

- an encounter with the gospel itself that must shed light on one's own worldviews.

As such, mission as encounter can be attained only through a genuine comprehensive understanding of God's mission which is, in essence, the source of the mission of the church, the mission of the church itself, and the context within which mission takes place.

4.3 Theological Foundations for Thinking Mission as Encounter

Mission as encounter can be effectively conceptualised within the framework of God's mission the premise of which is God's revelation to humankind. If encountering humans has been the leading motive of God's mission, this reality should shed light on the nature of any participation in God's mission or *missio Dei*. To gain a better theological understanding of the concept of mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology, it is worth examining the revelation of God, the concept of *missio Dei*, the place of the Incarnation of Jesus in mission, the role of the Holy Spirit in mission, and the status of the church with regard to God's mission.

4.3.1 The revelation of God

God is not only the Creator of all that exists, but also the one who reveals himself to his creatures, especially to humankind. He is not a solitary God remote from his creation, but a God who shows deliberate solidarity with all the creation. The solidarity of God with humankind was expressed, from the start of creation, by the divine decision to create human beings in God's image and after his likeness (cf. Gen 1:26). This scriptural truth about God as the one who relates to human beings and who reveals himself certainly suggests the idea of

mission as encounter. Giussani (2006:91) is, therefore, right when he says that, “In the history of God’s kingdom the initial revelatory event is an encounter.”

Reflecting on the missionary nature of God’s revelation, Ahonen (2000:29-32) submits that most of the great religions based on revelation, except Buddhism, have the common belief that God created the world. The world, he goes on to say, did not come about by chance, but God in his wisdom created everything, in order that the entire creation depends on his will since he is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. While, however, in other religions, such as Islam, the relationship between the Creator and the creatures remains a distant one, because God (Allah) is considered to be only a supreme Power, the Almighty and Judge of all. In the Christian view of creation, the Creator is not a distant and solitary power, but a communal Creator. He is the only one God, between whose three persons there prevails a fellowship of life and love. In keeping with this view, “Creation means sharing this communion of life and love with his creatures. God does not remain somewhere far away, but in his love comes among his creatures and shares his love with them... The creation also tells of communion. The entire Trinity, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, was present and involved in creation” (Ahonen 2000:32).

Because God was willing to encounter humankind ever since the beginning, he exclusively created humankind in his image and after his likeness. This does not mean that God disliked other creatures, but, on the contrary, he appreciated them and declared them “to be good” (cf. Gen 1). Ahonen (2000:32-3) expresses more clearly God’s purpose regarding human beings in the following terms:

The God of love seeks and calls every human being into fellowship with him. God does not remain distant in his transcendence, but comes to where people are, revealing himself and sharing what is his. Without God’s own intervention and revelation, his real nature remains completely alien to human beings. The entire Christian faith, however, is based on the fact that God himself has drawn near to sinful humankind and revealed his nature in a comprehensive and

appropriate way. This revelation is much more than general information about the Divinity. (...) Revelation is not only knowledge, but primarily God's presence. God is himself present in his revelation. Revelation is encounter between God and man [sic]. Because the presupposition of revelation is that God himself comes near to a person and opens himself to him or her, revelation is called God's self-revelation.

It is interesting to notice, along with Ahonen, that God's revelation does not mean revealing all of the divine mysteries. In ordinary language, revelation means revealing something unclear in an exhaustive way when the parties involved know clearly what it is about. God's revelation, however, is by nature hidden. Even when God has revealed his character, God remains, to a great extent, hidden. Nevertheless, God's revelation is reliable and sufficient to enable human beings to find fellowship with God. In fact, the revelation of God contains a sufficient amount of knowledge about him for men and women to know who he is and what he demands of them (Ahonen 2000:33). So, even though God remains somewhat hidden, he has revealed himself more sufficiently through his own mission, the *missio Dei*.

4.3.2 The mission as *missio Dei*

In addition to God's revelation, the idea of mission as encounter is also founded on the understanding of mission as *missio Dei*. The theological Latin expression *missio Dei*, which literally means "the mission of God", has a very rich history in theological studies, especially in missiology. This key concept is, however, widely unknown by most Christians, and it has remained rather esoteric even within the theologians circles.

Renicks and Davis (2009) introduce the concept of *missio Dei* by highlighting that it perfectly sums up the perspective of the Bible and it explores and engages in God's mission as the foundation for the story of the Bible, the lens through which Christians relate to others cross-culturally, the centrepiece of

history, and the driving force for living "missionally" in whatever context Christians find themselves. Renicks and Davis also maintain that the term *missio Dei* enters into a deeper understanding of God through joining Him on the adventure of a lifetime. In support of these truths, Wright (2006:64) wrote, "There is one God at work in the universe and in human history, and ... this God has a goal, a purpose, [and] a mission that will ultimately be accomplished by the power of God's Word and for the glory of God's name. This is the mission of the biblical God."

In line with the above authors, it should be noted that the understanding of the key concept of *missio Dei* is a starting point to any missiological study. How far and why is the concept of *missio Dei* important in missiological research? Prior to answering this question, through which the core idea of the concept can be gained, it is worth examining the origins of the term *missio Dei* to begin with.

4.3.2.1 Origins of the term *missio Dei*

The origins of the concept of *missio Dei*, though not the exact words,⁸¹ may be traced to Karl Barth who, at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932, presented a paper stating that mission was not primarily the work of the church, but of God himself. Using the term *actio Dei*, Barth suggested that the Trinitarian relationship within the Godhead is the source of all mission. The following year, 1933, the German missiologist Karl Hartenstein expressed a view similar to that of Barth. Rather, however, than using the term *actio Dei*, the term that was coined and used by Barth, Hartenstein made use of his own term, the *missio Dei*, which means the mission of God (MacIlvaine III 2010:95-6). Though the term *missio Dei* was first used by Thomas Aquinas to describe the activity of the Triune God (cf. *Missio Dei* Essay; Hoffmeyer 2001:108; Flett 2010; Coutts 2011), its core idea in contemporary theological thought is

⁸¹ K. Barth used the term *actio Dei* from which Karl Hartenstein coined the phrase *missio Dei*.

attributed to Karl Barth whereas the phrase is attributable to Karl Hartenstein in response to Karl Barth.

A few years later, at the Tambaram meeting of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1938, a statement by the German delegation became another catalyst in the development of a new understanding of mission. As the Barthian influence relative to the new concept, however, became crucial, Karl Barth may be considered as the first clear proponent of the new theological paradigm, which broke radically with the preceding approaches to theology. Thereafter, the influence of the concept of *missio Dei* on missionary thinking in particular, and not just the term, surfaced clearly at the IMC of Willingen in 1952 and was developed theologically by the Lutheran theologian Georg Vicedom (Vicedom 1958; 1965). From then on, it has been recognised that mission derived from the very nature of God (cf. Bosch 1991:389-390 Bevans & Schroeder 2004:290).

Why has the concept of *missio Dei* signalled a major paradigm shift in mission thinking? Kim (2009:26) bears witness that:

The widespread acceptance of David Bosch's summary mission textbook, *Transforming Mission*, published in 1991, showed that the theology of *missio Dei* was acceptable across a broad Christian spectrum, including Evangelicals, liberals, traditional Protestants, Orthodox and Roman Catholics. It also introduced to a very wide audience the idea that mission constantly needed to be refined according to the context in which it was being done, and therefore should be understood as multi-dimensional.

For Ducker (2008), "The emergence of *missio Dei* as a theological concept cannot... be divorced from its historical context." Indeed, a long time before Willingen in 1952 and Karl Barth in 1932, mission was understood in a variety of ways. According to Bosch (1991:389), mission was understood either in soteriological terms, to save individuals from eternal damnation, or in cultural terms, to introduce peoples from the East and the South to the blessings and

privileges of the Christian West. Sometimes mission was defined salvation-historically, as the process by which the world – evolutionary or by means of a cataclysmic event – would be transformed into the kingdom of God. Moreover, mission was primarily perceived in ecclesiological terms, as the expansion of the church or of a specific denomination.

In the wake of Willingen, the immediate issues of greatest concern that contributed to the shift in the perception of mission were indeed the failures of the church relating to colonialism and ecclesiocentrism, and also the closure of missionary activities in China. Thus, considering ecclesiocentrism as the most compromising fact in thinking about mission, McKinzie (2010:9) says,

What the church expected to achieve in its missions was, through and through, too much about the church. We might characterize (or caricature) the worst of ecclesiocentrism this way: The church sends the church's missionaries to accomplish the church's mission, which is the expansion of the church and, implicitly, the achievement of the church's agenda.

On the same issue, Bosch (1991:370) states that:

Willingen began to flesh out a new model. It recognized that the church could be neither the starting point nor the goal of mission. God's salvific work precedes both church and mission. We should not subordinate mission to the church nor the church to mission; both should, rather, be taken up into the *missio Dei*, which now became the overarching concept. The *missio Dei* institutes the *missiones ecclesiae*. The church changes from being the sender to being the one sent.

The attempts to articulate mission in terms of the various models described above have led to shape the thinking about mission in a consensual⁸² way, which

⁸² It should be noted that the consensus about the new paradigm of *missio Dei* is not totally free from disagreements. According to Vermeulen (2002), this paradigm raises an apparent claim for the primacy of mission over ecclesiology, which is hugely difficult for Roman Catholics and Orthodox Churches. Thereupon, Ducker (2008:2) retorts that even though

is the *missio Dei*. As such (Laing 2011:223), the *missio Dei* concept has shifted understandings of the origin and source of mission, and it is, therefore, more correct to speak of mission in the singular, reflecting divine agency, than in the plural, reflecting human agency. In light of the preceding, Love (2010:37) concludes: “*Missio Dei* is the name given by theologians to the conception and practice of mission in a post-colonial world.” Henceforward, the issue is no longer that of seeking the meaning of the *missio Dei* as a term, but rather, its place in the development of the missiological debate.

4.3.2.2 *Missio Dei* in missiological debate

The concept of *missio Dei*, which is embraced by virtually all Christian persuasions, launched an interesting theological debate since Willingen 1952, not only about the definition of mission, but also about its origin and especially its relationship with the church. Over time, these three aspects of the missiological debate have greatly influenced the theory and practice of mission.

Regarding the meaning and origin of mission, mission was defined in relation to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, for the simple reason that it derives from the very nature of God. It was understood, as Reilly (1978:136-7) describes it, as God’s own ongoing process, which is Trinitarian in its initiation, Trinitarian in its realisation, and Trinitarian in its fulfilment. For this reason, mission is not something that occurred once in history, but rather a process that continues in history under the direction of the Holy Spirit to its

missiologists of different traditions will continue to disagree on the precise definition of the term *missio Dei*, the core components can be seen to include the following:

- The original impetus of mission comes from God himself. This makes mission a theocentric process rather than an ecclesiocentric one;
- The missionary impulse stems from and reflects God’s intrinsic nature;
- This nature is Triune, and each element of the Trinity is missional;
- Other agents (the church, individuals, and organisations) may have the privilege of participating in the *missio Dei*, but they are participants and not initiators.

ultimate fulfilment, when men and women will be united with God, and the kingdom fully established. Indeed, as said by Marie-Joseph, quoted by Reilly (:136), “mission is from the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Spirit – in the Holy Spirit, by the Son, back to the Father.”

Insofar as *missio Dei* is an overarching term, one should keep in mind that God not only created humankind in his image, and after his likeness, but he also loves, cares for, and saves human beings, and is hoping for the restoration of the whole universe (2 Pet 3:10, 13 & Rom 8:18f). This is, in fact, God’s sovereign and eternal plan for the humankind. And so, the *missio Dei* springs from God’s love. God is thus known as the one who comes down in order to engage actively in the whole life of his creation and the ultimate intention of whose mission is to save and transform (Kirk 1994:6-8). Since the fall of the humankind in Eden, the Trinitarian God, through his fourfold sovereign and eternal plan, decided to encounter human beings. It is clear, from the biblical perspective, that God the Father sent his only Begotten Son, and God the Father and God the Son (John 15:26; 16:7) sent the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:33), and, thereafter, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit sent the church into the world. After the sending of the church, the process of sending has to continue until the gospel is effectively proclaimed to “all nations” up to “the ends of the earth”, (Mat 24:14 & Acts 1:8). It is probably not surprising that a quick look at the Scriptures reveals that the Bible is really full of references to the facts of “sending” and “being sent”. In keeping with this dimension of understanding, the theology of mission is essentially Trinitarian, and mission is the achievement of the Triune God in his sovereign and eternal plan of love, care, salvation, and restoration of human beings and the whole of creation (cf. John 3:16).

About the relationship between mission and the church, attention should be drawn to the fact that the *missio Dei* hinges, above all, on the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than on the doctrine of the church through which mission has been the most betrayed. In this regard, Reilly (1978:136) points out that

“because of its Trinitarian origin, direction, and end, mission is not primarily an affair of men [sic], the mission of the church, or the mission of the Christian community, but rather the mission of God.” Similarly, Russel (1993:88) maintains that “the church does not have a mission; rather it participates in God’s mission, in the redemption of humanity and the restoration of all creation.” Then again, Rogers (2003:17) makes evident that mission involves the entire scope of God’s activities over the course of human history, as he works to achieve his purposes, and that God may use the church to assist him in accomplishing part of his mission in the world, but he is not restricted to working through the church. In short, the focus on the concept of *missio Dei* is on God’s purpose, not on the church’s activities in working with God to achieve his purpose. Bosch brings this to light as follows:

Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; and the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission... There is church because there is mission, not vice versa... To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is fountain of sending love... Since God’s concern is for the entire world, this should also be the scope of the *missio Dei*. It affects all people in all aspects of their existence. Mission is God’s turning to the world in respect of creation, care, redemption and consummation... It takes place in ordinary human history, not exclusively in and through the church. “God’s own mission is larger than the mission of the church”... The *missio Dei* is God’s activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate... The church serves the *missio Dei* in the world... In the final analysis, ‘*missio Dei*’ means that God articulates himself without any need of assisting him through our missionary efforts in this respect. (Bosch 1991:390-2)

From the assumption that mission is theocentric rather than ecclesiocentric, Ducker (2008:5-6) sums up, through a synoptic diagram (*figure 4.19*), a threefold perspective of the origin of mission, and concludes that both mission

and church originate from God, but in an order in which the church proceeds from mission⁸³ (c), and not the inverse.

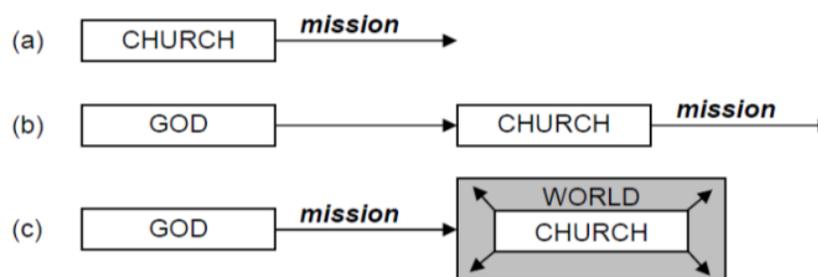


Figure 4.19: Synoptic diagram of perspectives on the origin of mission

Source: Ducker (2008)

The assertions (a) and (b) in the diagram above are indeed the areas in which mission has been the most betrayed and, therefore, become the source of most of challenges facing Christian mission today. More clearly, the assertion (a) in the diagram means that mission proceeds from the church, and (b) means that mission proceeds from the church and the church proceeds from God. The third assertion (c) means, however, that the church that is sent into the world proceeds from mission, and that mission derives from God. From this last assertion, one may note along with Bosch (1991), that mission is a movement from God to the world where it engenders the church as its instrument of propagation.

Ducker also claims that there is something both humbling and liberating in recognising that God is the origin, the architect, and the controller of mission. He therefore suggests that,

If the Church is seen as a product of God's mission, a truer perspective is gained: the Christian Church exists because of God's sending His Son, Jesus, and His actions throughout history. The Church is also sustained, guided and sanctified by God; in Bosch's words, "The *missio Dei* purifies the church" (1991, 519). It is worth reminding ourselves that the Church's goal is not self-

⁸³In the same way, Bevans and Schroeder (2004:11) maintain also that the mission is the mother of the church.

replication or numerical growth. The Church is to be “a witness to the meaning and relevance of the kingdom... [to be] an emissary of the kingdom” (Kirk 1999, 36). If the institution of the Church is understood as a missional act by God then it follows that God in His sovereignty may choose whatever instruments He deems appropriate to accomplish His aims. (Ducker 2008:5-6)

Since mission is primarily and, indeed, entirely God’s initiative and duty, no one can engage in it without referring to God. So, the church in general and Christians individually become agents of God’s mission, since Jesus commissioned his disciples by saying, “Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21). From that point on, God’s mission through Jesus became the *raison d’être* of the church, and, thereafter, the foundation of the church’s mission throughout the world. Actually, the church does not have any mission other than to participate in the *missio Dei*. It even has no mission by and for itself; rather, it only has to fulfil the mission of the one who sent Jesus to the world to be his messenger. Ultimately, God’s mission determines and shapes the church mission, and, so, it is its agenda and content. Here the term “mission of the church” does not contradict the preceding notion according to which the church has no mission for itself, but, rather, it refers to mission as a mandate entrusted to the church. The term “mission of the church” should indeed be understood not in the sense of possession but rather in that of mandate.

Coming back on the relationships between God’s mission and the church, Bosch (1991:519) sees that, in addition to the role of determining and shaping, the *missio Dei* purifies the church. Kirk (1999:31), on the other hand, points out that the church has no freedom to invent its own agenda. It is rather a community in response to the *missio Dei*, bearing witness to God’s activity in the world through its communication of the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed. All the above arguments simply mean that the church derives from God, and that it needs to depend wholly on God in its being and action throughout the world.

Mission as *missio Dei* or divine task in the world, conversely, needs to be understood in relation to a remark by Nyasulu (2004:19) who points out that an over-emphasis on the divine task of mission poses a danger to the whole concept of mission, because, in so doing, human responsibility disappears. Practically speaking, mission is not only God's task; it is also the task of the church. God provides everything for his mission, but the church is there to implement it. Aware of such a remark, Bosch (1991:10) provides for an interim answer, stressing that mission is the *missio Dei*, that is God's self-revelation as the one who loves the world and the one who is actively involved in and with the world, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to be called to participate. Despite this interim explanation, the remark needs also to be viewed in light of the following sections.

As a brief assessment of the missiological concept of *missio Dei*, two major conclusions may be made. Firstly, if mission is understood first and foremost as God's mission, this means that no approach to mission should be undertaken out of God's mission itself. Secondly, if mission is understood as a movement from God to the world, and a movement of God's love towards human beings, and, if it involves the entire scope of God's activities over the course of the human history, this means that the *missio Dei* is the clear and valid source of mission as encounter.

4.3.3 The Incarnation as the character of mission

Another theological foundation of thinking mission as encounter is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Actually, the doctrine of the Incarnation has become one of the most widely used themes in conceptualising mission, and so it may be considered to be the very character of mission. This is certainly foundational in understanding the meaning and implications of the core idea of Christian mission. In the four Gospels, especially the fourth one (cf. John 1:1-18), the

incarnational mission is central since it reveals publicly the *missio Dei* and engages the church by defining its identity and its role of participation in the *missio Dei*. Jesus is, thus, at the centre of God's plan of salvation. Accordingly, Elwell (2000:517) admits that the concept of mission is central to an understanding of Jesus, because Jesus and his mission are virtually synonymous.

Christ's mission through the Incarnation is indeed the most palpable meaning of God's revelation and love to humankind (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10). In this sense, Peelman (2007:34) believes that there is no mystery as concrete as that of the Incarnation of the divine Word or the humanisation (enfleshment) of the Son of God. The embodiment of God submits itself freely to the most concrete conditions of human flesh and of a particular people. Jesus of Nazareth is a Jew by means of his birth and his enculturation, and also by means of multiple links of solidarity that link him to his human community and to the history of his people. This is a real mystery beyond human understanding. Far from focusing on the concept of Incarnation semantically, Ahonen (2000:77), through quotation from Robert W. Jenson, reads that

The incarnation tells us a great deal about the way in which God acts in the world. God's action can be described as incarnational in one way or another, since the Word has taken concrete form. God has not revealed himself in the form of an abstract idea or set of moral instructions, nor as a manifestation of authority or power that silences, but as the living God acting in human history, a God who is interested in the destiny of both nations and individuals.

Moreover, as for sustaining the idea of *missio Dei*, Ott *et al* (2010:99) argue, in convincing terms, that "God did not just send a message; he sent his Son. It will never be adequate to simply deliver a message in an isolated or disengaged manner, disregarding the needs of the hearers." This refers to the Incarnation as God's bodily encounter, the encounter with the other. Padilla, quoted by Mah (2004:15), reinforces this idea by stressing that:

The incarnation makes clear God's approach to the revelation of himself and of his purposes: God does not shout his message from the heavens; God becomes present as a man among men. The climax of God's revelation is Emmanuel. And Emmanuel is Jesus, a first-century Jew! The incarnation unmistakably demonstrates God's intention to make himself known from within the human situation.

Speidell (1990:141), on the other hand, notes that the premise for a theology of incarnational mission lies in the notion that, because God revealed who he is in Christ, Christians, therefore, ought to be who they are in Christ, not merely by emulating this example but by participating in the vicarious obedience of the humiliated one, Jesus Christ.

Ahonen, Padilla and Speidell maintain that the Incarnation tells that God does not dwell only in heaven as a distant God,⁸⁴ but that God is truly Emmanuel, the one who is fully engaged in human history and the one who walks step by step with human beings.

The doctrine of Incarnation, thus, as defining the character of mission concurs closely with the hypothesis according to which face-to-face encounter in mission is valid for the Pygmy peoples among whom there are no other functional means of communication.⁸⁵ Despite the virtual absence of means of communication with regard to the specific case of the Pygmy peoples, modern tools of communication can never replace or be equated with the face-to-face encounter with the other peoples, Pygmy peoples or not. Pastor Thomas Wild of the Church of the Confession of Augsburg in Alsace-Lorraine, who made use of the Internet in his ministry for several years, so well recognises that the Internet

⁸⁴ Woungly-Massaga, M. and Woungly-Massaga, L. (2009:70-1) denounce the preaching that merely leads people to heaven in neglecting all about the earthly life, and consider such a way of theologizing as doing a "theology of the exile to heaven".

⁸⁵ It is worth being reminded that the Pygmy peoples do not yet have access to formal education that could help them read books and write or make use of all other means of communication such as radio, television, telephones, Internet; nor do they even have the opportunity that interaction with other peoples offers in the context of the market globalisation of today.

is a new arena for communication, but that it is not a gadget that will enable the evangelisation of the developed world where it is used mostly as an essential means of communication. For him, “The virtual world has many charms: but Christ came in the concrete world, and it is there where finally we are called out to encounter our sisters and brothers” (Comeau & Zorn 2004:151). Accordingly, the true face-to-face encounter with the other peoples remains the only genuine way of carrying out mission.

Understanding the Incarnation of Jesus as an essential theological foundation for mission as encounter enables to consider significant implications regarding the Incarnation itself. These implications include the Incarnation as border crossing, the Incarnation as a model for *kenosis* in mission, the Incarnation as a model for holistic mission, the Incarnation as a model for intercultural mission, and the Incarnation as a model for contextual mission. These five implications are substantially important in the context of the encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, an encounter that should take place by taking into account their obvious status of otherness.

4.3.3.1 The Incarnation as border crossing

As first implication regarding an understanding of the Incarnation as an essential theological foundation for thinking mission as encounter, Phan (2003:147-8) refers to the Incarnation of Jesus as a border crossing. For him:

The mystery of the Word of God made flesh in Jesus can certainly be viewed as an act of border crossing. Essentially, it is the culmination of the primordial border crossing by which the triune God steps out of self and eternity and crosses into the *other*, namely, the world of space and time, which God brings into existence by this very act of crossing. In the Incarnation, the border that was crossed is not only that which separates the eternal and the temporal, the invisible and the visible, spirit and matter, but more specifically, the divine and the human, with the latter’s reality of soul and body. In this divine crossing over

to the human, the border between the divine nature and the human nature of Jesus functions as the marker constituting the distinct identity of each. One is not transmuted into the other or confused with it; rather, the two natures are “without confusion, without change.”... the same border is no longer a barrier preventing God and the human from joining together. Indeed, by crossing the divine-human border, the Logos transforms the barrier into a frontier and creates a new reality, Jesus of Nazareth, whose humanity the Logos assumes and makes his own, so that, (...) his two natures – divine and human – are united with each other “without division, without separation.” In this humanity the Logos now exists in a new way, not available to him before the Incarnation, and this historical mode of existence, in time and space, and above all, (...) in suffering and death, now belongs to God’s eternal and Trinitarian life itself. Thus, in the Incarnation as border crossing, the boundaries are preserved as identity markers, but at the same time they are overcome as barriers and transformed into frontiers from which a totally new reality, (...) emerges: the divine and human reconciled with each other into one single reality.

This comprehensive explanation of the Incarnation of Jesus is very important in the understanding of Christian mission, which should be conceived wholly as encounter, the encounter with the other. Thus, Phan (2003:148) concludes his explanation by saying: “Like Jesus, missionaries are constantly challenged to cross all kinds of borders and, out of the best of each group of people these borders divide and separate, to create a new human family characterized by harmony and reconciliation.” As is shown in the next section, it is the Incarnation as border crossing that enabled Jesus Christ to perform his earthly mission through the *kenosis*.

4.3.3.2 The Incarnation as a model for *kenosis* in mission

The Incarnation also involves a model for *kenosis* in mission. More than the humility that implies a modest and low view of one's own importance in social relationship, *kenosis* implies “self-emptying”. The *kenosis* or self-emptying of Jesus began at the Incarnation and was brought to fulfilment in his death on the

cross. The term *kenosis* is used in Philippians 2:7 for Jesus' renunciation of the state of glory with the Father in order to share human condition up to death, that is, God emptied out the divine selfhood in humble self-giving love to the world.

The term humility is used more in Christian literature as well as in missiology. For instance, the Manila Manifesto (1989:A.4) states that true mission should always be incarnational, and that this necessitates entering humbly into the worlds of other people, identifying with their social reality, their sorrow, and suffering, and their struggle for justice against oppressive powers. As such, the Manila Manifesto holds that a humble attitude in mission cannot be attained without personal sacrifices. On the contrary, the term *kenosis*, which includes intimately the idea of humility, appears to be the most appropriate concept to express more clearly the idea of humility in mission. *Kenosis* is deeply meaningful in mission especially when it is perceived in connection with the Incarnation of Jesus. In most cases, the terms *kenosis* and incarnation are used interchangeably, simply because they refer equally to a same mystery of Christ's "self-emptying". Besides John 1:1-18, Philippians 2:5-8 describes how Christ gave up his heavenly position to "make himself nothing" or "empty himself" and then condescended to identify with human beings in all ways except sin. Christ deliberately performed a detachment from heaven in favour of solidarity with humankind. For that reason, *kenosis*, more than a mere humility, seems to be an appropriate model in mission.

Reflecting on the interreligious dialogue in missiology, Frederiks (2005:216-8) advocates the *kenosis* model by stating that this model means the ability to identify with the other person. For her, the identification with people on the periphery implies Jesus' example of voluntarily laying aside power and status, and she claims that this way of self-emptying should enable people to cross boundaries of power, caste, culture, and religion. Frederiks, however, notices that *kenosis* involves a risk, the risk of rejection, suffering, having to give-up preconceived ideas about what it means to be Christian or Christian

community. Taking the risk is, however, necessary in order to be truly with the other. In fact, Jesus' *kenosis* was a real risk that led him to death. Carrying out mission involves the challenge of running various risks, depending on the context.

Frederiks (2005) also refers to other advantages of the *kenosis* model, pointing out that this model represents the willingness to be challenged and changed by the other in order to be with the other, and it is, therefore, a relational model of being in community and in interaction with the other. Because *kenosis* calls for "self-emptying", this model means that not the self, not the preservation of the community, nor the structure or policy is important, but the other human being, and his/her *shalom* is of sole importance. At last, it ought to be noted that "in its willingness to seek the other, to respect the other in his/her culture and religion and in the encounter with the other, sharing our deepest convictions about God, the model of *kenosis* offers a paradigm for a joint human pilgrimage towards God...it is in sharing life that the love of God is shared" (Frederiks 2005:217). Furthermore, Frederiks (2005) concludes that *kenosis* calls upon Christians to participate fully in the events of everyday life, because it is there, in our lives, that the love of God for human beings becomes visible and credible. It was in sharing his life with human beings, even sharing death with them, that Christ showed God's love for the world through holistic, intercultural mission and contextualisation.

4.3.3.3 The Incarnation as a model for holistic mission

The earthly ministry of Jesus and thereafter that of his disciples may be described as a ministry in word and deed, or as proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. Hence, the mission of Jesus may be summed up according to this twofold dimension: verbal mission, that is, preaching, teaching, witnessing, evangelizing; and mission in deed, that is, healing, liberating, reconciling,

guaranteeing abundant life (cf. Luke 4:18-19 & John 10:10). It is through these two dimensions that God made himself known. Wright (2006:75) considers that, in the Bible, God is known through what God does and says, and that the combination of the mighty acts of God and the words through which those acts were anticipated, explained, and celebrated form the twin core of so much of Old Testament literature. In fact, the implementation of these two dimensions in mission implies, not a tele-presence, but rather a genuine physical presence, or an effective face-to-face encounter with the other.

To perform these two dimensions of mission, Jesus went through *kenosis*. He who was perfectly God took up a place among human beings as a perfect Man and cared for human beings as a whole through his ministry. Jesus deliberately concerned himself with the spiritual, physical, mental, social, and emotional troubles of humankind. He did not only proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God, but he also participated in healing, saving castaways, liberating people from demons and oppression, raising the dead, and reinstating the marginalised, such as lepers and prostitutes into society. The mission of Jesus was truly characterised and achieved through teaching by word and deed, proclamation and participation or demonstration. He, for instance, called upon people to be fed by the word that comes from God's mouth, but thereafter he fed the hungry crowds. Jesus declared that "blessed are the poor in spirit", but he also contributed to the success and joy of a wedding celebration in Canaan by providing the best wine.

About mission in word, Schnabel (2005:265) reports that Jesus was known as a teacher on the same level as his contemporary Rabbis. His teaching ministry, however, differed very much from that of the Rabbis of his time. He walked from settlement to settlement and taught men and women, large crowds and small groups, in synagogues and in open fields, in public markets and in private houses. In effect, Jesus dealt with both the ministry of preaching and teaching, and the ministry of serving without any contradiction between the two.

Bearing witness to his own mission as being in word and deed, Jesus stated, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19). Saayman (1983:87-9) considers Luke 4:18-19 as being a starting point for an understanding of the holistic mission of Jesus. According to this scripture, Saayman states, Jesus performed his ministry with distinguishable but inseparable dimensions, namely those of evangelising, healing, compassion, social, political and economic justice, and fellowship or community. All these dimensions, he concludes, should be reflected in the mission of the church, which is assumed to be holistic. So, whoever neglects any of these dimensions also neglects the entire mission.

The conception of mission as existing in word and deed, or proclamation and participation, has provoked a huge debate among theologians, even within the conferences of the IMC since Willingen 1952 onwards. Some scholars had reduced mission to a mere verbal proclamation of the message of the gospel, and confused the missionary with the evangelist, and missionary action with the programme of evangelisation. Others held the position that mission was the establishment of *Shalom* in the sense of social harmony, and focused more on the social deeds than on the word. This double-sided debate regarding the perception of mission has led to division amongst Protestants since the Bangkok 1972-1973 conference of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). From then on, there have been two movements within historic Protestantism, the Ecumenical movement and the Evangelical movement. Since the IMC held in Salvador de Bahia (1996), however, which included delegates from the two Protestant movements; there has been some positive progress about the issue that triggered the schism at Bangkok. Through the IMC of Athens 2005 to Edinburg 2010, it is now consensually believed that one of the most important developments in contemporary Christian missiology is

the recovery of a theology of mission that integrates faith and life, word and deed, proclamation and presence. This holistic understanding of Christian mission is deeply rooted in biblical theology, and the example of Jesus is a fundamental model (cf. Woolnough & Ma 2010).

While showing him ministering in both word and deed, the four Gospels present Jesus holding a view close to that of the evangelical movement. Jesus recognised people's rights and responsibilities. He, thereafter, recognised the spiritual and physical needs of the human being as well, because the human being is by his very nature both body and soul. For this reason, one cannot care about the soul while neglecting the body, and care about the body while neglecting the soul. Similarly, the needs of the body impact very strongly on the needs of the soul, and the needs of the soul impact strongly on the needs of the body. One would say that in the mission enterprise, the "word" and the "deed" are twins that cannot be separated. To sustain this scriptural reality, Nissen (2004:32) writes that mission is not only a verbal proclamation, but also a healing action (cf. Matt 4:32; 9:35), which strives not only for "church growth" as if the church were an end in itself, but also for the wholeness of creation, that is, for the total integration of human and cosmic history into the fullness of the eschatological Kingdom (Matt 10:7). Keeping the above truth in mind, it is necessary to consider any social deed as a logical consequence of the proclamation of the gospel, because considering it as only a means for evangelisation would lead to the risk of forming Christians whose faith relies only on materialistic interests.

4.3.3.4 The Incarnation as a model for intercultural mission

The Incarnation of Jesus is not only border crossing, or a model for *kenosis* in mission and for holistic mission but also a model for intercultural mission. What does "intercultural mission" mean? There has always been some

misunderstanding between “intercultural mission” and “cross-cultural mission” both in the conceptualisation of mission and in its practice. Hiebert (1999:383) points out that intercultural mission is a very complex process which, if Christians fail to understand it, will result also in their failing to express the gospel effectively.

Though both terms ‘intercultural’ and ‘cross-cultural’ refer to two or more different cultures, there are substantial nuances in their meaning. While the term cross-cultural mission connotes one-way traffic between cultures, in the sense of something which needs to be transferred or carried from one culture to another, the term intercultural mission connotes the reciprocity where those who do the mission are equally ‘missioned’ by the others, equally challenged to change (cf. Botha 2012). Likewise, while the former term assumes the sense of superiority by imposing foreign patterns onto host cultures, the latter implies the sense of *kenosis* and so focuses on inspiration from within the host’s social context so that it may participate to its own evangelisation. In this respect, Munikwa and Hendriks (2011:455) state that the intercultural mission witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ with love, boldness, and humility to people who differ culturally. These authors (:455-6) also believe, along with Kgatla (2002:53), that intercultural mission is deeply rooted in communities and the contextual realities of people with active communal dialogue, reciprocity, and transformation and that it is a reciprocal process where the presenter and the recipient of the gospel message exchange roles in a dynamic way.

The Incarnation of Jesus is thus a true intercultural mission. This intercultural mission of Jesus, however, was initially intended for Jews, but then applied to all the nations. In the beginning, Jesus concentrated on and limited himself to the Jews, the elected people, in order to offer them the reign of God which had been promised to them (Matt 15:24; 10:5-7). In support of this understanding, Shenk (1994:111) regards the focus of Jesus on the Jews, from the perspective of the church growth, and says:

God planned well for the growth of the church. The plan included geopolitical strategy. God didn't want Jesus locked into any box. He placed his son in Palestine. That is the bridge between the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Palestine is the crossroads of the world. Israel located in Palestine was at the right place for maximum influence throughout the earth. God had called Israel to be the light to the nations; Palestine was an ideal location for that light to penetrate into Africa, Asia and Europe. Jesus of Nazareth lived within this same meeting place of the continents.

Despite this statement, through which Shenk tries to demonstrate the reason why Jesus was born in Palestine instead of another place, Nissen (2004:27) assumes that there are still problems in defining the real targets of mission. For this author, the universality of the final commission according to Matthew is in striking contrast to the particularity of the mission instruction in Matthew 10:5-6, which reads: "Do not go to any Gentile territory or any Samaritan towns. Instead, you are to go to the lost sheep of the people of Israel." The final commission also differs from Mark 13:10 according to which "... before the end comes, the gospel must first be preached to all nations." This leads to a contradiction, and there have been many attempts to solve it. Nissen (2004:27-8) proposes a pertinent solution to the problem in the following terms:

The best solution is probably to suppose that Matthew is operating with a two-stage scheme of salvation history implying two stages in the mission of Jesus. The mission of the earthy Jesus is a centripetal mission directed to Israel in the hope that the conversion of his people will inaugurate the "eschatological pilgrimage of nations to the mountain of God" (cf. Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1) and so lead to the salvation of the world. But the Jews reject this mission (cf. Matt [sic] 21:33-46; 22:1-14)...This leads to the death of Jesus, marking the end of his centripetal mission to Israel. But the vindication of the death by God through the resurrection invests Jesus with "all authority in heaven and on earth" (28:16) and opens the way for a universal post-Easter to all nations (28:18-20)... The transition from Matt 10:5-6 to Matt 28:18-20 has often been understood as if Jesus proceeded from a mission to Israel to a mission to the nations – that is a kind of quantitative augmentation, or a transition from "home" mission to "foreign" mission.

Whilst ministering firmly among the Jews, Jesus adopted a new perspective, which showed that he was also interested in the other nations. In this respect, Comeau (2004:106-9) refers to Jesus as a man of relationships who is open to others, and who refuses racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious barriers. Moreover, some scriptures prove that Jesus was also involved in intercultural mission, despite his home mission among the Jews. In Matthew 15:21-28, Jesus challenges traditional thinking when he speaks with the Canaanite woman and heals her daughter through her faith. It is said (v. 30) that Jesus also healed those who were not true Jews, and, through these acts, crowds returned glory to the Almighty God of Israel (v. 31). In John 4:4-26, the encounter and dialogue of Jesus with the Samaritan woman also provides strong proof of the extraversion aspect of Jesus mission. In Matthew 16:4, Jesus evokes Jonah's example in order to explain his death and resurrection, but also to sustain the centrifugal movement of mission. Mark 11:15-19 deals with the sellers who are driven away from the temple. The fundamental sense here is that God's house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations (v 17).

In due course Jesus understood his mission as being both centripetal and centrifugal. Thus, with regard to the opinion that mission is not to be kept at home or within a framework of cultural boundaries, Jesus opened the eyes of his disciples when he told them that the differences between sacred and profane things did not have value anymore (cf. Matt 15 & Acts 10:15, 34-5). Indeed, the major focus of Jesus, in his relationship with his disciples, was to prepare them for both *kenosis* in mission and also holistic and intercultural mission. In order to achieve this goal, Jesus, among his disciples, dealt with mission as a worldwide mission, a mission beyond borders. Whereas Jews adopted a xenophobic mentality, refusing to interact with foreigners socially, politically or religiously, Jesus created a new understanding of mission by presenting himself as a sociable man who loved and looked after people beyond his own borders. Jesus reveals the ultimate meaning of his mission in his last speech to his Apostles, as Luke

relates it in Acts 1:8, saying, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” In this scripture, the universality of mission is clearly shown, to such an extent that no-one can regard it any longer as mission restricted to the specific social and geographical frame of the Jews.

4.3.3.5 The Incarnation as a model for contextual mission

Mission always implies the context. According to Ott et al (2010:268-9), the context includes everything that shapes a society and each individual person. Context is more than culture, since it also includes religious or theological heritage, the historical era and current events, the social, economic, and educational group, age, gender and personal circumstances. All these components of the context determine the locus and scope of mission.

In order to express the need to deal with the context in the reflection and practice of mission, theologians coined the term “contextualisation” in the early 1970s.⁸⁶ This term was, henceforth, used in the circles of the ecumenical Theological Education Fund (TEF), with a particular view of the task of education and formation of people for the church’s ministry. Afterwards, it became the foundation of a variety of theological models, and then a much debated method in missiology and Christian mission (cf. Bosch 1991:420-1).

⁸⁶ The neologism of contextualisation is generally attributed to the Theological Education Fund (TEF) with the missiologist Shoki Coe as its first author (cf. Coe 1976; Wheeler 2002; Ahonen 2003:28-39; Van Engen 2005, and many others). More clearly, Hesselgrave and Rommen (1992:28) point out that the concept of contextualisation made its public debut in the publication *Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate of the Theological Education Fund (1970-77)*, and it has been conjointly promoted by the Staff members of the TEF, namely the director Shoki Coe from Taiwan (Asia), and the associate directors Aharon Sapsezian from Brazil (Latin America), James Bergquist from the USA (America), Ivy Chou from Malaysia (Asia), and Desmond Tutu from South Africa (Africa). In the efforts of bringing to light the genesis of the contextual theologies, Botha (2010:184) maintains that only Shoki Coe (Taiwan), Aharon Sapsezian (Brazil), and Desmond Tutu (South Africa), all of whom represent three similar contexts of what was known as the Third World, became the embodiment of the contextualisation in the TEF in particular and the WCC in general.

The concept of contextualisation has, therefore, been defined as a continual process through which God's truth and justice are applied to, and emerge in, concrete historical situations (Thomas 1995:170). According to Bevans (2002:27), contextualisation is the right term to describe the theology that takes into consideration human experience, social location, culture, and cultural change.

In keeping with the preceding comments, it is appropriate to admit that the Incarnation of Jesus did not take place in a vacuum, but in a particular and well identified context of the Jews. The Jewish context has characterised the entire earthly ministry of Jesus who, thereafter, commissioned his disciples and all those who would believe and follow him on the basis of the same model, saying, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21 cf. 17:18). Clearly, Jesus intended the mission of his people in the world to be modelled on his own mission, which is both incarnational and contextual, and whose context is the locus and scope of the Incarnation. In an article entitled "What Does It Mean to Be Incarnational When We Are Not the Messiah?" Tiersma submits that the contextual and incarnational mission is significant because the gospel does not exist in a vacuum but must be incarnated, "fleshed out" anew in each context (Mah 2004:15-6). According to Tiersma, the best form of mission is for witnesses to become fleshly representations of Christ and the gospel to the non-believing world.

The missiological significance for contextualisation is intimately linked to the final Commission of Jesus. This assumes that all the nations must understand the gospel as clearly and as accurately as Jesus' own people in his day did (cf. Gilliland 2000:227). Contextualisation is not just a new method helping to make the gospel understandable in a vacuum but rather an effort of bearing in mind that the context is itself the very locus and scope of mission implementation. Though the term contextualisation came to the fore only during the early 1970s as a new concept in theology, Jesus Christ and then his disciples had already

made use of it more than 2000 years ago (cf. the Gospels and 1 Cor 9:19-23). Certainly, mission has always to do with the context within which the Incarnation has also taken place.

Despite nuances between the phrases “incarnational mission” and “mission as encounter”, these two concepts involve a common dynamic for the contextualisation of the gospel. Of course, the gospel becomes truly good news only when it is announced from within a given context through a true face-to-face encounter. For this reason, contextualisation is not just a new method of mission but rather a new vision for mission. Highlighting the necessity of contextualisation in mission, Ott *et al* (2010:265) draw attention to the fact that mission is not just about bringing people to accept the gospel cognitively, and that the theology of mission is incomplete until it speaks to the gospel’s penetration into every aspect of lives and worldviews of people. In actual fact, when the good news of Jesus enters a society, those who respond to it must decide what they will do with many of the old aspects of their culture. Because the missional encounter also involves cultural shocks, this is the area where the gospel must rightly play the role of purifying the cultures.

Regarding the relevant issues mentioned above, the following three objectives of contextualisation in mission, as identified by Scherer and Bevans (1999:44-6), deserve to be taken into account:

- Contextualisation in mission attempts to communicate the gospel in word and deed, and to establish the church in ways that make sense to people within their local cultural context, presenting Christianity in such a way that it meets the deepest needs of people and penetrates their worldviews, thus allowing them to follow Christ and yet remain within their own culture.
- Contextualisation in mission aims at offending, but only for the right reasons, that is, good contextualisation, not the wrong one. When the gospel is presented in word and deed, and the fellowship of believers is

addressed according to appropriate cultural patterns, people will then more likely be confronted by the offence caused to the gospel, exposing their own sinfulness and tendency towards evil, as well as the oppressive structures and behavioural patterns within their own culture.

- Contextualisation in mission aims at developing contextualised expressions of the gospel, so that the gospel itself will be understood in ways that the universal church has neither experienced nor understood before, thus expanding people's understanding of the kingdom of God. In this sense, contextualisation is a form of mission in reverse, whereby one can learn from other cultures about how to be more Christian in one's own context.

To these three objectives, Musasiwa (2007:68-9) adds a fourfold missiological imperative according to which:

- Jesus modelled the incarnational ministry, which for Christians represents the heart of contextualisation.
- Contextualisation is an aid to the gospel communication. Once the gospel has taken root in any cultural context, the best contextualisers become the indigenous Christians themselves.
- Contextualisation is a means of developing indigenous expressions of the gospel. This involves, among other things, the utilisation of those aspects of the receptor culture that are in harmony with the fundamentals of the Christian faith so that the resulting church is truly Christian and truly indigenous.
- Contextualisation is a means of achieving holistic church growth. When it involves the gospel, it promotes qualitative numerical, organic, conceptual, and diaconal growth of the church.

Thereafter, acknowledging that the necessity of contextualisation must not blind Christians to the fact that not all contextualisation efforts are acceptable, Musasiwa (2007:70) provides the following criteria for a healthy contextualisation:⁸⁷

- Contextualisation must respect the authority of the Bible as the primary source of theology. The acknowledgement of the contextuality of the Bible is not incompatible with the conviction about its divine inspiration.
- Contextualisation must take account of church tradition as another source of theology. Just as the Bible books participate in the contexts in which, and for which, they were written, so too were the creeds developed during the centuries of church history.
- Contextualisation must be dynamically relevant to the interlocutors. Interlocutors are people with whom and for whom, theology is formulated, and who, therefore, determine the type and content of the formulation.
- Contextualisation must remain open-ended. No society is static. Anthropologists recognise that in each society there is an ongoing process of cultural evolution as one culture comes in contact with another and as cultures need change. The theologising process must also evolve with culture. Otherwise, there is a danger of focusing theology on past stages of culture and losing contact with the modern age.
- Contextualisation must be dialogical. Contextualising theology is both particularistic because it relates to a unique context, and universalistic because it shares with other emic theologies the same authoritative biblical revelation that must validate them all. Although no one cultural

⁸⁷ For further insights about the criteria of the contextualisation, one may also read Hesselgrave and Stetzer (2010:159-160).

formulation of the gospel must dominate others, there must be a dialogic element in all theologies enabling them to listen to and enrich one another. This dialogic element in contextualisation ensures that the church remains one and universal.

To sum up the preceding views on contextualisation in mission, Peelman (2007:104) draws attention to the fact that the concept of contextualisation recalls that a genuine Christian community results from two forces, the capacity for the gospel to encounter a particular context profoundly, and the capacity for the gospel to transform a particular context. It is only when these two aspects are achieved that the community that results from them becomes a community that makes the difference, and that has, henceforth, the right to announce the message of the gospel to others.

4.3.4 The Holy Spirit as the chief Agent of mission

The fourth theological foundation for thinking mission as encounter involves the Holy Spirit who is the chief Agent of mission (cf. Bellagamba 1993; Kim 2009). According to the IMC of San Antonio in 1989 (Zorn 2001:218), the Holy Spirit is the creative power in mission, or the protagonist of mission. While Dorr (2000) refers to mission as the power of the Holy Spirit, and Kim (2009:32) says that because God is at work in the world by the Holy Spirit, mission as *missio Dei* is a pneumatological paradigm of mission; Comeau (2004:118) refers to the Holy Spirit as the entry point of God in every time and place where God reveals and communicates himself to the humankind.

Perceiving the Holy Spirit as the chief Agent of mission means that there is no way to think of mission without realising the preeminent role of the Holy Spirit in it. In fact, the Holy Spirit has been actively present since the creation (Gen 1:2) and through all the salvation history. In this perspective, Kim

(2007:162) perceives the theology of the Holy Spirit and the theology of the mission as being intimately linked. This is because on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on believers, there was simultaneously the birth of the church, the fellowship of the Spirit, and the beginning of Christian mission in the power of the Spirit. Not only is Christian mission characteristic of the Spirit but the *missio Dei* as a whole may also be said to be the movement of the Spirit in the world, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, that is the sovereign presence and activity of God in the world. Jesus, therefore, was conceived (Matt 1:20), anointed at his baptism (Matt 3:16-17; Acts 10:38), led into the desert to be tempted by the devil (Matt 4:1), returned to Galilee after his victory over the devil (Luke 4:14), and raised by the Holy Spirit, after which he bestowed the Spirit on his disciples, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld” (John 20:22-23).⁸⁸ Then Kim (2007:162) concludes:

Since then, the Holy Spirit has been recognized as the Spirit of Christ, who is the means by which human beings can experience God and know the truth, and who indwells and empowers the community of believers. The Holy Spirit is understood to be the third person of the Trinity, co-equal with God the Father and God the Son and in eternal relationship with them.

For a long time, however, the Western theology that was spread to the rest of the world as a normative theology was marked by the *Geistvergessenheit*, a forgetfulness of the Spirit (cf. Kim: 163). In his contribution to the book “*Les chrétiens dans la diversité religieuse*”, however, Jonson (2011:79-93) reveals that the Holy Spirit is currently a new theological and missiological paradigm, and that the rediscovery of his role is undoubtedly due to the revitalization of Trinitarian theology.

After stating that before God the Father, according to the New Testament, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are equated, Johnson (2011:87-8) keeps demonstrating

⁸⁸ For further information about the relationship between the sending of the Spirit and the sending of Jesus, read Glasser (2003:260-2).

the primacy of the Holy Spirit on Jesus in the Bible by referring to various examples. For him, Christians think, first of all, of the creation in which the Spirit of God is described as the powerful wind that hovered over the surface of the waters (Gen 1:2), the one who gives life (Gen 2:7), the one who confers authority on the prophets so that they are able to proclaim the word of God (Ezek 2:2; Mic 3:8); the one who allows to announce the restoration, the forgiveness and the liberation of the people of Israel (Isa 61:1-3). It is the same Spirit who renews and restores life by fleshing out and giving the spirit back to the dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14), the one who transforms the hearts of stone into the hearts of flesh (Ezek 36:25-28). It is also through the Spirit that Mary conceived Jesus (Luke 1:35), and the same Spirit of God came upon Jesus (Matt 3:16), and oriented and guided his earthly ministry (Luke 4:18f). Finally, the Spirit is promised to the disciples so that they are able to understand the will of God (John 14:26), and the book of the Acts illustrates the role of the Spirit within the birth of the Church. Johnson concludes his arguments about the primacy of the Holy Spirit on Jesus by quoting Stephen Bevans who said:

I've come to see that it is indeed the Spirit that we know first, who precedes Jesus not only in our own lives but in the history of the world and in cultures which have not known him. And it is the Spirit whom Jesus reveals to us the Holy Mystery that is only dimly intimated in the fabric of history, culture and life.⁸⁹

Despite his long advocacy of the primacy of the Holy Spirit, Johnson does not intend to underestimate or ignore the place and the role of Jesus. On the contrary, he focuses on drawing attention to the fact that it is the Holy Spirit who enables humans to recognise Jesus as the Son of God. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit is at work in mission throughout the world, and remains the one who makes it possible. Furthermore, through the sending of the Holy Spirit at work in the church, the gospel spreads and transforms. In Galatians 5:16-26, the apostle

⁸⁹ See also Stephen Bevans' article on: <http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/Bevans.html>.

Paul explains the transformative power of the gospel through the Holy Spirit by contrasting the works of the flesh (vv 19-21) to the fruits of the Spirit (vv 5:22). The gospel spreads in order to transform humankind from the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit. Paul's warning lies in the fact that Christians should walk by the Spirit (v 16), be led by the Spirit (vv 18, 25), and live by the Spirit (v 25). Rightly speaking, Christian faith relates intimately to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus assures his disciples by promising them the Holy Spirit, saying, "I will not leave you as orphans... But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:18, 26). This meant that his earthly mission was to be carried out and continued by, and through, the Holy Spirit. Thereafter the risen Christ promises, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Acts 1:8 defines not only the scope of mission across the world, but it also points out the driving force and source from which mission must be perceived and carried out. According to this scripture, the Holy Spirit is not himself the power but he is the one who gives it. In agreement with this understanding, Dorr (2000:167-183) talks about a fivefold prophetic power that the Holy Spirit gives for mission as:

- The inspiring power, which is the wonderful ability that some people have to convince, to inspire and even to 'enchant' others. It is evident from the Gospels that Jesus had this power to an amazing extent. This is why, according to Matthew 4:20, for example, men could leave their nets and follow him. (Dorr 2000:168).
- The empowering power, which is the ability to empower others. This is the facility in helping other people to get in touch with their own strengths,

their own gifts, their own creativity, etc. Empowering power may seem to come naturally to some people, as though they had been born with it (Dorr 2000:171), but the Spirit of God is the one who initiates and empowers for mission. The WCC Commission for World Mission and Evangelism (Kim 2009:30) states, in this respect, that the Holy Spirit transforms Christians into living, courageous, and bold witnesses (cf. Acts 1:8).

- The fulcrum power. In addition to the above two prophetic powers, the Holy Spirit can also work through people in a different way, using them as a kind of “fulcrum”, to bring about important changes with the expenditure of relatively little energy (Dorr 2000:174). This is, for example, true in the cases of the apostles Peter (Acts 2-7) and Paul (Acts 9-28).
- The yielding power, which is the ability to flow with life, to be so in tune with nature, with people, and with the world around that things fall into place in a very easy and organic way. If the fulcrum power focuses on a particular action or word through which people deliberately intervene at a specific point in an ongoing process, the flowing power is a matter of letting the whole process of life unfold in its own time (Dorr 2000:177).
- The yielding power. If the flowing power is the ability to be in touch with life in all its richness, then the yielding power means being able to let go with dignity. It also means knowing when the time is right to give up the struggle and sensing when this particular dance has been completed. Fundamentally, the yielding power is the ability to surrender to failure, to weakness, or to death when that is the only authentic way forward (Dorr 2000:180).

On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the Holy Spirit inaugurated the great mission encounter that, officially, opened doors to the other nations by means of the

spiritual gift of different kinds of languages. Acts 2:5-10 shows clearly that all the nations were to rendezvous at the advent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. No nation was forgotten or neglected. If Babel involves the dispersion of peoples, Pentecost involves their gathering by means of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit as the chief Agent of mission is, therefore, among his many other activities, to bring nations together and put them on the same wavelength by banishing cultural barriers. On this, Glasser (2003:259) asserts, "With the advent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, God's redemptive activity shifted from working through a particular people to working in the midst of all peoples." About the gift of different languages which enabled the bringing together of scattered peoples, Acts 2:7-8 reads: "And they were amazed and astonished, saying, Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?" So, since Pentecost, mission has ceased to be kept within the framework of the Jewish culture and context.

Taking into account other peoples' cultures and contexts is certainly a great opportunity for hopeful relationships with them. Regarding the need for encountering the Mbuti Pygmies in this way, it is important to point out that there is a winning way forward. If new languages have been a big impediment to mission encounters with exotic peoples in the course of the history of missions, for the Mbuti Pygmies this is no longer an obstacle, because they all use the common local languages of their neighbouring Bantu. The issue relating to how to encounter these neglected peoples is of different nature as has been described in the two preceding chapters. Though learning appropriate languages in order to reach the Mbuti Pygmies is no longer a necessity today, the gift of different kinds of languages at the day of Pentecost reveals that the Holy Spirit makes use of whatever means in his disposal to spread mission beyond conventional boundaries.

The *Redemptoris Missio* (RM 1990: chap. III) describes the mission of the church as fully the work of the Holy Spirit. For it, mission is a sending forth in the Spirit, the Spirit who directs the church's mission and makes the whole

church missionary. The Spirit is unlimitedly present and active in every time and place, and offers the human race the light and strength to respond to its highest calling. His presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures, and religions. This is the same Spirit who was at work in the Incarnation and in the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and who is at work in the church. The Holy Spirit is, in effect, the chief Agent of the whole of the church's mission, and the whole mission mandate as described in the four Gospels, and the book of the Acts refers to him in this way.

Finally, when Jesus promises his effective presence as a guarantee for the carrying out of mission (Matt 28:20), he surely alludes to the Holy Spirit. Because mission is first and foremost God's affair, Jesus is fully present in it through the Holy Spirit. And as Kim (2009:30) maintains, "Mission is a heartfelt but spontaneous outworking of the inspiring, transforming, life-giving work of the Holy Spirit." Such an understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit should fertilise Christian faith and lead to a new perception of the church, which must be viewed as a missional church.

4.3.5 The church as a missional church

Another theological foundation for thinking mission as encounter suggests that the church be seen as a missional church. What is a missional church? Before defining what it means to be a missional church, one might agree with Driscoll (2012) that this "is a concept without one clear definition and one that can be readily applied to countless ministry activities." According to Engen (2010:24), a possible way forward in defining mission for the twenty-first century might involve an attempt to describe what a missional church would look like. By the term missional, Engen emphasises the essential nature and vocation of the church as God's called and sent people. By postulating that a missional

ecclesiology is biblical, historical, contextual, praxeological, and eschatological, Van Engen believes that:

...the term sees the church as an instrument of God's mission in God's world. ...a church that is missional understands that God's mission calls and sends the church of Jesus Christ, locally and globally, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to be a missionary church in its own society, in the cultures in which it finds itself, and globally among all peoples who do not yet confess Jesus as Lord. (Van Engen 2010:24).

For Carlson (2007), on the other hand, "A missional church is an authentic community of faith that primarily directs its ministry focus outward toward the context in which it is located and to the broader world beyond." Moreover, among a set of definitions provided by the "Friend of Missional" (2010), one also discovers that a "missional church is a collection of missional believers acting in concert together in fulfilment of the *missio dei*."⁹⁰

⁹⁰ The "Friend of Missional" (2010) suggests the following other definitions of a missional church:

- The missional church is one where people are exploring and rediscovering what it means to be Jesus' sent people as their identity and vocation.
- The missional church is faith communities willing and ready to be Christ's people in their own situation and place.
- The missional church knows that they must be a cross-cultural missionary (contextual) people and adopt a missionary stance in relation to their community.
- The missional church will be engaged with the culture (in the world) without being absorbed by the culture (not of the world). They will become intentionally indigenous.
- The missional church understands that God is already present in the culture where it finds itself. Therefore, the missional church doesn't view its purpose as bringing God into the culture or taking individuals out of the culture to a sacred space.
- The missional church is about more than just being contextual; it is also about the nature of the church and how it relates to God.
- The missional church is about being -- being conformed to the image of God.
- The missional church will seek to plant all types of missional communities.
- The missional church is evangelistic and faithfully proclaims the gospel through word *and* deed. Words alone are not sufficient; how the gospel is embodied in our community and service is as important as what we say.
- The missional church understands the power of the gospel and does not lose confidence in it.
- The missional church recognizes that it does not hold a place of honour in its host community and that its missional imperative compels it to move out from itself into that host community as salt and light.
- The missional church will align all its activities around the *missio dei* – the mission of God.

As a missional church, the church is indeed one that is called on and sent for the fulfilment of the *missio Dei*. Understanding the church as *ekklesia*, a term which comes from the Greek verb *ek kaleo* whose meaning is “called away from”, is fundamental to any understanding of the way the church relates to God’s mission, the *missio Dei*. If the church is called, it is for being sent, because God’s calling always implies a sending or mission. The church, therefore, is not merely called but rather “called upon” for a clear and precise divine purpose, which is God’s mission. The calling and sending of the church that make of the church a missional church enable a threefold fundamental truth through which the relationship between God’s mission and the church can be unfolded. Firstly, the mission of the church needs to be understood as participation in the fulfilment of God’s mission. Secondly, it needs to be carried

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- The missional church seeks to put the good of its neighbour over its own.
 - The missional church will give integrity, morality, good character and conduct, compassion, love and a resurrection life filled with hope pre-eminence to give credence to its reasoned verbal witness.
 - The missional church practises hospitality by welcoming the stranger into the midst of the community.
 - The missional church will always be in a dynamic tension or paradox between missional individuals and community. We cannot sustain being missional on our own, but if we are not being missional individually we cannot sustain being mission-shaped corporately.³
 - The missional church will see itself as representative of Jesus and will do nothing to dishonour his name.
 - The missional church will be totally reliant on God in all it does. It will move beyond superficial faith to a life of supernatural living.
 - The missional church will be desperately dependent on prayer.
 - The missional church gathered will be for the purpose of worship, encouragement, supplemental teaching, training, and to seek God's presence and to be realigned with God's missionary purpose.
 - The missional church is orthodox in its view of the gospel and scripture, but culturally relevant in its methods and practice so that it can engage the world view of the hearers.
 - The missional church will feed deeply on the scriptures throughout the week.
 - The missional church will be a community where all members are involved in learning "the way of Jesus." Spiritual development is an expectation.
 - The missional church will help people discover and develop their spiritual gifts and will rely on gifted people for ministry instead of talented people.
 - The missional church is a healing community where people carry each other's burdens and help restore gently.
 - The missional church will require that its leaders be missiologists.

out in Christ's footsteps. Lastly, the church needs to be understood as God's agency for transformation.

4.3.5.1 The church mission as participation in the fulfilment of the *missio Dei*

Because the church has been called on and sent to be a missional church, its role in God's mission is nothing other than that of participation. This means that the church should not be considered as the owner or initiator of mission, or even itself as the mission of God, but rather as the one that participates in its fulfilment. As the one that is called on and sent, the church is a "servant". According to Jesus, "... a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him" (John 13:16). This scriptural truth means that the mission of the church is to participate in the *missio Dei* by continuing the mission of Jesus throughout the world until the end of history. Consequently, the motivation to engage in encountering the Mbuti Pygmies comes first and foremost from the *missio Dei* of which the church is privileged to be part. The *missio Dei* is not selective but includes everyone without distinction. This, according to Kritzinger (2009:2), requires a good pneumatology, since the Holy Spirit establishes that dedicate correlation between God's work and human work, God's gracious initiative and our faithful participation in it.

The church participates in the *missio Dei* by committing what God is doing through the Spirit in the world. Therefore (Kritzinger 2009:2), "Mission flows not merely out of an external command (like the Great Commission), but from the outpouring of Spirit, which sets in motion an ongoing movement of people living in the power of the Spirit and by the guidance of the Spirit." In this sense, mission is a mandate entrusted to the church by its initiator, who is God himself.

The participatory role of the church has been discussed briefly in the preceding sections, affirming that mission is primarily and essentially God's affair. But what does it mean to participate in God's mission? The assumption according to which mission is primarily and essentially God's affair brings to light a threefold truth with regard to the nature of the mission of the church. Firstly, the church stems from God's mission. Without God's mission, the church would not only have no mission, but also no reason to exist. Secondly, the church is not itself the whole of God's mission but rather a privileged part of it. As a community of the kingdom, the church is also both the primary agent as well as the chief fruit of the *missio Dei* in this age (Ott et al 2010: vii). In his sovereignty, God remains a living missionary God from before the birth of the church, through the church, and beyond the church's sphere of activity. Agreeing with Reilly (1978:136), God's mission works through the church's mission, but, at the same time, it is wider than the church's mission is. According to Rogers (2003:17), God has always worked independently of his people in order to achieve his purposes, because mission does not refer to the specific things that God may do in an individual's life, or even in the life of the church. Despite the fact that God's mission is to be regarded as going beyond the church's sphere of activity, however, the church remains at the heart of God's mission. Actually "it is the church that evangelises, finds appropriate cultural channels to express the faith in the name of Jesus Christ, participates in the struggle for justice and the care of the environment, engages in dialogue with people of other faiths, and builds peace" (Kirk 1999:205).

Thirdly, the church is a missional church in order to commit to God's mission. In this respect, the church is more the one that is sent than the one that sends (Bosch 1991:370). Its fundamental mission is God's mission. Mission does not come from the church, and the church does not have any other mission than God's mission, because what could be considered to be the church's mission is meaningless and even dangerous without God's mission. In this

respect, Bosch (1991) and Russell (1993) notice that the church is called on to participate in God's mission and to be an instrument in the hands of God for the fulfilment of his redemptive purpose for humankind. Prabhakar (2006:110) is adamant as he maintains that the church, as the people of God, is not the centre and goal of mission, but rather the means and instrument. In other words, the church participates in God's mission in terms of what God is doing in the world, and (Kirk 1999:218) it is not what it does, but rather what God does.

4.3.5.2 The church as a missional church in Christ's footsteps

Because the church has been called on and sent to be a missional church, it has to carry out mission, not on the basis of its own will and experience but rather on the basis of the will of the one to whom it is accountable. From such an understanding, God's mission fulfilled in Jesus Christ remains the only model that the church has to take into account. Jesus has conceived the church mission on the basis of his own mission, stating, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you" (John 20:21 cf. 17:18). This scripture is central to the church's understanding of what its mission is really all about, and how it must be implemented.

Among the existing teachings about the way the church must perform its participation in God's mission, it is valuable to examine the example of Jesus, which consists of the following fundamental truths:

- The church is called on and sent for mission on basis of a comprehensive and holistic mode. To follow the example of Jesus Christ means that the church must proclaim the gospel in word and deed, that is, to address the whole person (body, mind and spirit) and the whole community in all their needs. This means that mission should not only target some aspects of human needs but that it should rather be carried out in an ongoing and

innovative way, because human culture has never remained static but always dynamic.

- The church is called on and sent for intercultural mission. This means that the church's activities do not merely consist of internal or external testimony in the sense of a one-sided presentation of the gospel from one culture to another, but rather a process of partnership and mutuality through which the cultures of both the evangelists and the evangelised are affected essentially by the communication of the gospel (cf. Saayman 1990:316). In this understanding, mission should not any longer be kept at home or spread as the private property of the church but shared among all the nations until the coming back of the Master of the harvest. Domesticating the gospel within one's own ethnic group, community, convictions, and dogmas should be viewed not as a mere misunderstanding but rather as a denial and betrayal of the whole Christian mission itself, and so a sin. In support of this fact, Kirk (1999:30) argues that mission is at the heart of what it means to be the church to such an extent that, if the church ceases to be missionary, it has not just failed in one task, but it ceases to be the church.
- The church is called on and sent to commit itself to contextual mission. As applied to the incarnational mission of Jesus, the church's participation in God's mission needs to be applied within particular social groups in different situations, geographical spaces, and times. Human beings and their conditions, cultures, and environments all of which determine the context, are ultimately the practical reality of mission. This virtual scope of mission should be taken into account, not exclusively and in a selective way but in an inclusive way that has room for everyone. Since Jesus commissioned his disciples to be his witnesses to all nations, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (cf. Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8), this

means that all human contexts and cultures are worthy of Christian mission. In the same way, whatever their particularities, the context and culture of the Mbuti Pygmies are also worthy of Christian mission. To flesh out the idea according to which the church is a privileged instrument that should perform contextualised mission according to God's will, Jeganathan notes:

The church is an instrument for God's mission (*missio Dei*) in the world and it has been called to serve in the society so that the society can be transformed according to the will of God. By serving as co-workers with God, the church has great responsibilities in respect of God's mission; it has no mission of its own; it has been called to participate in God's mission and challenged to meet the contemporary challenges like poverty, religious pluralism, illiteracy, globalisation, ecological degradation, etc. In this context, the church has to be equipped and empowered, and its commitment and its activities have to be designed on the foundation of biblical witness, theological reflections and contextual realities. (Jeganathan 2000:163)

- The church is called on and sent to be a missional church with an attitude of humility, as an instrument that God has chosen to carry his name to all the nations.⁹¹ It is written, "A servant is not greater than his master" (John 15:20). So, if the mission of Jesus was a matter of *kenosis* for the redemption of the whole humankind, in the same way the mission of the church is a matter of *kenosis* through obedience and humility for the same purpose of reconciling humankind with God. Speaking to the Philippians, the apostle Paul spoke of the *kenosis* of Christ, not as an alternative among many possibilities, but as a firm recommendation, saying, "Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had" (Phil 2:5).
- In short, the church is called on and sent to follow Christ in mission. It exists for that precise purpose. Jesus underscores this reality by using the

⁹¹ In the same sense, Acts 9:15 reads: "... he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."

metaphor of the vine and the branches. Then he states, “Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me” (John 15:4). Following Christ in mission is indeed being joined to him.

4.3.5.3 The church as God’s agency for transformation

By virtue of the truths that arise because the church is an instrument in the hands of God, called on and sent to participate in the fulfilment of God's mission in the world, it is helpful to perceive the church as God's agency for transformation. In line with Engen (2010:24), “Mission means ‘sending’, and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God’s action in human history, with God’s people (now the church) being the primary agents of God’s missionary action.” Because, therefore, no one can encounter God and remain unchanged, God’s mission encounter with humankind is essentially transformative. This is what the church is called for.

Lingenfelter (1998:173) highlights the transformative mandate of the church by pointing out that, from the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit moved with power upon the small band of disciples in Jerusalem, the church has been God’s agency for the transformation of cultures and societies. Lingenfelter keeps arguing that, from the beginning, the vitality of the church has depended on the empowering of the Holy Spirit and the obedience of its members for the proclamation of the gospel and the discipling of new believers. The new believers, who were the result of the transformative power of the gospel, devoted themselves daily to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42-7). These spiritual disciplines, which were part of the shaping of the early church, served as a firm basis for the future transformative role of the church.

The living fellowship that resulted from hearing the proclamation of the gospel was itself a sign of transformation. As a faith community gathered around the word preached and that lived out its truth, the early church was capable of serving as a purifying influence to society. Without being truly transformed by the gospel, no one can live harmoniously with others to the point of surrendering freely his or her possessions and belongings for the sake of the others. So too, no one can endure the persecution and hardship that believers encounter on the path of faith. Lingenfelter (1998:173-5) puts it this way:

As the church spread out of Jerusalem in response to persecution, its power was based upon the collective spiritual life of its members and their commitment to being followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. They endured persecution and hardship and boldly preached the gospel to anyone who would listen. Moving outward, proclaiming good news in the power of the Holy Spirit, they touched every people with the message of hope, love, and reconciliation to God. As they followed the commands of the Lord Jesus before his death, their love and fearlessness in the face of opposition impressed the weak and the powerful in the pagan world around them...

Empowered by the Holy Spirit and living lives in the spirit that produced love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith, they began to change the world of the Jews and the Greeks around them. There was much opposition and conflict in this change process.

Cultural transformation, which is one of the major challenges to Christian mission throughout the world, has never come easily. If encountering the Mbuti Pygmies is a challenge to Christian mission in the DRC, this is because Christians from non-Pygmy ethnic groups remain too much bound to their own cultures, to the point of ignoring all about the culture of the Pygmy peoples. Internal transformation among these non-Pygmy Christians through fellowship, the learning of God's word and through prayer, in the power of the Holy Spirit, as was the case for the early Christians, would produce transformation that would in turn enable transformation among their neighbouring Mbuti Pygmies. Transformation is a process and not static. It is true that in many areas of social

life in the DRC, the church has proved sufficiently that it is capable of being God's agency for transformation. So, God wants it to encounter the Mbuti Pygmies in order to effect the same cultural transformation among them.

Recommending this significant missional mandate of the church, Engen (2010:25) maintains that a missional church is "the salt of the earth" (Matt 5:13), a transforming presence as the body of Christ in mission, called to be, to embody, and to live out in the world the following biblical concepts of mission, among others, *koinonia* (fellowship), *kerygma* (proclamation), *diakonia* (service), *martyria* (witness), and to be prophet, priest, king, liberator, healer, and sage.

To sum up this comprehensive section on the foundations of mission as encounter, it is good to keep in mind that from God's revelation through the *missio Dei*, the Incarnation of Jesus, the role of the Holy Spirit as the chief Agent of mission, up to the mandate of the church as a missional church, there are sufficient theological reasons to claim that Christian mission is worthy of being thought in terms of encounter. Such an understanding of mission will certainly lead to a new way of implementing Christian mission on the ground. This does not mean that Christian mission never has been carried out as encounter, but the concern in this study is that it has been carried out mostly in selective mode rather than as an open and integrated encounter. So, because God's encountering mission includes all human beings without exception, it has been useful to explore the five theological foundations of mission as encounter in order to discover practical ways and means through which one can encounter the Mbuti Pygmies. Before dealing with practical strategies that may help in the process of encountering these Mbuti Pygmies in the forthcoming chapter, it is useful first of all to examine some of the implications of mission as encounter.

4.4 Implications of Thinking Mission as Encounter

Thinking Christian mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology suggests some practical implications that may contribute to the development of the debate and practice of mission, encountering the Mbuti Pygmies. These practical implications include the obedience to the calling of God for mission, the face-to-face encounter rather than the tele-presence, the embrace that makes the other more human, the spirit of kenosis that brings about the spirit of belonging, the dialogue that unlocks Christian networks, the opportunity to learn from one another, and the courage of taking the risk. This list of practical implications of thinking mission as encounter is not exhaustive, and, in spite of its starting point, which is obedience to the call of God for mission, it does not even consist of hierarchy or priority.

4.4.1 Obedience to God's calling for mission

Because mission is primarily God's affair, Christians engage in it by means of God's calling which also, and always, involves the sending. From this point of view, the essence of mission becomes not just religious zeal, but rather a matter of faithful obedience to the one who calls for mission. Obedience is, thus, at the centre of mission, and it embodies the essence of Christian life. Furthermore, the issue of obedience raises a significant legitimate missiological concern (Cruse 2000:701). In his attempt at defining mission, Allmen (1954:89) points out that obedience works together with faithfulness and submission, and that these three qualifications, applied by a missionary or the one who is sent, enable a virtual encounter between two persons distant from one another, that is, the one who sends and the one to whom one is sent. This way of perceiving mission, according to him, is very important, because the one who is sent disappears behind the one who sends in order to enable the contact between the two distant

persons. This is to say that God encounters the humans and needs to encounter them in person through the faithful obedience of those whom he calls on and sends in the world.

Thinking mission as encounter or involving one's own physical person in encountering the "others" within their condition and culture for mission purposes is the most important obedience to God who is the initiator of mission. Encountering the Mbuti Pygmies who lack basic conditions for housing is an act of bravery, since such an endeavour cannot be achieved without obvious difficulties. The truth, however, is that, whatever the difficulties, obedience is not optional for Christians, but rather a "must", a way of life. Facing difficulties is intrinsic to Christian mission and requires bold humility and *kenosis*, which go hand in hand with obedience.⁹² This recalls the *kenosis* mission of Jesus, which is the foundation of Christian mission. Obedience, however, does not mean that Christian mission always involves difficulties, but rather that difficulties where they may occur should not prevent one from carrying out mission. On this point, Jesus Christ, the Master of mission warns:

... If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:34-36)

In keeping with the preceding views, the Society of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart – MSC (2011) has set up a set of statements about obedience and mission from which one may learn some pertinent motives relative to obedience to God's calling for mission. Some of these statements include the following:

3. We recognize that the practice of obedience in an apostolic congregation is for the sake of our common *mission*, for the vital embrace of our missionary charism and not simply the passive acceptance of one's task. The way of obedience is integral to the development of an authentically evangelical life-

⁹² In Philippians 2:5-8, humility and obedience seem to be bound together with the *kenosis*.

style and dedication to the coming of the Kingdom. We need to be clear and realistic about how we understand the practice of obedience today...

7. ... Such an understanding of obedience requires a more *personal* commitment and spirit of dedication...

9. Our reflection on the shift in the paradigm of obedience makes it clear that the way of Jesus must be the model for our way of obedience. Jesus reveals in his person and behaviour God's way of communicating – and thus, we might say, of obeying. ... In God to 'obey' is to be for the other and not for the self. ... In essence Jesus is defined as a *man* and as Son by his obedience to the Father and his openness to the Spirit.

The *principle of Incarnation* is the foundation of our obedience: the incarnate Word invites us to live out our humanity in the same dynamic relationship of Sonship that was his. ... We profess obedience to share his spirit of obedience that we may better serve our brothers (and sisters) and share more deeply in the mission of our Society and the Church"...

15. ...“Obedience cannot be in a vacuum but must be in a context where we read the signs of the times. Obedient response to God's will must include responding to the challenges that face contemporary culture today – globalization, ecological threats, issues around intimacy and sexuality, despair and hope”.

17. ... Obedience is the quality of a mature person, a discerning heart, one prepared to grow in personal authenticity and integrity. Contemporary events make it clear that when we do not know ourselves, acknowledge our personal needs, strengths and limitations, it is easy to fall into the abuse of power and clericalism. The spirit of obedience encourages us to let go, to be open to new life in a spirit of wholeness and integrity.

22. ... This new 'model' of obedience as discernment requires a more generous spirit of availability and responsibility... The practice of obedience also includes financial accountability, care for poverty and attentiveness to the poor, to justice and to the integrity of creation.

To sum up, the Society of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) offers necessary perspectives, all of which are vital for the effort of responding to the multiple challenges facing the Mbuti Pygmies. As a reminder, one may repeat that obedience involves a vital embrace of one's missionary charism versus a passive acceptance of one's task, the fact of being for the other not for the self, the awareness about contexts and the way to respond to their multiple

challenges, and the fact of being freed and open to new life in a spirit of wholeness and integrity. Moreover, obedience requires to be modelled on Christ's obedience to his Father, more commitment and a spirit of dedication, discernment, maturity, and growth of personal authenticity and integrity, availability and responsibility, financial accountability, care about poverty and attentiveness to the poor, to justice and to the integrity of creation. All of these elements are requirements and qualifications for the whole Christian and missional life, without which encountering the Mbuti Pygmies would remain a challenge to Christian mission in the DRC.

4.4.2 The face-to-face encounter rather than the tele-presence

Reflecting on mission as encounter implies a face-to-face encounter whereby the missionaries are genuinely present among the concrete communities within which they are called to work. This is theologically and missiologically vital and it emerges from four factors. First of all, the face-to-face encounter clearly spells out the core idea of mission, that is, the sending. Whatever the debate about the definition of mission, indeed, mission primarily suggests the sending. The fourth Gospel, in this respect, deals virtually, from the beginning to the end, with the sending of the Son by the Father and the sending of the disciples by the Son.

Secondly, the face-to-face encounter precludes the excuses and the spirit of laziness that make some Christians content to focus on only one aspect of mission, that is, mission in word. It is far easier for many ministers to commit courageously to preaching, teaching, and publishing Christian literature rather than being concretely involved in the other vital social needs of their communities. Likewise, Christian mission is currently going to depend vitally on literature and the media, such as evangelical books and journals, radio, television, the Internet and telephone, in short, on all the tools and means that "High-Tech" provides. Apart from the cost and the need for the tools that the

media require, it is very easy to proclaim and spread the gospel from one's own office to many unknown and unseen persons across the world. Far from being negative about this,⁹³ doing mission through the media is practical only in some cases and contexts. Otherwise, such a method of approaching mission may end in superficial results and so reveal itself as being impractical for communities like the Pygmy peoples. Not only does the context in which the Pygmy peoples live not allow them to benefit from the advantages of "High-Tech", but also, in some ways, limiting mission action to the media alone does not seem to be the way of integrity and faithfulness in participating in God's mission. It is necessary also to recognise that many among the non-Pygmy peoples in many places across the world, especially in Africa, have, until recently, no access to the media through radio, television, the Internet (E-mails, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, YouTube), journals and magazines, the telephone and cell phones, and MP3 and MP4, etc.

Lenoble-Bart (2001:200), who recognises the important role of both the face-to-face encounter in mission and the mission through the media expresses her concern as follows, "In their dealings with the media, Christians oscillate between the fascination for the vast potential audiences, but also the reserve related to theological privilege that is granted to the bodily presence within the celebration of worship and to the encounter with the other." Lenoble-Bart's worry means that, whatever the results, being contented with doing mission only through the media cannot really enable anyone to perform a genuine comprehensive and holistic mission, whereby the *martyria* (evangelism), *diakonia* (service) and *koinonia* (communion)⁹⁴ are lived.

It is true that the general tendency for using the modern means of communication is both to save time and energy and to limit physical and social contacts. Actually, people who are far from one another, even on the other side

⁹³ It should be noted that the media in mission remain useful means for sensitising masses and communities for the Kingdom of God. But sensitising and advertising should aim at an inclusive mission that leads to a genuine follow up of those who receive the gospel up until making them mature disciples of Christ (cf. Matt 28:19-20).

⁹⁴ Moody has developed a triangular definition of mission, which includes the *martyria*, *diakonia* and the *koinonia* (cf. Ribeiro 2011:2).

of the planet, can be in touch every day through the Internet or the telephone, while those who work together next to each other can also communicate through the computer or the telephone. Whatever the facilities of modern means of communication, however, bodily and social contacts remain the most vital way of performing an integrated Christian mission. People do not learn only through hearing but also through seeing, touching, feeling, and being challenged by the ways of life and cultures other than theirs. Regarding the case of the apostle Paul, which could be taken as an exception to the rule because of his several epistles written to local churches and to individuals, it should be noted that these epistles were written not for a pioneering missionary task but rather for a follow up. Paul's epistles are mostly didactic. It follows from his example that the writings and the media in mission should either be involved in the pioneering work, or they should be used as a follow up on the ground.

Thirdly, the face-to-face encounter is a way forward to target specific and concrete communities or people groups in specific geographical contexts, in order to save time and energy and so to be efficient at the work. This is what Jesus did among the Jews in the former Palestine. Actually, the most common challenge in mission has always been the tendency to waste time and energy by trying to embrace too many things and target too many population groups at the same time. There are some whose excessive zeal most of the times results in premature exhaustion rather than really pushing forward the mission they are intended to fulfil. On this issue, the model of Christ who has chosen to launch the worldwide mission through specific people and contexts, as has been shown, remains the one to whom one should refer. Targeting specific and concrete communities does not, however, mean shying away from all the other surrounding or remote communities.

The fourth motive for a face-to-face encounter is an opportunity for getting in touch with the reality on the ground. Of course, as far as Christian mission needs always to be contextualised, and for the sake of efficiency and updating methods and strategies for mission, realities on the ground remain

necessary. It is actually noticed that most of the most powerful and helpful Christian ministers and writers are those who have experienced genuine mission encounters in many places around the world. This means that, even mission through the media needs to be powerfully enriched and shaped by data and knowledge from the ground. What is important to note is that realities in mission fields are two-pronged. In one sense, they challenge the missionaries in terms of efficiency and methods, and, in another sense; they end by changing worldviews of the missionaries. In support of such a remark, Nissen (2004:69) admits, “The mission doesn’t change the world only, but also the church.”

4.4.3 The embrace that makes the ‘other’ more human

Another salient way of responding to the challenges facing the Pygmy peoples is what the authors, mainly Miroslav Volf, identify as the embrace.⁹⁵ Volf (1996) tackles the embrace by opposing it to the exclusion, because the embrace is the way forward where exclusion is experienced with its characteristics of discrimination, disdain, exploitation, breach of trust, and all the other prejudices that harm the human dignity of the other. In this case, the embrace does not imply just the formal sense of holding someone closely in one’s arms as a sign of affection and intimacy, or of accepting willingly or enthusiastically a career, a belief, a theory, or an option, but rather the dynamic consisting of making the other more human through Christian encounters with him or her. According to the Oxford Pocket Thesaurus of Current English (2009) the verb “to embrace” has, as synonyms, the verbs “to welcome”, “to accept”, and “to receive”. The Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite (2011) provides other helpful meanings, such as “to take in” or “include as a part”, and “to be equal or equivalent to (something or somebody)”.

⁹⁵ This concept of embrace is used in a metaphoric sense.

In clearer terms, Volf (1996:29) notes that the drama of embrace, which is the will to give ourselves to others and welcome them to readjust our identities and make space for them, is prior to any judgement about others, except that of identifying with them in their humanity. The will to embrace precedes any truth about others and any construction of their justice. This will is absolutely indiscriminate and strictly immutable, because it transcends the moral mapping of the social world into good and evil. Even if the will to embrace is indiscriminate, however, grace has primacy and the embrace itself is conditional. With social contexts, truth and justice are unavailable outside of the will to embrace the other; the embrace itself – full reconciliation – cannot take place until the truth has been spoken and justice done.

Taking one step farther, Volf (1996:76-9) tackles the opposite of the embrace, the exclusion, pointing out that the practice of exclusion and the language of exclusion go hand in hand with a whole array of emotional responses to the other, ranging from hatred to indifference, and that these two dimensions of exclusion call forth emotional responses and are sustained by them. To the questions, “Why do humans hate others or turn away from them? Why do they assault them with the rhetoric of inhumanity? Why do they seek to eliminate, dominate, or simply abandon them to their own fate?” Volf answers that sometimes the dehumanisation and consequent maltreatment of others are a projection of our own individual or collective hatred of ourselves (1996:77-9). He then unlocks his answer as follows:

... we persecute others because we are uncomfortable with strangeness within ourselves...

We exclude also because we are uncomfortable with anything that blurs accepted boundaries, disturbs our identities, and disarranges our symbolic cultural maps... We assimilate or eject strangers in order to ward off the perceived threat of chaotic waters rushing in...

We exclude not simply because we like the way things are (stable identities outside) or because we hate the way we are (shadows of our own identity), but because we desire what others have. More often than not, we exclude because

in a world of scarce resources and contested power we want to secure possessions and wrest the power from others...

We exclude because we want to be at the centre and be there alone, single-handedly, we add conquest to conquest and possession to possession; we colonise the life-space of others and drive them out; we penetrate in order to exclude, and we exclude in order to control – if possible everything, alone.

Denouncing the way the practice of exclusion and the language of exclusion are lived out even within the circles of Christians, Volf (1996:79) concludes, “Christians make use of silent or tacit exclusion. But whatever it can be, exclusion is exclusion. Silent or tacit exclusion is just like an empty space of neutrality.”

So if the Pygmy peoples are generally excluded within the whole of the DRC society through the varied prejudices mentioned above and in chapter two, the churches certainly make use of silent or tacit exclusion towards them. Rightly speaking, the churches have never openly excluded the Pygmy peoples. But, at the same time, they have no clear and concrete mission agendas about the Pygmy peoples. This kind of “empty space of neutrality” of the churches is certainly what the current study has identified as a challenge to Christian mission in DRC.

Coming back to the embrace, Volf (1996:144), sensitively, makes it clear that the “Embrace does not make two bodies one by transforming the boundary between bodies into the seam that holds together one body. What holds the bodies together in an embrace is not their welded boundary, but the arms placed around the other.” This is a valid truth about any mission encounter with any other people. So, reflecting on the theme of interreligious dialogue, Dervieu (2008:19) corroborates Volf’s idea of embrace through the concept of dialogue, and he provides for some significant inputs about the relationships needed between the “self” and the “other”. For him, dialogue means that the other, next to me, the other in front of me, will reveal to me something of my humanity, of my own, and that with him, thanks to him, I will look at the difference not as an obstacle or a matter of conflict but as an opportunity to act more for the good of

our humanity. It is about walking together towards a culture of peace for the good of our humanity. Dialogue is not, therefore, about changing the other, but changing oneself, to try to know oneself better.

In view of these inputs, it is worthy of admitting that the embrace is a way forward for restoring his/her human dignity to the other, that is to say, making him/her more human. The embrace, which is itself a sign of confidence in the other, enables an environment of mutual confidence, which, in turn, creates new perspectives. Volf highlights this dimension of embrace by posing a pertinent question to which he provides a prompt answer as follows:

Why should I embrace the others? The answer is simple: because the others are part of my own true identity. I cannot live authentically without welcoming the others – the other gender, other persons, or other cultures – into the very structure of my being. For I am created to reflect the personality of the Triune God. (Gundry-Volf & Volf 1997:59)

Karecki (2000:4) makes a comment on this perception of Volf relative to the embrace, by pointing out that each human being has been created to reflect the mystery of the Trinity, which is a community of persons in whose life we share through our baptism. This community, according to her, is an inclusive one, open and ready to embrace the other, all the “others”. The kind of embrace that Volf has in mind does not crush, but shows openness to the other. It breaks down the barriers that separate “us” from “them”.

Bearing all the above comments in mind, it should be noted that the embrace which results from mission encounters should not necessarily depend on material aid, because, where there is no confidence and mutual acceptance, the needy receive the material aid but reject their donors. This is the unpleasant case with the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri forest who, most of the time, claim that they receive humanitarian aid without almost any consideration from their donors (cf. MP3 2010).

Without creating an environment of confidence and mutual acceptance through the embrace, not only will the missionaries be rejected, but the gospel

that they are supposed to bring with them will also be rejected. Such sad experiences are not uncommon in mission endeavours.

4.4.4 The spirit of kenosis⁹⁶ that brings about the spirit of belonging

Alongside the previous implications of mission as encounter, there is the spirit of kenosis that creates in the other the spirit of belonging. In fact, deliberately leaving one's own cultural and social comfort for confronting other lifestyles and cultures is a major challenge in the missionary endeavour. Such a challenge can be faced only through obedience to God's calling for mission that is materialized by the spirit of kenosis. The apostle Paul, therefore, recommends that the Philippian believers have in them the mind of kenosis towards the others (cf. Phil 2:1-8). The spirit of kenosis is a necessary attitude in the mission endeavour. It certainly opens to the others, assures them, and brings about the spirit of belonging in them. The spirit of kenosis enables the performance of mission, not from above but from below, where, thanks to the experiences each has acquired, each can easily declare his allegiance to the gospel.

Raguin (1969:57) agrees that the spirit of kenosis is necessary for anyone concerned about reaching out to people who are different from themselves, and he says:

The state of kenosis puts us in the state of reciprocity. We are instinctively ready to keep silent, to listen, to try to understand, to let ourselves be impregnated by the atmosphere and by the surroundings. In that way we are ready to understand others from the inside. We do not try to examine what they are, what they do or what they say according to what we are, or do or say. We can thus try to understand their very being with all the expression of themselves which is accessible to us. If we do so we will become familiar with an interior world different from ours but nevertheless deeply similar. We hope to arrive then at an intuitive knowledge of the other, of his [sic] being. Only then shall

⁹⁶ With regard to the mission encounters with the Asian peoples, Phan (2003:139-142) makes use of the term "kenotic spirituality" instead of "the spirit of kenosis".

we be in harmony and will it be possible to arrive at a person to person relationship. This is the entrance into an essential understanding of the other.⁹⁷

Karecki (2012:57), who also quotes Raguin, makes a comment that Jesus, through kenosis, entered into the world of the other and became part of it, and that this kind of travelling into the inner of another is what enables Christians to be compassionate and sensitive to another. In this way, Karecki goes on; Christians reveal the awesome mystery of the vulnerability of God to others, for it is in powerlessness and humility that God has chosen to reveal himself to human beings.

Creating the spirit of belonging should, therefore, be one of the outcomes of the mission action, because, as Moser wonders whether one may believe without belonging (Comeau & Zorn 2004:11), Christian faith does not come from a vacuum, but from the awareness of an objective fact. That is why the apostle Paul wrote, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17). The preceding verses to this scriptural statement suggest someone who must earlier be sent to preach the word of Christ. Preaching the word of Christ, the gospel, within the missionary context that Paul experienced pre-supposed a face-to-face encounter with the others, within their specific contexts. The more the gospel kept being announced by a preacher concretely involved in the life of his listeners, as the apostle Paul did in many places where he worked, the more it opened the way for being received. In fact, the spirit of belonging refers to the issue of complex relationships an individual has with the groups among which he operates, that is, the experience within one’s own context.

Moser (Comeau & Zorn 2004:14f) identifies four common types of belonging: the implicit belonging whose paradigm is the Government or the nation; the informal belonging whose paradigm is the vast audiences; the elective belonging whose paradigm is the club or the association; and the belonging through work. Beyond these four types of belonging, Moser also

⁹⁷ This is also found in Karecki (2012:57).

points out, each Christian is called upon to declare his double belonging to which he/she owes one and the same faithfulness, the same community of destiny and the Christian community. Each Christian is certainly bound to his/her society with its components and also to the Christian community. Apart from the community of destiny within the forest and its hunting bands, however, to which other communities and religions do the Pygmy peoples belong? How will these neglected and cautious peoples declare their membership to the gospel without being first ensured of the humility and the spirit of kenosis of those who must encounter them? This is to say that a genuine missional encounter should contribute to creating a certain experience in the ones who are encountered. The experience contributes very much to the shaping of the spirit of belonging. Giussani (2006:95-7) spells out the relevance of the experience that can be gained through a genuine encounter as follows:

...the experience of the encounter is an experience of freshness whose depth is proportional to our awareness of its being rooted in a long history... The encounter with God or a person or the community can spring from the evidence of a moment and then be lived only as a memory. At times it seems like “a beacon in the fog”, but still this fleeting appearance leaves us with the confidence of having discovered “something that has something within.”...The encounter with the word and power of God is always an encounter with something that reveals one to oneself; that empowers, enhances one.

Thereafter, Giussani (2006:105) maintains that the experience is a fundamental method through which nature facilitates the development of awareness and the growth of a person. No one can speak of experience without an awareness of “growing” in them; and to grow truly, one needs to be provoked or helped by something different from him/her, by something objective, by something that one encounters.

Finally, Giussani concludes, “Only through a true, objective experience can men and women become aware of the presence of God in the world.” This means, in other words, that it is through a true and objective experience that men

and women can objectively declare their allegiance to the gospel. It seems true, therefore, that it is only through the spirit of kenosis in the mission encounters that the Pygmy peoples can freely declare their allegiance to the gospel, which, because of the discriminatory attitude of the non-Pygmies towards them, has often been considered to be the private preserve of the foreigners. Thus, in the specific case of the Mbuti Pygmies, the attitude or spirit of kenosis that the apostle Paul recommends is a way forward to reduce, or even to eliminate the obvious distance that separates them from the others.

4.4.5 The dialogue that unlocks Christian networks

Mission encounters with exotic peoples have meant, over time, a great deal for extending and creating Christian networks. Christian networks have, however, been created and extended, and are still being extended on the basis of selective patterns. Christian ties are often made between A to B, and they extend from B to B₁, B₂, B₃; but rarely or never from B to C, D, E, and so on.⁹⁸ This linear way of carrying out Christian mission has led to situations in which some population groups are targeted whereas their close neighbours are forgotten. Such is the plight of the Mbuti Pygmies in the northeast DRC who, surrounded by strong churches with a very long experience, remain almost unreached and unchurched population groups. There are even some local churches established within the forest among the Mbuti Pygmies, but the members of these are only the B₁, B₂, and B₃ who have emigrated there for agricultural purposes. In terms of Christian fellowship, these church members who are ‘other’ than the Mbuti Pygmies relate to themselves and their fellows – the “Bs” – in villages and towns, but never

⁹⁸These alphabetical letters are used symbolically. A = the first missionary undertaking from the West; B = the first culture that received the gospel from A. B₁, B₂, B₃ = the extensions of B within the same culture and all other cultures related to B; and C, D, E = all those B considers as the others.

with their close neighbours, the Mbuti Pygmies. This issue can be schematised in the following way:

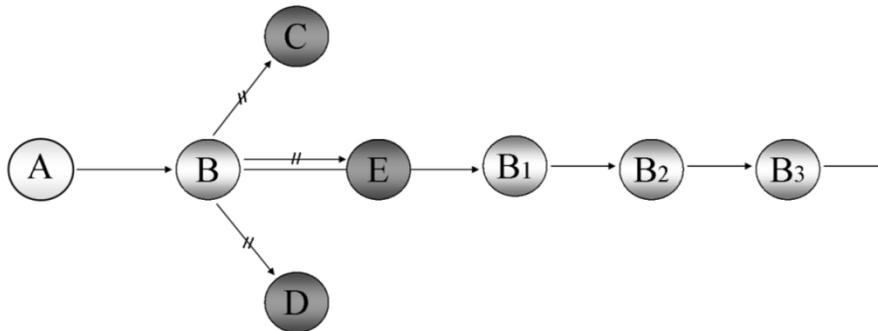


Figure 4.20: False process of networking Christian communion in the DRC

This *figure 4.20* better illustrates the way the process for networking Christian communion in the DRC has been almost locked into some cultures to the detriment of others since the early missionary activities in this country.

McGavran and Riddle (1979:100) express the same concern about the DRC in different words, and they make use of the symbols E-0, E-1, E-2, and E-3. The alphabetical letter E refers to the Evangelism and the numbers 0 to 3 to the different steps within the process of the Evangelism. For these authors, E-2 is the discipling of people of another language and tribe within the country, and E-3 is the discipling of another tribe and culture outside the country.⁹⁹ E-0 consists of renewing Christians from one's own community, tribe, and language, while E-1 happens when people from the same tribe and language group, but not Christians, are evangelised. The conclusion of these authors is that the present programmes of Evangelism of the Church of Christ in Congo, a Network of more than 66 mainline Protestant Denominations, are almost entirely in E-0 and E-1 categories, in other words, in the line B to B₁, B₂, B₃, and so on.

⁹⁹It should be admitted, however, that, as it has been demonstrated previously about the noticeable discrimination against the Pygmy peoples, these authors are also not exempt from the common tendency to exclude these peoples. In their classification and analysis, they put the Pygmy peoples in the category of E-3, as if they were another people living outside the DRC (cf. McGavran & Riddle 1979:100).

Thinking about mission as encounter is, in the specific case of the Pygmy peoples, a dialogue that in fact unlocks Christian networks. This means that Christian mission becomes mission without borders and for all peoples without distinction. In this sense, mission must be thought of in a multidimensional way in order to provoke dialogue where there are differences. The encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, in John 4, provides for a very good example of dialogue that unlocks Christian networks. From this example, one may learn that:

- It is possible to understand one another, despite differences. There were noticeable differences because of religion, culture and gender, but also because of the discrimination against Samaritans by the Jews.
- The dialogue passes through tensions between what people are, believe, do, and think. This is seen this way: “You are a Jew, I am a Samaritan woman” (v 9); “We worship on this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place” (v 20); “You Samaritans do not really know whom you worship, but we Jews know whom we worship, because it is from the Jews that salvation comes” (v 22).
- The dialogue also passes from the individual to the community. This is indicated by the personal pronouns “you”, “me” (v 9), “you”, “we”, “my ancestors” and “you Jews” (traditions).
- At the end of the dialogue, Jesus and the Samaritan woman discover a common agenda, the messianic expectation. As a matter of fact, the Samaritan woman engaged in unlocking the good news she received from Jesus in favour of the people of her town, saying to them, “Come and see the man who told me everything I have ever done. Could he be the Messiah?” (cf. López 2009:45).

To unlock Christian mission networks through sincere dialogue involves opening isolated population groups, such as the Pygmy peoples, to the world. The use of social networks within the contemporary context of an accelerated global market certainly enables the acquisition of new information, the exchange of information, the finding of employment, learning more about new opportunities, and the exchange of new ideas, among other purposes. Individuals can acquire social ties in a number of social settings such as jobs, social organisations, religious organisations, political organisations, professional organisations, sports and cultural groups, a group of friends, etc. Actually, the world, in its diverse organisations and links among peoples, has become a large metaphorical open book from which one can learn as from a real book. The social, mental, and spiritual opening up of the Mbuti Pygmies is, therefore, biblically and missiologically to be recommended, since these peoples also are God's images, created after his likeness, and worthy of benefiting equally from his grace.

4.4.6 The opportunity to learn from one another

Encountering exotic peoples has often led to running the real risk of thinking that one brings all kinds of skills to others and that there is nothing to learn from them. This risk that naturally involves attitudes of superiority has marked Christian mission over its history in many lands and contexts, with as consequences the damaging behaviour of paternalism. Likewise, to encounter the Mbuti Pygmies who are generally needy in almost all aspects is a very demanding task that implies assisting them from the level of basic education and elementary notions of health and hygiene. Roux (1984:331) who, along with Niles, seems to have a contrary view with regard to material aid, warns that, "Witnesses are not rich people who aim at assisting poor people, but they are beggars who tell the other beggars where they can together find their food."

Roux is not against the substantial aid that may be given to people that are encountered, but he is against the focus on humanitarian aid at the expense of holistic mission. With regard to the Mbuti Pygmies, therefore, evangelical duty and humanitarian aid should be offered equally in a spirit of humility. Some relevant questions arise however. Is the need to assist the needy the only thing to be gained in the process of encountering the Mbuti Pygmies? Is there something one can learn from them? Within the current context of the global market and interactions, what can city-dwellers learn from peasants and forest dwellers such as the Mbuti Pygmies?

Among the values and benefits of the Mbuti Pygmies that were identified in chapters two and three, namely the skills in mastering the forest and its resources, the skills in entertainment and crafting, the skills relating to natural diet and herbal medicine, the absence of conflict and discrimination with regard to age, gender, family, and belief, the social organisation where everything is shared, where there are no rich and poor, where well-being does not mean the accumulation of material possessions, and where marriage is generally monogamous and permanent (cf. Duffy 1996:vii), and the instinctive and accurate consciousness about the excessive consumption of the environment that must be prevented, these peoples really have something good to offer all. Within the current context of climate change, for example, one of the most important things that one should learn from the Mbuti Pygmies is involvement in earthkeeping. Duffy (1996:176) puts it well when he says that, “The Mbuti’s natural and total harmony with their ecosystem is something from which all people can learn.”

In any case, it seems that before the ecologists were aware of global warming in response to greenhouse gases, the Pygmy peoples were already aware of that problem. As a result, they all have a right and responsible culture for not wasting the environment uselessly by destroying the forests, hunting the wild animals during their gestation period, by over hunting resulting in the extinction of some species, by gathering more than what is really needed, and by

settling in the same places for a very long period. Quoting Václav Havel from “The Art of the Impossible”, in this regard, Sacks (2003:161) reveals that, “Only people with the sense of responsibility for the world and to the world are truly responsible to and for themselves.”

Broadly speaking, learning from the Mbuti Pygmies in terms of earthkeeping involves the necessity of engaging in the process of caring about the earth. This is not just “fellowshipping” with them, but rather the more courageous effort of learning from below about this neglected but very important aspect of the church mission. Leddy (2011) is not mistaken when he states, “It is sometimes people very, very different from ourselves who summon us to become who we really are.” Actually, for the sake of future generations, because the present generations are not the only tenants of the earth, the church should draw more attention to the fact that caring about the earth is one of its urgent missional duties. The integrity of creation is indeed one of the key problems that the church’s role in evangelisation should not ignore, because all the issues relating to the earth are in the centre of the concerns of God’s Kingdom (cf. Ela 2003:122-5). In support of this significant affirmation, Wright (2006:397) reminds Christians, from a biblical perspective, that;

The earth is the Lord’s. The earth, then, belongs to God because God made it. At the very least this reminds us that if the earth is God’s, it is not ours. We do not own this planet, even if our behaviour tends to boast that we think we do. No, God is the earth’s landlord and we are God’s tenants. God has given the earth into our resident possession (Ps 115:16), but we do not hold the title deed of ultimate ownership. So, as in any landlord-tenant relationship, God holds us accountable to himself for how we treat his property.

About these Wright’s theological perspectives, Parsons (2011:7) points out that the “Naturalist R. J. Berry, in agreement with many eco-feminists, rejects the theology of human stewardship of the environment because he reasons that God cannot be the absentee landlord, transcendent and uninvolved.” Sacks (2003:165-6), however, who has the same understanding as Wright, maintains

that human beings do not only not own nature, but they are duty bound to respect its integrity. Sacks puts his point of view rather well in connection with the interpretation of Genesis about the creation of human beings, their first mandate, and their fall. For him, the mandate given to human beings to exercise dominion over all other creatures is not technical but moral and is limited by the requirement to protect and conserve. The eating of the forbidden fruit and man's subsequent exile from Eden seems to justify this point that everything is not permitted. There are limits to what humans may do, and, when these limits are transgressed, disaster follows, "Dust you are, and to dust you will return" (Gen 3:19). Sacks (2003:167) underscores his point of view by stating that, "Creation has its own dignity as God's masterpiece, and, though we have the mandate to use it, we have none to destroy or despoil it." So, caring about creation, the environment, should be taken as accountability imposed on everyone and not just a concern of the ecologists.

Protecting the environment in Africa as well as in the rest of the world has become a major and a crucial issue. The evidence of environmental destruction at an accelerated pace, as shown below, are unmistakable indications. If no substantial action is taken, the future of the next generations is surely in danger. The major factors of environmental destruction on a global level as identified by Wright (2006:413) can be seen as:

- The pollution of the air, the sea, rivers, lakes and great aquifers;
- The devastation of rainforests and many other habitats, with the terrible effect on dependent (living beings);
- Desertification and soil loss;
- The loss of species – animals, plants, birds, insects – and the huge reduction of essential bio-diversity on a planet that depends on it;
- The hunting of some species to extinction;

- The depletion of the ozone layer; and
- The increase of the greenhouse gases and consequent global warming.

One may add to this Wright's non-exhaustive list the destruction of the environment due to overcrowded cities and bad urbanisation, and even to toxic garbage. For example, the city of Libreville in Gabon alone, with its population of 619 000 inhabitants, produces 350 tonnes of garbage each day. According to *Radio France Internationale – RFI* (2012), this amount of garbage is beyond the capacity of the Gabonese services in charge of collecting it. This has become a major hygienic issue in Libreville. Likewise, the DRC capital city Kinshasa, with its population of more than 8 401 000 inhabitants produces more than 5 000 tonnes of garbage daily (Radio Okapi 2012).

Wright (2006) clearly maintains that all the above factors constitute a vast and interrelated impending catastrophe of loss and destruction that affects the whole planet and all its human and nonhuman inhabitants. To be unconcerned about it, he insists, is to be either desperately ignorant or irresponsibly callous. As every country in the North and the South has some responsibility with regard to environmental destruction, to be opposed to the destruction of the planet constitutes a contemporary prophetic mission for the church. In this case the Mbuti Pygmies who, for example, make use of only what that is needed and do not accumulate material possessions, seem to provide a good example that may be imitated. Furthermore, Sacks makes a very fascinating observation on the relevance of protecting the creation by concluding that:

We are more aware than any previous generation of how much our existence depends on the presence of other species, which produce the food we eat and the oxygen we breathe, absorb the carbon dioxide we exhale, sustain the fertility of the soil and provide the raw materials we need. Those species in turn depend on others; and others still may, in ways yet unknown, turn out to contain vitally important antibiotics or other medical agents – 40 per cent of all medicines used today depend on substances originally extracted from plants,

fungi, animals and micro-organisms. We are beginning to understand how complex and interdependent biosystems are, and how unpredictable the consequences are of the destruction of a species or habitat. Diversity needs protection. (Sacks 2003:173)

Bearing these observations in mind, it is worthwhile for Christians to imitate models wherever they can be found for the sake of God's kingdom. In fact, those whom human beings see as different from themselves could be precious gifts to them if only they were open-minded. Karecki (2000:3) believes that, "We can, if we open ourselves, be enriched by people of different cultures. Of course, it depends on how we see another person: as a problem, or as profound mystery before whom we stand with awe and wonder." Accordingly, if the earthkeeping involvement of the Mbuti Pygmies may be recognised as being an instinctive value, this should enable the non-Pygmy people to recognise that these peoples are worthy of God's gifts and graces. If the non-Pygmy peoples claim to have something to teach the Pygmy peoples, they should humbly accept that they also have something to learn from them.

4.4.7 The courage of taking the risk

As a summary of the above implications of mission as encounter, mission as encounter ultimately implies the courage of taking the risk. Obedience to God's call for mission, the face-to-face encounter rather than the tele-presence, the embrace that makes the other more human, the spirit of kenosis that reassures the others and brings about the spirit of belonging in them, the dialogue that unlocks Christian mission networks, and the courage to learn from one another, all involve something of a risk.

Advocating radical change in order to meet the challenges facing the mission development in Africa, Mbiti (1971:2-4) suggests efficiency, far-sightedness, experiments, the taking of a risk, and dynamic faith as necessary demands on the

church. About the demand of taking a risk, he presents the whole Christian mission as a risk, and recommends faithful courage in mission, by stating that:

Without risks there can be no progress. The taking of risks is an opposite of conservatism. Christianity is a religion of risks: the incarnation of Christ was a risk, the death of Jesus was a risk, the Great Commission to His followers to spread the Gospel was also a risk, [and] missionary work is a risk. So unless the Church here is ready to take risks it will not make any progress. Risks in turn demand courage and faith. We need the courage to change and be changed, the courage to suffer and serve, the courage to get dirty and become holy. (Mbiti 1971:4)

Through his arguments, Mbiti brings to light a broad and comprehensive understanding of the requirements of being disciple of Christ. Because Christian mission can be performed and produce fruit only if there are those who are committed to taking the risk, Jesus encouraged his followers to take the risks, saying: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt 16:24-25 cf. Mark 8:34-35).

4.5 Conclusion

Thinking mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology has enabled to establish that such an approach to mission is biblically and theologically founded. From the fact that God has encountered human beings since the creation, and that he is still willing to encounter them through divine means including the church, there is no reason for Christians to shy away from encountering those whose culture, religion, race, or gender differ from theirs. That is why, unless Christian mission is perceived and carried out essentially as a matter of genuine encounters with others, the church will achieve no significant progress in the world.

In order to acquire a better understanding of the missiological paradigm of encounter, this chapter has investigated three key points:

- The overall understanding of the concept of mission as encounter in order to find out whether this paradigm is capable of having a missiological theory that could help in the perspective of reaching out to the Mbuti Pygmies built upon it.
- The theological foundations of thinking mission as encounter through which mission, as God's initiative, has been tackled as essentially encounter-oriented. Not only does the Triune God encounter humankind, but also the church, as his only privileged instrument for mission, is commissioned to keep encountering all the nations on the basis of Christ's model, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is the chief Agent of mission. The model of Christ's Incarnation and other models, identified as the borders crossing, the spirit of kenosis in mission, holistic and intercultural mission, and contextualisation in mission, should be taken into account by the Church in its missional agenda.
- Some implications of mission as encounter, which could contribute to the development of the debate and the practice of mission in terms of meeting the challenges facing the Mbuti Pygmies, were examined. These implications begin with obedience to God's call for mission and culminate in the courage of taking the risk, because the whole Christian mission should be seen as a matter of risk.

It should be noted, as a result of the findings gained, that the missiological paradigm of encounter in Christian mission is two-pronged. On the one hand, the encounter enriches the other, the one who is encountered, as it opens the way for the Reign of God. On the other hand, it becomes an opportunity for the enrichment of Christians from and through the other, to know who they are and who God is

through the other, because the other is a full image of God and so reflects truly the kind of image of God that Christians are. Grundy-Volf & Volf (1997:59) expresses this more profoundly by stating, “The others are part of my own true identity.”

It should be noted also that, if the Mbuti Pygmies remain “unreached” and “unchurched” people, this does not mean that they have rejected the church or the gospel. But rather, it is because the church has failed to encounter them, because it is itself not yet perfect. In fact, the church has not yet taken the gospel to “the ends of the earth” where the Mbuti Pygmies are living. The apostle Paul, the most powerful early missionary, recognises that he had not yet reached the goal and perfection, but he is pressing and struggling to take hold of the prize (cf. Phil 3:18). To help the church in its ongoing pressing on and struggle for seizing the prize, with regard to the Mbuti Pygmies, the next chapter will focus on suggesting some practical strategies that involve the missional approach of the encounter.

Chapter Five

STRATEGIES FOR THE MISSIONAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE MBUTI PYGMIES

5.1 Introduction

The knowledge gained through the earlier chapters now enables to devote this penultimate chapter to some strategies for the mission encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies. Indeed, the issue of how to encounter the needy and desperate people such as the Mbuti Pygmies raises obvious questions, reservations, and hesitations. How does one behave *vis-à-vis* them? Which aspect of their needs can be taken into account first of all? How, when and where does one start, since the Mbuti Pygmies are naturally isolated and nomadic? If the missional encounter is a way forward to tackle the challenge to Christian mission in the DRC with regard to the Mbuti Pygmies, the question remains of how this can be done without harming them in terms of their identity, context, culture, and traditional ways of life. In short, what missional strategies would be most appropriate for addressing such people groups who live in very different situations and act in very different ways? These are some of the pertinent questions that arise and to which this chapter intends to provide answers.

Encountering other cultures quite different from one's own culture is certainly a very tricky issue which necessitates appropriate strategies, or further tools necessary to mission which, when it is carried out among the Pygmy peoples, has often been limited to a mere proclamation of the gospel. In this sense, Søggaard (1993:69) thinks, "We may have many good strategies that are independently effective, but due to the fact that they are not integrated but

disconnected and isolated steps, ultimate results are not seen”. Four strategies are suggested with regard to the mission encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, which is by itself a strategy. As a first strategy, this chapter examines conversion as the first act that Christians should undertake in the process of the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies. This conversion, however, does not necessarily have to do with the Mbuti Pygmies who often are considered to be “heathens” who must be converted. Secondly, the chapter intends to argue that the Mbuti Pygmies ought to be perceived as being both fully made in the “image of God” and fully part of the “all nations”. In fact, it is only through a clear conviction about these scriptural truths *vis-à-vis* the Mbuti Pygmies that any legitimate mission encounter with them can take place.

Thirdly, this chapter five suggests formal education as an opportunity for sustainable development among the Mbuti Pygmies. There are certainly many areas of development in which the Mbuti Pygmies urgently need assistance, for example, access to housing, health care and sanitation, food, clothing, and to basic human rights. In addition, the Mbuti Pygmies surely already have a good informal and traditional education that helps them in mastering the forest and its hardships. But because of external influences resulting from accelerated globalisation, the access to formal education appears to be a way that could open doors to them for other developmental opportunities.

Finally, this last but one chapter suggests that the churches of the DRC be reinforced and equipped through an integrated and encompassing theological education. From a critical point of view, it seems that the theological education in the DRC presents manifest gaps with regard to the conducting of mission as something that has to do mostly with the contexts in which populations are encountered. Not only does theological education seem to deal less with the realities on the ground, but also missiology as theological discipline is also often regarded as alien or an appendix to mainstream theology. This kind of theologising results in negative consequences for all the activities of the church

to such an extent that theology has become little more than a synonym for ecclesiology.

5.2 Conversion

The anthropologist and ethnologist Bahuchet (1991:31), who conducted successful empirical research on the Pygmy peoples in Central Africa for several years, from Cameroon to the northeast DRC, and is the author and co-author of several publications on the same people groups, has concluded that the improvement of the fate of the Pygmy peoples must necessarily be achieved through the education of the villagers, the non-Pygmy peoples. This conclusion is noteworthy as it suggests the education not of the so-called uncivilised and illiterate Pygmy peoples but rather of the so-called civilised and literate villagers. Which group needs education, the Pygmy peoples or the villagers? Insofar as both groups need education, what kind of education would be best especially for the villagers who are supposed to already be educated? It is in line with this last question that conversion¹ is suggested as a necessary starting point for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies.

Those who are willing to commit to a mission encounter with the population groups living within other cultures and contexts, such as the Mbuti Pygmies, should first of all be awakened and equipped through an appropriate education, which is none other than conversion. Quoting Gutiérrez in this respect, Roux (2007:129) submits that “every spiritual journey starts with conversion: it involves a break with the life lived up to that day.” In the same sense, Gittins (1993:36-52) talks about the conversion of the missionary; that is, the intentional and personal change and transformation of the missionary for the effectiveness of mission. This kind of conversion is what is expected with regard to the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies.

¹ Cf. Musolo W’Isuka (2011:84-87).

What does conversion mean? Why does one deal, first of all, with the conversion of Christians rather than the conversion of the targeted Mbuti Pygmies? What results could one expect from such a conversion of the missionary? To answer these questions, this section intends to examine the meaning of the term conversion, the types of conversion, and the outcomes of the missionary's conversion.

5.2.1 The term conversion

The term conversion is full of meaning, and its scope goes beyond the religious area. Biblically, the idea of conversion is a central theme in both the Old Testament and the New Testament and, especially, in the Gospels and the book of Acts. While, for instance, the Gospel according to Mark opens with a call to repentance for the forgiveness of sins in order to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus who was to come, and who focused himself on the call for repentance and belief in the gospel as well, the Gospel according to Luke ends with the same note of repentance and forgiveness of sins that should be proclaimed in Jesus' name to all nations.

One may agree with Karecki (2000:13) that Jesus began his public ministry with a call to repentance, that is *metanoia* in Greek, which means turning from and turning to, or more literally, returning home. For Karecki, conversion is always a returning home to the position of who human beings are in God, who they are at the deepest level of their being, a turning from irresponsible to responsible living, which is a turning away from sin and turning to Christ and his teaching, a call to change so that they might be more authentic witnesses to the values of the gospel. Hiebert (2008:311), however, considers two dimensions of conversion, conversion as a point or a turning around that may involve a minimal amount of information regarding Christ, and conversion as a process or a series of decisions that grow out of this initial turning. All these

truths about conversion mean that human beings are, naturally, what they are not supposed to be in God. So conversion is a process towards what God wants human beings to be, and everyone is called to it.

The process of conversion is a very complex subject in theology. Spindler (2001:70) refers to it as a change of orientation and of nature, and points out that all human conversion is founded on the divine conversion, in the sense that God, in his unfathomable and infinite love, has decided to turn to humankind, to come close to them and walk with them. In this sense, the sending of Christ at a given point in history highlights the change that has occurred in God. This sustains the Christian common tradition according to which God is the one who initiates conversion so as to enable human beings to be reconciled with himself through the Holy Spirit who opens them to respond to God's call. "This call does not take place in a vacuum; it can be heard in the circumstances of our lives through people, events, creation, suffering, celebrations, work situations, and so on. It is personal and contextual" (Karecki 2000:14). So, too,

If conversion is a continuous process, then *metanoia* or "conversion of heart" must take place where we actually are as we change within a changing world. It does not happen in a vacuum but in a rather volatile microcosm: our own life. The most obvious context for our life is our own body, but embodiment had hardly been acknowledged, much less celebrated, as a variable in spirituality. It needs to be considered in relation to mission generally and is very pertinent here. The body we have or are, and its condition or state, is not an outcome merely of personal choice or caprice. It is meaningful and comprehensive in relation to social as well as personal factors. The particularities of our embodiment are significant: the body's state of health, age, sex, and aesthetic appeal. Given that conversion is a social experience and that embodiment has a social context, how is our embodiment acknowledged, redeemed, and integrated – or is it acknowledged, bypassed, and overlooked? (Gittins 1993:42)

Because God has initiated conversion through himself, Spindler (2001:70) maintains that human conversion can be perceived only as an analogy of that change that God has experienced himself, because a static conception of God,

according to which God is merely immobile and unchanging, makes all notion of human conversion problematic.

To go further in an understanding of the term conversion, McKnight (2007:71) suggests that this concept be studied from two distinguishable perspectives, from above or theologically, and from below or sociologically. Conversion from above, as has been said briefly in the previous paragraphs, is a process whereby God makes humans fit to complete his design for the world for all eternity. Its scope is more than personal forgiveness of sins, and it extends to the entire process of God's work of transforming human beings so that they become what he wants them to be. Conversion from above is, therefore, wholly the result of God's grace (McKnight 2007:72). Love (2000:231) puts emphasis on the fact that "only God can bring about conversion", and calls this "the Godward dimension of conversion, known as 'regeneration' (Titus 3:5) or more popularly known as being 'born again' (John 3:1-8)."

On the sociological side, that is, conversion from below, Karecki (2000:14) reveals that there are different types of conversions, all of which, if they are authentic, require a responsible choice to be made on the part of the person being called to conversion. For her, the type of conversion to which one is called is dependent on who he/she is and which area of his/her life needs to be confronted. Conversion is, in this sense, a lifelong process, because human beings are always in need of conversion. Roux (2007:133) refers to this kind of conversion as an ongoing process in missions practice, stating, "Every day we should be converted by experiences of change and transformation (whether for the first time regarding specific issues, or anew), as we grow to reflect the glory of God more and more." Even though every conversion is not necessarily religious (cf. Karecki 2000); every type of conversion has to do with some kind of call to change the life of a human being.

5.2.2 Types of conversion

Because of its evident holistic character, conversion needs to take place in many areas of the lives of human beings, and each person, event, or context is an occasion for conversion. Along with Gelpi (1998), who has analysed various types of conversion, Karecki (2000:14-6) describes five different types of conversion.² These are affective, intellectual, personal moral, socio-political, and religious conversion. In her analysis, Karecki notices that the five types of conversion do not imply five different types of people, but that all five types could occur in each human being. They could happen simultaneously or consecutively depending on who the human beings are, how they are being called to conversion and who or what is precipitating that call. Conversion, no matter of what type is, contrary to the belief that it is a single act in a human life, is always an ongoing process, because Christians are never fully converted to the Lord.

The five types of conversion below sustain the idea that no aspect of human life can be left untouched in authentic conversion. So, every conversion may be a religious conversion even if the humans are not consciously aware of it.

5.2.2.1 The affective conversion

The affective conversion is concerned with healthy intuitive perceptions of reality and, for this reason; it can animate the other forms of conversion with

² McKnight (2007:72-3) identifies, in other words, six dimensions of conversion, which are: the *context* that shapes conversion; the *crisis* that precipitates the yearning for spiritual transformation, the *quest* for resolution to one's own crisis, the *encounter* with Jesus Christ, the *commitment* to the truth of the gospel and to God in a personal manner, and the *consequences* that must make itself manifest in changes – affective, intellectual, ethical, and socio-political. Fundamentally, the consequence of conversion is the transformation of identity, as a person shifts from the self to God as the centre of gravity in her life, shifts from love of self to love of God and others.

warmth and feeling. It requires human beings to deal with feelings that live deep within themselves and to see how these feelings are related to conscious behaviour (Karecki 2000:15). Hiebert (2008:312-3) elucidates the feelings related to conversion in the following terms:

Feelings often provide the initial impulse for conversion. People come to a church and “feel at home”. They enjoy the warm fellowship of Christians and are attracted to the gospel. We need to remember that we are not God’s lawyers providing the gospel. We are witnesses to a new life, and the affective dimensions are often what first attract people to the gospel. In discipling, it is hard to convert feelings, partly because our discipling processes focus on cognition. Feelings are caught, not taught, and in discipling, we need to include them more in times of informal fellowship and in personal sharing. Feelings, like knowledge, are parts, not the whole, in the process of spiritual transformation.

Affective conversion also animates other forms of conversion with a sense of imaginative freedom in which a person experiences a certain flexibility to be open to the as-yet known. It also nurtures a depth of sensitivity to the beauty and goodness of life (Karecki 2000:15).

5.2.2.2 The intellectual conversion

The intellectual conversion brings order to the other forms of conversion. It enables a person to take responsibility for distinguishing between true and false beliefs. By changing the perceptions of reality of people, adult believing requires that people consider the consequences of their beliefs. Intellectual conversion also enables people to develop sound criteria for the decisions they make while reflecting on reality in the search for truth (2000:15). Hiebert (2008:312) points out that, for the sake of defending the truth against heresy, Protestant reformers and evangelicals have stressed the importance of cognitive transformation or conversion. Then he emphasises that Christians are concerned

not with conversion in general but with conversion to Jesus, and not to Jesus as a good man but to Jesus of the Bible, the Christ, the Son of God, who became flesh, died, and rose to save people from their sins. This is to say that conversion requires knowledge, without which it can miss direction. Hiebert (2000:312), however, underscores that knowledge alone is not enough. Satan knows much better than anyone that Jesus is Lord, but he is not saved since he is not willing to worship and follow Jesus.

5.2.2.3 The personal moral conversion

Personal moral conversion helps orientate a person towards realities and values that make ultimate and absolute ethical claims. This type of conversion requires people to act on the strength of their convictions and to make ethical decisions about important matters in their lives, realising that these always have some impact on social relationships. Personal moral conversion does not allow people simply to “follow the crowd”. It engenders a commitment to values and respect for human rights and duties. It builds strength of character and endows the person with courage (Karecki 2000:15).

Referring to evaluative transformation, Hiebert (2008:313) shows that there is a growing awareness that, although transformation may begin with cognitive and affective conversions, it must also include the moral dimension of cultures and their worldviews. This means that Christians are called not only to know the truth and experience beauty and joy but also to be holy people. At the heart of moral transformation is decision making. Human beings think about things, have feelings about them, and then evaluate them, decide, and take action. Some decisions they make are based on rational thinking, with little emotional and moral input, such as solving mathematical questions or buying the cheapest clothes they can find. Still other decisions focus on moral issues, such as fighting racism, deciding on abortion, and killing another person. In fact,

conversion is generally followed by a period of evaluation during which the new way of life is critically re-examined. People who initially reject a new way often re-evaluate their decision and may be open to conversion. This whole process of evaluative transformation calls upon the personal moral conversion.

5.2.2.4 The socio-political conversion

Socio-political conversion “deprivatises”, or makes public, the other forms of conversion. It brings to light the social implications of the other forms of conversion. This type of conversion calls for a commitment to some cause of universal and human significance that takes place in the social order. It radicalises religious faith and endows it with a prophetic character. This form of conversion highlights the contextual dimension of faith that will not allow social realities to be obscured (Karecki 2000:15-6). Phan (2003:54) spells out this type of conversion by underscoring that it must take place within the total context of a person’s life, and that it is necessarily related to the community or the culture to which the person belongs. This implies (cf. Roux 2007:130) a change in one’s social identity, the acquisition of new conceptual language, and the shifting of one’s paradigm. Roux (2007:131) more clearly states that “Today, we need conversion on a social and communal level. This includes conversion of faith communities, but also conversion in terms of public social systems, as addressed in Liberation Theology.”

About the Mbuti Pygmies, therefore, there is a need for personal conversion among them as well as among those who are willing to do the mission encounter with them, but there is also a need for social and communal conversions that could create a society of justice. By doing this, the Mbuti Pygmies would not have to experience multiple challenges as they do now.

5.2.2.5 The religious conversion

Religious conversion always responds to an encounter with God in a way that affects one's experience of life. It creates a way of perceiving reality differently from any other human mode of perception. In the context of the Christian faith, an experience of being in a relationship with Jesus Christ enables Christians to perceive reality intuitively with their hearts (Karecki 2000:16). Concurring with Jim Wallis (1981:4), who appreciates the heartfelt transformation of the earlier Christians, Hiebert (2008:314-5) points out that:

The first evangelists did not simply ask people what they believed about Jesus; they called upon their listeners to forsake all and follow him. To embrace his kingdom meant a radical change not only in outlook but in posture, not only in mind but in heart, not only in worldview but in behavior, not only in thoughts but in actions. Conversion for them was more than a changed intellectual position. It was a whole new beginning... Conversion is far more than an emotional release and far more than an intellectual adherence to correct doctrine. It is a basic change in life direction. (...)

Conversion to Christ must encompass all three levels of culture: behavior and rituals, beliefs, and worldview. Christians should live differently because they are Christians. However, if their behavior is based primarily on their culture, it becomes dead tradition. Conversion must involve a transformation in beliefs, but if it is only a change of beliefs, it is a false faith (James 2). Although conversion must include a change in behavior and beliefs, if the worldview is not transformed, in the long run the gospel is subverted and becomes captive to the local culture... Christianity becomes a new magic and a new, more subtle form of idolatry.

Through the interplay between the grace of conversion and faith, Christians begin to experience the presence of God in their lives. This experience calls for some form of change in their lives; this is inescapable because people cannot be drawn closer to God without being purified. Since this process is never complete, religious conversion is an ongoing process in the same way as all other forms of conversion are ongoing. People grasp the connection between the

present and the “what might be” of the future and see their place in God’s reign (Karecki 2000:16).

Religious conversion has for a long time been almost the only dimension of conversion talked about in missions, and it has even been taken to be the central goal of mission.³ Although the issue of centrality in mission remains controversial within the theological circles, however, one can conclude that religious conversion sums up all the other types of conversion.

5.2.3 Outcomes of the missionary’s conversion

A comprehensive understanding of the term conversion through the Gospels enables to focus on this concept more in the sense of the Hebrew word *teshuva*, meaning “turning”, and the Greek word *metanoia*, meaning “change of mind or direction”, rather than on that of a mere regret of the past. *Metanoia* in the Gospels and the book of Acts, often interpreted as repentance, means literally “changing one’s mind or direction” in the sense of embracing new thoughts that

³ In his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America (1999)* Pope John Paul II describes three paths to an encounter with Jesus Christ. The first path is conversion; the other two are communion and solidarity. ...While conversion, communion and solidarity are all necessary for our union with Christ, it is highly significant that the pope places these three attitudes in that precise order in his exhortation, with conversion heading the list. Clearly, conversion is treated first because it is the foundation and the condition of possibility for communion and solidarity. It is, as it were, the gate through which a person passes to meet Christ. Furthermore, it lends depth to communion and authenticity to solidarity. Without conversion, communion would be a mere feeling of empathy and sympathy, a sense of clubby fellowship of like-minded individuals, praiseworthy indeed, but lacking the dimension of personal union, the total gift of self, which is the hallmark of true communion as it has been exemplified by Jesus. Without conversion, solidarity risks being reduced to a simple sharing of common interests that binds together the members of a voluntary non-profit association or a business corporation, necessary indeed for the well-being of a society, but still falling far short of the commitment to suffer with the marginalized, the poor and the oppressed, and to struggle with them to regain justice and human dignity. (Phan 2003:45-6)

are cleansed from egoistic limitations and prejudices. Dowsett (2007:336) makes a comment on this meaning, saying:

In the NT, repentance is most usually expressed through forms of the verb *metanoein*, 'to change one's mind'. This is not simply mental assent or formula of words, but radical transformation of world-view to embrace Christ as Lord, a new mindset devoted to faith and obedience, sorrow for past rebellion and present sin, and a life turned round to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength' (Deut 6:5).

This refers to the scripture, which speaks of the converted to Christ becoming a new creature, whose old life has passed away and for whom all things have become new (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). In The Free Dictionary (2009), the term *metanoia* is explained in both its theological and psychological sense:

In Theology, *metanoia* is used to refer to the change of mind, which is brought about in repentance. Repentance is necessary and valuable because it brings about a change of mind or *metanoia*. This change of mind will make the changed person hate sin and love God... *metanoia*, as mentioned in the Gospels, refers not to repentance but to a transformation of the mind, a new way of thinking, new ideas, new knowledge, and a completely new approach to everything in life.

In Carl Jung's psychology, *metanoia* indicates a spontaneous attempt of the psyche to heal itself of unbearable conflict by melting down and then being reborn in a more adaptive form.

Also on the theological level, "The Greek term for repentance, *metanoia*, denotes a change of mind, a reorientation, a fundamental transformation of outlook, of an individual's vision of the world and of her/himself, and a new way of loving others and the Universe" (Wikipedia 2012). It denotes thus "a basic change in life direction".

The meaning of the term *metanoia* as defined above provides the important ingredients for the conversion of those who are called for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies. These ingredients are the change

or transformation of the mind, the reorientation, the fundamental transformation of outlook, the new way of thinking, the individual's vision of the world and of himself or herself, the new approach to everything in life, the new ideas and knowledge, the new way of loving others and the universe, the hatred of sin in order to love God, and the healing of self or liberation. All of these ingredients involve the whole human being, flesh, soul, and spirit. Through them, conversion can ultimately be understood as liberation from all that prevents human beings from considering things at their fair value. To a large extent, the way a person behaves towards others reflects what he/she really is from the inside to the outside. Furthermore, one's false conception of oneself leads *ipso facto* to the misconception of others. For this reason, conversion as *metanoia* implies change in the whole person so that he/she reaches a new way of approaching everything in life. In keeping with Hesselgrave and Stelzer (2010:67), in this respect, one might assert that there is no true and lasting social transformation apart from personal conversion through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It should be noted, however, that discriminating against the Pygmy peoples is not always a deliberate act or even an independent act. Because of their high self-esteem, the non-Pygmy peoples often act without even caring about the existence of these forest dwellers, who they often consider to be "a mistake within the creation". As a result of such unconscious behaviour, which also needs to be converted, all kinds of challenges have become the lot of the Mbuti Pygmies. In relation to such an attitude, Drønen (2007:119) considers conversion to be a real liberation from destructive behaviour. So, too, Frederiks (2009:15) suggests that true liberation can be achieved only when everyone is liberated. This means that the liberation of the Mbuti Pygmies can be attained only when the non-Pygmy peoples are truly liberated from their own destructive behaviour which is characterised by discrimination and attitude of superiority. Being liberated from destructive behaviour can take place only through a true

and personal encounter with God, without which no one can reach the new way of approaching others. With this understanding, Karecki, along with Volf, states:

If we have allowed our encounter with God to transform us we will more easily meet the other in love and openness without any desire to control or manipulate. Why should I embrace the other? The answer is simple because the others are part of my own true identity. I cannot live authentically without welcoming the others – the other gender, other persons or other cultures – into the very structure of my being. For I am created to reflect the personality of the triune God. (Karecki 2009:34)

If encountering humankind is the main motive of God's mission, can one deny this privilege to the Mbuti Pygmies by stigmatizing them? Are Mbuti Pygmies a part of the humankind? Isn't it true that, "We need conversation and ongoing interaction with others, who live elsewhere and act otherwise, if we want to find Christ as the one who reconciles humanity"? (Jansen 2009:55). This is all about knowing and fully acknowledging particular contexts, and, finally, trusting that Christ transcends the loneliness of any particular context. Indeed, Christ's love through his redemptive mission, which brings about abundant life, also reaches to the Mbuti Pygmies within their context of loneliness and deprivation. If the non-Pygmy peoples need and struggle to attain abundant life, so, too, do the Mbuti Pygmies need abundant life, because both the non-Pygmy peoples and the Mbuti Pygmies all share the same nature with the same vital needs.

Another indispensable truth about the behaviour towards others is that the way one perceives others, positively or negatively, is the same way they will perceive him or her. So, one's own perception mirrors the perception of others towards oneself. Likewise, the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies should take place through a humble and integral conversion of the non-Pygmy peoples. This means unmistakably that the non-Pygmy peoples should comprehend that, despite the physical, cultural, and contextual differences among people, which, of course, are intentionally wanted by the Creator God, all

human beings are equally recipients of God's grace. Indeed, the greatest contemporary challenge that poisons social relationships is the issue related to differences among people. Reacting against racial discrimination due to social differences, Sacks (2004) indicates that it is the differences amongst human beings that distinguish them from organisms or machines, and that it is diversity that forms the basis of human dignity. Sacks goes on to affirm that the unity of creation is expressed through differences, and says that if religions are not part of solution, they are surely condemned to be part of the problem. Such significant truths about the essence of human beings are to be taken into account not only in terms of the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies but also in terms of the missional encounter with all the marginalised and voiceless peoples all over the world. Actually, the more the marginalised and voiceless peoples are made confident that they are accepted and welcomed despite of their differences, the more they will be open to missional tools, such as worship, evangelisation, up to the point of declaring their acceptance of the gospel, dialogue, reconciliation, fellowship, solidarity, healing, justice, liberation, hope, nurturing, etc. This is to say that conversion is by itself twofold, the same way as mission (Phan 2003:61) "is a two-way movement in which, as in any effective communication, the sender becomes the receiver and the receiver becomes the sender in alternation."

Conversion also involves a twofold power. On the one hand, it involves the power of opening Christians to themselves by allowing them to understand who they really are, and, so enabling them truly to interact with others. On the other hand, conversion involves the power of opening "the others" to themselves by allowing them to understand who they really are so that they may be able to be open to those who are reaching out to them. In other words, one's own conversion opens doors for the conversion towards and in others. Gittins (1993:xv-xvi) puts it well by asserting that a "missionary activity should therefore not only call other people to conversion and transformation, but

through real engagement with people of other cultures it should call missionaries themselves... We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day.”

The typical biblical example of the two-sided power of conversion is that of the Pharisee Saul. He who was a Pharisee by choice and a violent persecutor of Christians by conviction became not only a new creature with a new name of Paul, but his conversion also engendered mass conversion among the Gentiles as well as the Jews, once he was converted through a face-to-face encounter with the Risen Christ. Saul underwent a radical transformation (*metanoia*) to such an extent that he has become a new Pharisee willingly open to his former enemies, the Christians, for the sake of the gospel (cf. Acts 9:1-19; 22:4-16; 26:9-19). Conversion, therefore, is truly a path leading to an encounter with the other (oneself), the other (the neighbour), and the other (the Lord of mission). In this understanding, Frederiks (2005:218) holds, “It is only in true radical openness to the other in the totality of his/her being and openness to his/her deepest motivations in life, that the witness of God’s love for all people can be shared.”

Because conversion involves simultaneously a two-way movement and a twofold power that culminates in a twofold liberation that consists of breaking the spirit of discrimination and all its components in order to promote a respectful and peaceful coexistence between peoples opposed to one another, this is a necessary strategy for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies. It is certainly within the dynamics of a true and authentic conversion that most of the challenges facing the Mbuti Pygmies and, by extension, all other social groups living in the same conditions in the DRC, can be addressed. Roux (2007:133) concludes, “As we ‘convert’, we will do missions differently; we will manifest the *Missio Dei* in a better way.”

In order to have a broad understanding about the assumption according to which conversion is a necessary strategy for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, the next section provides further insights in different words.

5.3 Perceiving the Mbuti Pygmies as being fully made in the “Image of God” and fully part of “all nations”

Another way forward in performing the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, close to conversion or even resulting from it consists of a right perception of the Mbuti Pygmies themselves. This means approaching the Mbuti Pygmies as being fully made in the image of God and fully part of the “all nations”. These two scriptural concepts, the first of which includes the very first mandate entrusted to human beings, and the second the very basis of the Great Commission, are not merely complementary to the mission endeavour but central to it. Thus, unless Christians acknowledge that all human beings are fully made in the “image of God”, which they claim to be true for themselves, they will never be capable of carrying out mission to all the nations in the sense of responding positively to the missionary mandate entrusted to the church. So, then, because at present Christian mission targets only some people in a selective way, it is necessary to review the way Christians understand the scriptural concepts of “image of God” and of “all nations”. Examining these two scriptural concepts is what this section is all about.

5.3.1 The meaning of the term “image of God”

Probably because of the focus of interest that there has been upon the human being, his life, actions, feelings, struggles, potentialities, and expectations, the idea of “man as image of God” has been one of the most discussed concepts and one that has resulted in many controversial interpretations in theology. Accordingly, Jónsson says that:

It has been claimed that one’s conception of the image of God in man (*imago Dei*) determines the fate of every theology. While this is probably too strong a statement, there is, nevertheless, no doubt that the main textual support for this

concept (Gen 1:26-28) has played an extremely significant role in the history of theology. Scarcely any passage in the whole of the OT (Old Testament) has attracted as much interest...⁴ (Jónsson 1988:1)

Although the term “image of God” has been a key issue in theological debate over the course of the Christian history, however, it is striking to note that this term is far less central in the Bible. In the Old Testament, for instance, it appears only three times, i.e., in Genesis 1:26-28; 5:1 and 9:6. Without elaborating on Genesis 1:26-28, the main reference on the concept of image of God, Genesis 5:1 refers to it in introducing the book of the generations of Adam, and Genesis 9:6 to emphasise the warning to Noah about human beings whose blood should not be shed. In the New Testament, the idea of the “image of God”, in the sense of Genesis 1, appears in only James 3:9. In 1 Corinthians 11:7, this term refers to the headship of the husband in marriage, and this latter use of “image of God” is complex and beyond the scope of this study.

Before entering into a fuller consideration of the concept of “image of God”, it is wise to briefly examine the use of the words “image” and “likeness”, which pose some syntactical problems in Genesis 1:26-27. Why are these words that are vitually synonymous used in this way in the same sentence (v 26)? Are these two words referring to two different realities about the human being? Why is “likeness” omitted in verse 27?

Agreement about this syntactical issue suggests that there is no substantial difference between the two words. This kind of pleonasm in Genesis would probably have been seen as the personal writing style of its author, because in Genesis 1:27; 5:1 and 9:6, which refer closely to Genesis 1:26, “image and likeness”, are used interchangeably. While Genesis 1:27, which is a comment of the verse 26, drops the word “likeness” and retains only “image”, Genesis 5:1 reads “likeness” and 9:6 reads “image”. As evidence that it is a matter of the

⁴ To make it true that the concept of *imago Dei* has been of great interest among theologians, Jónsson (1988) has devoted his work on a number of surveys on a period of 100 years, that is, from 1882 to 1982.

personal style of the author of the Book of Genesis, the same words are also used concomitantly in Genesis 5:3, not in connection with God and the human being, but about Adam who, in his 130th year, fathered his son Seth in his own likeness, after his image. So, because of the apparent repetition of the words “image” and “likeness” in an interchangeable manner within the same Book of Genesis, Kooten (2008:2) considers these words as synonyms. Reyburn and Fry (1997:50) try to solve the problem by saying that “image” should not be confused with “picture” in the photographic sense, because the parallel expression “after our likeness” makes it clear that “image” is in some sense a resemblance. Then these authors recommend that translators do not have to attempt to say more than the text suggests. In the light of all those points of view, and of Clark who, in *The Image of God*, maintains that, “To distinguish between image and likeness is a fanciful exegesis”, in this study the term “image” will be used as a synonym of “likeness”.

The concept of “image of God” first appears in the Bible within the account of creation, in the context of Genesis 1:26-29. It is through this text that several questions arise about the human being as image of God. What does it mean that a human being is made in the image of God? How can a human being who has a material body be the image of God who is spirit and bodiless? Otherwise, which part of the human being, the body, soul or spirit, would be the image of God? To respond to these questions, some interpretations have to be examined as follows.

5.3.1.1 Interpretations of the term “image of God”

The most important interpretations of the concept of man created in image of God are based either on the physical, the immaterial, the whole human being, the functional, the relational, or the setting apart of man and woman among all creatures (cf. Curtis 1984:40-59). To gain insights into these interpretations, it is

helpful to learn from Curtis (1984) who has conducted thorough research into the concept of man as the image of God in the book of Genesis. His interpretations can be assessed as follows.

In line with Genesis 5:3, which reads that Adam fathered a son in his likeness, after his image, theologians have adopted the *physical interpretation* of the image of God. For instance, Curtis (1984:40) mentions Gunkel who maintains that, because the son looks like the father, and is similar to him in form and appearance, thus the first man is like God in form and appearance. Here the image of God refers primarily to the body of the human being, although the spiritual is certainly not to be excluded. This interpretation is questionable, since the human being does not consist of the physical body only. Moreover, it does not provide a clear connection with the dominion mandate entrusted to humankind in Genesis 1:26-28. Finally, this interpretation is in conflict with the fact that God is spirit and bodiless.

The second interpretation locates the image of God in the *immaterial part* of the human being, such as intellectual ability, self-determination, and moral consciousness. According to Curtis (1984:44 cf. Kleger 2006:32), this view readily accounts for the superiority of human beings over the rest of creation and provides a solid basis for his dominion. The human being is, however, not only immaterial, but also material, with a physical body. In addition, God's recommendations in Genesis 1:28-29 would be meaningless if the human being was an immaterial being only. How can a spiritual being be fruitful and multiply in the sense of filling the earth, subduing it and having dominion over all the creation? How can every plant yielding seed on the face of the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit be given to a bodiless being as food? This second interpretation of the image of God in a human being is also questionable.

As a corrective to the above two interpretations of the image of God, which indeed separate the human being into material and immaterial parts, the consensus among theologians lies in *the whole human being*. The human being

is viewed as a whole rather than as a sum of physical and immaterial parts (cf. Curtis 1984:45-6). Kooten (2008:2), among the proponents of this interpretation, thinks that the “image of God” is understood in terms of representation and that it is the place where the deity manifests himself and is present. This way, Kooten sees that the context of Genesis 1:26-27 highlights the way in which the human being functions as God’s image, because, by representing God, he is given dominion over the rest of creation. He compares his view with that of the Ancient Near East, where the notion of the image of God had already emerged, and where its distinctively Israelite feature seems to mean that all human beings, not just the king as the earthly manifestation of the deity, are to be considered as God’s image. Similarly (Mays 1988:87), “In the imageless religious tradition of Israel, the only acceptable image of God is the human being”.

The fourth interpretation of the term “image of God” focuses on the *function entrusted to the human* rather than on the whole human being or its parts. According to this understanding, the image of God is to be viewed in man’s function of ruling over the rest of creation (cf. Curtis 1984:46-7). On this, Clines (1968:101) says, “Man is God’s image not because of what he is, but because of what he is given: a share in the divine sovereignty over creation. He is lord of the world, yet Yahweh’s vassal.” An observation here is that function cannot be possible without the bodily human being with all its attributes. In line with this remark, Reno (2010:54) points out that “The capacity for dominion is an aspect of the *imago Dei*.”

Next to the functional interpretation there is the *relational interpretation* according to which man’s *relationship with God* is what the image of God intends to mean (cf. Curtis 1984:47-8). Consensus for this interpretation is that Genesis 1:26-29 enables everyone to understand that, among all the creatures, God co-operates only with humankind. The relational capacity, however, cannot be separated from the whole human being. If God is willing to have a relationship with humankind, this involves all that constitutes the human being

as a whole. Relationship with God or not, the human being is in essence a creature in God's image. He remains God's image to such a great extent that, according to Ahonen (2000:32), "Even after the Fall, human is still in the image of God, but imperfectly." If God's command to the man and woman about the dominion over the rest of creation, and the blessings for being fruitful, multiplying and filling the earth and subduing it (vv 26-28) consist of the relational understanding of the image of God, God is also the one who pays attention to their physical needs in terms of food (v 29). This last reading clearly shows that God conceives of the human being as an indivisible unity.

The sixth interpretation, but not the last of other possible interpretations of the term "image of God", focuses on *the human being as a special creature*. According to this reading, the human being is set apart from all other living creatures, and his/her exclusive position clearly determines the image of God. For Curtis (1984:49) and Kleger (2006:30-4), this understanding of the image of God includes psychological powers like self-consciousness, reason, the use of language, abstract thought, self-determination, the ability to know God and to have a personal relationship with him, moral judgement, and social capacity. Rendle-Short (1981) underscores that the main impact of the image is that God endues man with some of his divine attributes, thereby separating him and making him different from the beasts, and he mentions, among other things, six human attributes, namely language, creativity, love, holiness, immortality, and freedom. Kapolio (2007:171), who holds a similar view, says that the image of God lies in the whole complexity of being human, the diversities and distinctivenesses of what it is to be a human being in this world. As a further comment, he suggests that it is helpful to think of the image of God as God-given capacities (formal) that enable human beings to function in particular ways (material). The formal capacities include the competence to exercise loving stewardship of the earth, to make moral decisions, and, above all, to love both God and other human beings. All these psychological powers, capacities,

and attributes of God that the human being alone can hold enable humankind to reflect the image of God to a greater or lesser extent.

5.3.1.2 Missiological implications of the term “image of God”

What do the Mbuti Pygmies have to do with these different interpretations of the image of God in which the human being is made? Far from pretending to have solved the problem with regard to the endless debate about the meaning of the term “image of God” in the human being, what is interesting is that there is no interpretation that focuses on any population groups at the expense of others. But, on the contrary, they all deal with the capacities, attributes, and body of the human being taken in the universal sense. Likewise, there is no interpretation that can prove the non-humanity of the Pygmy peoples as a whole. That is why, if all the human attributes examined above involve the image of God in the human, this would mean that the Mbuti Pygmies who possess all of those attributes are also fully made in the image of God. Moreover, in a more literal sense, these so-called “wild peoples” seem to be more made in the image of God than the non-Pygmy peoples claim to be. In fact, while the Mbuti Pygmies are mostly discriminated against because of their wildlife lifestyle, often considered as a fundamentally outmoded life, through Genesis 1:26-29, one may realise that they are, instead, the only human beings who are still living according to God’s initial plan. The way the Mbuti Pygmies live harmoniously with nature and care about it, without dominating or destroying it, is proof that they are truly God’s image with regard to the pattern of creation. Thus, despite their particular ways of life and contexts, the Mbuti Pygmies reflect the full image of God, worthy of all that God has envisaged for humanity. So, if the Mbuti Pygmies fully reflect the image of God, the churches in the DRC, as God’s instruments for the fulfilment of the *missio Dei*, should not shy away from encountering them and

all those who are like them. Scripturally speaking, Christian mission is rightly designed for all the nations.

In line with the above observations, the affirmation that human beings have been created in the image of God implies four further important truths about humanity, all of which are essential to Christian mission. Wright (2006:421-5) helps to formulate them in the following order:

All human beings are addressable by God

Among all creatures, God speaks more to human beings. He may speak to other creatures as he did with the serpent (Gen 3), but human beings remain his only privileged interlocutors. In Genesis 1-3, God speaks to the humans not only words of blessing and fruitfulness but also of instruction, permission, and prohibition, followed later by questions, judgements, and promises. As a result, the human being is the creature who is aware of God through rational communication and address. In keeping with this scriptural truth, Wright (2006) maintains that to be human is to have the capacity of being addressable by the living Creator God. In addition, whatever the cultural environment in which a person lives, or whatever the religious worldview through which they see their life in this world, the most fundamental ground of their humanity is that they have been made in God's image. God needs no permission, no translation, and no cultural contextualisation when he chooses to communicate with any person whom he has made in his own image. The gospel has its life-giving potential precisely because even sinners and rebels are people made in God's image, capable of hearing God's voice. In view of this truth, there is no reason for churches and individual Christians in the DRC to be reticent or reluctant regarding the need of encountering the Mbuti Pygmies.

All human beings are accountable to God

The truth according to which all human beings are accountable to God is the other side of the truth of the addressability, because human beings, within the creation narratives, are creatures who must give an answer when God addresses them. In Psalm 33:13-15, one notices the astonishing reality that every human being on the earth is seen and known by God, considered and evaluated by God, and that God observes all their deeds.

All human beings have dignity and equality

Being made in the image of God is indeed that which sets humans apart from the rest of the animals and it is that which all humans have in common. The fact that no other creature is created in the image of God constitutes the basis of the unique dignity and sacredness of the human life. Also, the fact that all human beings are created in the image of God constitutes the basis of the radical equality of human beings, regardless of gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, or any form of social, economic, or political status. Consequently, Christian mission must treat all human beings with dignity, equality, and respect.

When looking at any other person, Christians should not have to see labels such as, for example, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, secular atheist, White, Black, Coloured, Pygmy, city-dweller or peasant, rich or poor, but only the image of God. This is fundamental because, while one affirms the validity of reaching out in mission to all people everywhere, one must also think critically about the methods, attitudes, and assumptions with which one does so. The understanding of the dignity of all persons made in God's image necessitates careful attention to the ethics of mission.⁵ Anything that denies other human

⁵As ethics is the science which deals with morals, and as a moral matter is something concerning character, behaviour, or actions considered or judged as being good or evil, right

beings their dignity or fails to show respect, interest, and informed understanding for all that they hold precious is actually a failure of love and so a denial of the gospel itself. Otherwise, if the gospel is not good news for others, in the same way, it cannot be good news for those who have to spread it in the world. Moreover, to love one's neighbour as oneself is not just the second great commandment in the law, but it is also an essential implication of the common createdness of humankind. This is also as relevant to mission as it is to any other walk of life.

The biblical gospel fits all

The image of God is not, of course, the only thing human beings universally have in common. They are also all sinners and rebels against the Creator God, as a result of which the image of God in them is deteriorated. Fortunately, God's mission includes the restoration of people to that true image of God, of which his own Son, Jesus, is the perfect model. This means that just the sin of humans is a universal reality, which underlies the many cultural forms in which it manifests itself, so also the gospel is the universal remedy that addresses human need in any and all cultures. Whatever the appearances or the caricatures have been, Christian mission is not a matter of inviting or compelling people to become true Congolese, Africans, Westerners, or Asians. It is rather inviting people to become more fully human through the transforming power of the gospel that fits all because it answers to the most basic need of all and restores the common glory of what it is to be truly human, a man or woman made in the image of God.

or wrong, the ethics of mission deals with the attitude, behaviour, and actions - whether they are right or wrong - in the work of missions. One may read also Poh (2007) for more information about Ethics in Missions.

5.3.2 The meaning of the term “all nations”

The notion of human beings created in God’s image logically implies and includes the notion of “all nations”. It follows from this that, if all human beings are made in God’s image, worthy of what God has envisaged for humanity, this truth will make it easy to understand the missiological meaning of the term “all nations”. What is the meaning of the term “all nations” in missiology? Why is it necessary to survey it in connection with the Mbuti Pygmies?

In the four Gospels the term “all nations” which is used exclusively in the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ⁶ has more than one possible meaning. Moreau *et al* (2004:43) identify four main options, which include *all the non-Jews, the nation-states, the ethnic groups, and the whole of humanity in a general sense*. To acquire a more simplified understanding of these four options, it is better to merge them into two groups, that is to say, the second option with the first and the third with the fourth option.

5.3.2.1 “All nations” as the non-Jews

In most cases, the Bible uses the term *panta ta ethnê* or *ethnê* (all nations or nations) in the sense of the non-Jews including the nation-states and individuals. Some scholars retain this option in an exclusive way. Harrington (1982:110-1), among many scholars, asserts from his interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew, that *panta ta ethnê* does not include the nation of Israel, because, for Matthew, the *ethnê* and Israel are two distinct entities in salvation history. Such an exclusive interpretation, however, makes missionary efforts selective in terms of encountering people, because, if Israel is not part of “all nations”, some other people may also not be part of “all nations”. Of course, from the perspective of

⁶ This term occurs 9 times in the Gospels (Matt 24:9, 14; 25:32; 28:19, Mark 11:17; 13:10, and Luke 12:30; 21:24, 24:47).

the Old Testament, where mission focuses mostly on a centripetal movement for which the nations are invited towards Israel, the term *gôyîm* (nations) refers to all non-Jewish nations. The term refers even to specific peoples such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Greeks, Medes, Philistines, and many others, in connection with the conflictual relationships with Israel. Jesus also uses the same term in the sense of non-Jews (Luke 12:30; 21:24), and goes further by forbidding his disciples from going among the Gentiles or entering any town of the Samaritans, but rather to focus on going to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 10:5-6). The Jewish belief was that Israel was a chosen nation, set apart, which should not mix with the *gôyîm*, the Gentiles or pagans.

In actual fact, Wright has captured the concept of the mission of Israel so well when he claims that even though Israel did not have a missionary mandate to go to the nations, one might note that Israel had a missional role in the midst of the nations in connection with God's ultimate intention of blessing the nations (Wright 2006:24-5). Israel as the priestly people of God's Temple was called on to minister for the fulfilment of the prophecy according to which "the house of God should be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (cf. Isa 56:7). Thus, "Israel as a people was called into existence because of God's mission to bless the nations and restore his creation" (2006:251). Israel's role among the nations, however, failed. Ott et al (2010:22) argue that "Israel *neither* went to the nations, *nor* did Israel live as a holy and righteous people amid the nations. Israel repeatedly fell into idolatry, perverted justice, and, with but rare exceptions, failed to manifest the righteousness and glory of God among the nations". Israel has thus failed to understand that its election to be a people set apart was intimately linked with the blessings God has planned for all the nations (all the families of the earth) in Abraham (cf. Gen 12:3). In actual fact (2010:93), "Universal blessing would come through the particular call of Abraham, then through Israel, through whom the Redeemer would come."

As the plan of God to bless all the nations (the families) of the earth must be achieved, regardless of the failure and rebellion of Israel, God provided for another way forward, the centrifugal movement of mission. Started for Israel as a judgement through exile and captivity in foreign nations, especially Assyria and Babylon,⁷ the centrifugal movement of mission was now linked to the Servant of God, the Messiah (cf. Isa 49:6; Dan 7:13-14), in connection with God's promises to Abraham. Jesus thus launched the centrifugal movement of mission by starting with Israel. So Israel was chosen as a starting point of the worldwide mission but not as the end of it. This is the reason why, by the end of his earthly mission, Jesus pointed towards the ultimate goal of his mission by using the phrase "all nations" in preparation for this new dynamic of mission for which he was preparing his disciples. As a consequence, the term *gôyîm* or *ethnê* in Matthew 24-28, and related formulations in Mark 11:17; 13:10 and Luke 24:47, has changed from its traditional meaning in Judaism to a very new meaning that would be the basis of the Great Commission. This is what the second interpretation of the term "all nations" below is about.

5.3.2.2 "All nations" as the whole of humanity

The term *gôyîm* or *ethnê* in the Bible is an almost overarching term that generally refers to races, peoples, tribes or ethnic groups, and nations, usually with the implication of non-Jews, that is, the heathen, pagans, or Gentiles. In the last part of the account of Matthew (24-28), however, it is quite easy to realise that the term "all nations" refers rather to the whole of humanity rather than only to the non-Jews. According to Ott *et al* (2010:93), "Though there has been considerable debate about the precise meaning of 'all nations' (*panta ta ethnê*) and related formulations in Matthew 28:19 and 24:14, the language of Revelation 5:9 and 7:9 is comprehensive". For these two authors, the terms are

⁷ For more information about Israel judgement through exile, read Glasser (2003:127-139).

piled up: *phulê* (ethnic group, tribe), *glôssês* (tongue, language group), *laos* (people, nation, crowd), *ethnos* (nation, people, Gentiles). Agreeing with the meaning of the concept of the whole of humanity in contrast to that of the non-Jews only, Bosch (1991:64) writes:

It is true that *ethne* in Matthew's gospel mostly refer to Gentiles only. But in almost all these cases we have to do with either Old Testament quotations or material of non-Matthew origin. To this, we must add that, where Matthew adds *panta*, "all", to *ta ethne*, an important nuance is added. Matthew uses *panta ta ethne* four times, and all of these are in the final part of his gospel (24:9, 14; 25:32; and 28:19), where the Gentile mission comes into focus ever more early... It is clear, then, that Matthew was simply trying to say that Jesus was no longer sent only to Israel but had, in fact, become the Savior of all humankind.⁸

Ahonen (2000:52) also maintains that, by showing that the message of Christ was intended not only for the Jews, but for all nations, Matthew was pointing to how Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament messianic promises, and that he attempted to build a bridge between Judaism and the new faith in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:13-16). In fact, about the issue of whether Israel belongs to "all nations" or not, the centripetal and centrifugal movements of mission are not contradictory at all but complementary. If Israel was intended to be a missionary people towards whom nations were invited for God's blessings, this means that Israel was itself fully part of God's blessings. In the same way, if, in the new covenant, things move outward, from the centre to the edges (the nations) for God's blessings, this means that Israel which is also at the edge, because it is no longer at the centre, is fully part of the nations. Regarding Israel as a people, therefore, the key concept of "all nations" in the last teachings of Jesus Christ is inclusive

⁸ Nolland (2005:1266) agrees with Bosch's view in the following terms: "Matthew uses *ethnê* alone when referring to the Gentiles, but when he speaks of 'all the *ethnê*', he no longer uses *ethnê* to distinguish Gentiles from Jews but rather refers to the whole of humanity."

rather than exclusive. It includes both Israel and all the *gôyîm* or *ethnê*, the Gentiles or heathens (pagans).

According to Matthew 28, the centre or point of departure for the centrifugal mission includes the disciples of Christ to whom Christ was talking, and, by extension, all those who believe in and follow him. Luz (2005:626) clearly sees that the mission command of the Risen One “is directed not only to the eleven apostles at the beginning of the church history; the apostles are figures with whom all disciples of Jesus in all times can identify.” Thus the church, which is the universal network of all believers in Jesus, has everywhere the mandate of carrying out the centrifugal movement of mission. The watchword is the “go therefore” (v 19) which makes the decisive step for the scope of the Great Commission, the “making disciples of all nations”. For Ott and Strauss (2010:37), however, “the mandate is not just to make disciples of individual persons. Rather, it is to disciple nations, indeed all nations.” Piper (1993:167-218) is adamant as he rightly argues that the task of mission is not merely to win as many individuals as possible from the most responsive people groups of the world for Christ but rather to win individuals from all the people groups of the world. Here, the emphasis is put on the adjective “all”, which implies that things henceforth move from particularity to a global-scale. This is, indeed, the outcome of Jesus’ resurrection that marks the end of the exclusive focus on Israel. What was Jewish mission has now become world mission in which Jews and non-Jews are all involved (cf. Davies & Allison 1997:684). Nolland (2005:1265-6) makes it clear, however, that Matthew 28:19 does not turn from the Jewish frame to the Gentiles, but, rather, it widens the scope from that of 10:5-6, which is in view.

As has been shown previously, there is almost an obvious misunderstanding regarding the meaning of the concept of “all nations” within the churches in the DRC. Churches seem to make disciples of chosen individual persons rather than of “all nations”. Paradoxically, however, the tendency within

the churches is that they are also attempting to move from local individual persons to the farthest nations, neglecting almost all those who are around and nearby them, such as the Pygmy peoples. This is, indeed, a misunderstanding of the concept of “all nations” inasmuch as from the centre to the edges there are many opportunities for mission that should not be missed. And if there is still a gap between the centre and the edges, this means that the church is still far from achieving its missional mandate. If Matthew seems not to be explicit about the term “all nations”, Luke (Acts 1:8) unlocks it by defining its geographical stages, which are Jerusalem (the home area), all Judea (the country as a whole), Samaria (the neighbouring country), and to the ends of the earth (all the rest of areas of the world). Here, Luke spells out the scope of mission by applying the principle of the waves of water that cannot jump any stage on their centrifugal path. The local, national, and worldwide stages for mission should be followed in a coherent and comprehensible manner. In fact, carrying out mission in all of Judea and Samaria up to the end of the earth does not mean the end of the initial work in Jerusalem, as if Christian mission was a nomadic activity. Rather (Schnabel 2004:375-6), Christ has directed the Apostles to initiate an international and universal mission that begins in Jerusalem, reaches the surrounding regions of Judea (including Galilee) and Samaria, and then extends as far as the borders of the earth.

This does not mean that the goal of mission is to be achieved in the northeast DRC once the Mbuti Pygmies are encountered, but rather that these peoples are vivid proof that churches in that area of the country are still far from achieving their missional duty. The more the Mbuti Pygmies, therefore, remain, as they are, virtually unreached and unchurched as well as isolated from the rest of the Congolese people, especially with regard to access to even the basic social facilities, the more their distressing situation will remain a great challenge to Christian mission as a whole. Otherwise, what do these peoples really mean for the churches? Are they seen as being fully human created in the image of God

and after his likeness, and as worthy of being encountered for mission purposes as any other people? If they are believed to be made fully in the image of God, they should also be believed to be fully part of “all nations”, the very scope of Christian mission. Then, if the churches shy away from encountering them, there is reason to wonder whether these churches are aware of the purpose of being the church and of the purpose and the scope of the church’s mission. Finally, if the church is, by its very nature, missionary, and if its missional action is intended for all the human beings without exception, then the Mbuti Pygmies, having been acknowledged as being fully human, should not be ignored in the missional process. This means that the mission efforts for the development of the Mbuti Pygmies should also include a way to provide them with formal education.

5.4 Promoting Formal Education among the Mbuti Pygmies

Next to conversion and the development of a right perception about the Pygmy peoples, the mission encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies may also be implemented through formal education. This does not mean that the Mbuti Pygmies have no education, or that the formal education intended to be given to them is the best one. The Mbuti and all the Pygmy peoples definitely have their own form of education thanks to which they have managed to maintain their culture and lifestyles throughout their existence. Their traditional education may be better than the classical formal education. Without any education, indeed, no one can organise his or her society in terms of mastering the forest and its resources and living within it harmoniously, performing crafts and entertainment, and setting an example of peace-making, ideal marriage, and caring about the environment, as the Pygmy peoples do. So why is it necessary to promote a new mode of education among people who already hold their kind of education, which probably suits them perfectly well?

There are very evident reasons why formal education should be promoted among the Mbuti Pygmies. The Mbuti Pygmies belong to the worldwide community, which is characterised by aggressive competition in the global marketplace within which only those who hold power as a result of formal education lead everything, even within the churches. Without at least a basic formal education, no one can survive within this global community. So the Mbuti Pygmies, with their traditional education, which is limited to the forest environment only, are not capable of knowing what is going on outside their natural settings. They become the victims of things and external influences as inevitably they are confronted by the impact of accelerated globalisation for which they are not prepared. As a result, the non-Pygmy peoples, for example, take advantage of the lack of formal education of the Mbuti Pygmies to exploit them. In this respect, most of the challenges that face the Mbuti Pygmies certainly come from the fact that they do not receive the same education as the non-Pygmy peoples. As has been described in the earlier chapters, the Mbuti Pygmies lack almost all the basic social facilities, such as the access to housing, food, clothes, health care, sanitation, basic formal education, means of communication, justice, and land, all the result of the “otherness” of their culture and lifestyle. Assisting them is in fact very costly since it would mean taking into account all their vital needs. Such a task is enormous and difficult for the churches that are working in a context of scarcity and endless conflicts and wars such as the DRC today. Besides this, humanitarian aid has never been a lasting way of assisting vulnerable people such as the Pygmies.

In view of the above realities and the fact that the Mbuti traditional education does not adapt to the new challenges and contexts, it is better to provide them formal education so that they are able to rely on themselves. This means “to teach them how to fish”, instead of merely providing them with their

daily provisions or “fishes”.⁹ Formal education is indeed a vitally important need for sustainable development among all peoples all over the world. Denying or depriving some population groups of education is a real scandal. Stressing the necessity to make education accessible to all, Sacks (2003:140) states, “I do not lose knowledge by giving it to others... Knowledge grows by being shared.” To persuade South Africans to strive for education, the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, used to say that “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” So, too, the World Bank (1995: xi) maintains that:

Education produces knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. It is essential for civic order and citizenship and for sustained economic growth and the reduction of poverty. Education is also about culture; it is the main instrument for disseminating the accomplishments of human civilization.

Here, the World Bank provides the necessary elements through which the world can be changed positively. In this respect, Sacks (2003:137) spells out the process of education as a way of enabling human dignity, by affirming that:

Education – the ability not merely to read and write but to master and apply information and have open access to knowledge – is essential to human dignity. I have suggested that it is the basis of a free society. Because knowledge is power, equal access to knowledge is a precondition of equal access to power. It is also the key to *creativity*, and creativity is itself one of the most important gifts with which any socioeconomic group can be endowed. More than that, it has become the key to flourishing in the twenty-first century... Education, not merely basic but extended, becomes necessary, even a fundamental human right. Investment in education is the most important way in which a society offers its children a future.

In the light of this thinking, however, the Pygmy peoples in general are not taken into consideration at all in the process of changing the world and of gaining human dignity through education. By ignoring their need, the world is

⁹ Cf. Chinese proverb that says, “It is better to teach how to fish instead of donating a fish.”

metaphorically functioning as a disabled person, because one of its parts, the Pygmy peoples, is marginalised with regard to education, which surely shapes the world. Education is a key starting point of any sustainable development. According to the World Bank (1995:1), “Education is critical for economic growth and poverty reduction.” It opens the world and brings about self-understanding so that one is aware of one’s place and the role one needs to play in the world.

Education appears to be the most important and urgent need that could open doors to reach the Mbuti Pygmies, and help to open them to the world. Though these peoples are considered to be resistant to any process of development, probably because of a lack of adequate methods and strategies to encounter them, Ferris (2000:303) believes that, “Among resistant people groups and in Creative-Access Countries, educational services can afford an entree that does not otherwise exist.” How, in the process of announcing the gospel to the Pygmy peoples, for example, will the Mbuti Pygmies read the Bible and related literature without first being educated? How will they understand and keep the message of the gospel, and even participate to its spreading, if they do not have any basic education? Finally, what will be their place, expectations, and contributions to the development of the DRC and the world within the current context of market globalisation and interaction among different peoples, if they remain uneducated?

Before dealing with the way formal education can practically be promoted among the Mbuti Pygmies, it is necessary to have a brief historical look on its place in mission endeavour, and then examine some challenges to it.

5.4.1 Education in missions

Drawing on Aubert (2001:96-9), one realises easily that, since the beginning, education has been a constitutive dimension of the activity of the church as well

as the transmission of the faith. The following few examples can help to understand that education has been a great and significant tool during the history of Christian mission across the world. Probably on the basis of the model of Judaism which maintained an educational infrastructure as a priority from the giving of the Law of Moses (Deut 6:7), churches, in addition to elementary schools, have developed basic education and centres of professional training in order to bring to faith different social groups and also to establish indigenous Christianity everywhere. Furthermore, through the initiatives of Raymond Lull in the Middle Ages, universities have provided a platform for mission. In addition, in 1659, the Congregation of Propaganda instructed the Apostolic Vicars leaving for China to focus on education, saying, “Create schools everywhere without delay... If you find in these schools young men who are pious and good natured, devoted and generous, capable to achieve their humanities, and who give some hope to embrace the ecclesiastical life, feed their zeal” (Aubert 2001:97).

Within the dynamic of mission of the 19th century, Christian missions, which were rather mixing civilisation with evangelisation, have systematically developed schools in mission fields. Education, and its necessity of being disseminated along with the missionary activities, was one of the major issues debated during the WMC held in Edinburg in 1910. From the dynamic of mission of the 19th century and the encouragements given by the Edinburg 1910 WMC, Christian mission has invested in education in all its aspects. On this issue, J. Herbert Kane bears witness that:

Education has been always an integral part of the missionary movement. Teaching held an important place in the public ministry of Christ. It was included in Christ’s instructions to His disciples as recorded in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, 20. Teaching played a large role in the development of the early church... Modern scientific education was introduced to the Third World by missionaries. In Africa the missionaries were for many decades the sole purveyors of education... In Africa, the colonial governments

showed little interest in education; that was left largely to the missions. (Kane 1986:318-9)

In addition, Ferris (2000:303) argues, “Mission work is inherently educational. The Great Commission, the mandate and charter of Christian mission, is a command to ‘make disciples’ and to ‘teach’, both explicitly educational activities.”

In the DRC, for example, education has been the most important and visible development activity of churches since colonial times, given that the colonial rulers were mostly church-oriented. Created simultaneously or beside churches, schools were considered as a prerequisite for the apostolate, as long as they could attract masses and enable them to encounter the gospel. Schools have served almost as the nurseries of Christians and clergy for the life of the local church. In all these educational efforts across the country, the Pygmy peoples as a whole have not been taken into account. Why? Some challenges to education among the Pygmy communities have been given as excuses to justify this failure of both the churches and the government.

5.4.2 Challenges to education among the Mbuti Pygmies

There are real challenges that seriously inhibit educational attempts amongst the Pygmy people groups. The most important challenges are the nomadic way of life, the discrimination experienced by Pygmy children in public schools, the hunting and honey seasons, and the quasi-illiterate status of Pygmy parents.

5.4.2.1 The nomadic way of life

About the challenge relating to the nomadic way of life, it is worth reminding that the Mbuti Pygmies are, more than other Pygmy groups, mostly forest dwellers and also nomadic. Reflecting on the nomadic way of life and referring

to the account of Abraham's life, Volf (1996:40) quotes Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet who describe the challenge facing nomadic peoples in the following terms:

“Nomads are always in the middle,” ... They have no fixed location, but roam from place to place, always departing and always arriving. “There is no starting point just as there is no goal to reach,” ...every place of arrival is a point of departure. Indeed, there is even no stable subject, either divine or human, who could give direction to the departures. One is always departing pure and simple, flowing like a stream... merging with other streams and changing in the process, de-territorializing them as one is de-territorialized by them.

Forty years ago, a French lawyer, named Rousseau, wrote in his *Manual of Public International Law* that, “Nomadism has no legal significance. The so-called nomadic States are only the travelling communities whose borders are elastic” (Moretti 2006:1).

From this description of nomadism, one can establish how difficult it is to initiate a project of development such as formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies. This is the reason why almost all those who are involved in assisting the Pygmy peoples in general often wish to make them sedentary by relocating them from the forest to the villages. This strategy, however, does not succeed, because the Pygmy people groups are always intimately bound to the forest and do not conceive of their life outside it. Focusing on relocating them creates another great challenge pertaining to the identity and dignity of the Pygmy peoples. So an important question arises of how to reconcile the challenge of providing formal education with that of the nomadic lifestyle. Can one meet the challenges of a people by creating new challenges? This large question, which is especially pertinent to the present study, deserves particular attention, as the Mbuti Pygmies deserve both to be allowed to maintain their identity and to acquire new knowledge.

There are no easy answers to such so challenging an issue, but attempts to tackle it should address both the urgent necessity of ensuring education to these people and the need to preserve their Pygmy identity. This kind of balance is needed in the mission encounter because carrying out Christian mission should not mean uprooting people from their traditional contexts and cultures, as if there were some contexts and cultures beyond the reach of being addressed by the Creator God. Nevertheless, as there are now, in Ituri, too many relocated Pygmy camps all along the main roads and nearby the Bantu villages, the challenge of nomadism to education can partially be met through the creation of stable schools within them. Unfortunately, as was observed during the field researches, there are no schools established within these Pygmy villages. This is to say that encountering the Mbuti Pygmies through education is not yet effective, and it remains a need.

Before suggesting the ways in which formal education could practically be implemented among the Mbuti Pygmies, three other challenges also deserve to be examined.

5.4.2.2 The hunting and honey seasons

Beyond the challenge of nomadic lifestyle, formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies conflicts with other major cultural challenges, the hunting and honey seasons. Hunting and the related activities of fishing and gathering are intimately bound to the nomadic life for survival. In this regard, Lewis maintains that people living in extreme poverty typically depend on the efforts of every family member to obtain daily food. For him, “Children, especially teenagers, are often important providers... Many very poor families cannot afford to lose an important contributor to the household economy; nor can they pay school fees, buy books, pens and uniforms and provide daily packed lunches” (Lewis 2000:15). This is true for the Mbuti Pygmies, whose every member of the

nuclear family must actively be involved in hunting and gathering, which are the only means of surviving. As evidence that the Mbuti Pygmies already have traditional education, children are trained in how to master the forest with its hardships, to hunt and to gather fruits, mushrooms, and other forest resources, from an early age. Hunting and gathering take precedence over all other things, including attending school.

During the hunting and honey seasons, from January to March and June to September, the Pygmy peoples with all their children leave their camps and go deeper into the forest for more or less six months (Musafiri 2010). These crucial seasons are considered to be public holidays that all the Pygmy peoples must celebrate together with their children, pupils or not. They are also among the most important cultural events such as the *molimo*, which is a festivity dedicated to the god of the forest. The few Mbuti children who dare to attend school are often compelled to abandon it during these hunting and honey seasons, and this causes their failure because, in the DRC, the hunting season especially corresponds with the period of classes and exams in both primary and secondary schools.

The hunting and honey seasons, together with all the other cultural events, should not be neglected, if one seeks to succeed in developing any educational project among the Mbuti Pygmies.

5.4.2.3 Discrimination within public schools

There are often attempts to persuade the children of the Mbuti Pygmies who live in close proximity to the Bantu villages to attend public schools. Sadly, these attempts mostly fail for a number of reasons. In addition to the lack of school fees and other necessities, resulting from the extreme poverty experienced by the Pygmy peoples in general, and which could be dealt with if only these peoples were willing to be educated, Pygmy children who dare to attend public schools

experience discrimination. According to Lewis (2000:15) who has studied the Batwa Pygmies in the eastern DRC, Rwanda and Burundi, Pygmy children are often teased and bullied by their colleagues, pupils from other ethnic groups, and even disheartened by the teachers. The UNESCO-IBE Director, Clementina Acedo, considers such a situation as constituting exclusion from education. For her, exclusion does not refer only to the 75 million children for whom access to education is denied or those who drop out before completing their education. “It also happens every day to those in schools who are segregated or discriminated against due to social condition, ethnic origin, cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, or other individual characteristics or capacities.”

For the Pygmy peoples, discrimination is a long-standing phenomenon that goes from generation to generation, and is experienced even by the very small children within schools. Lewis (2000:15) describes the plight of the Batwa Pygmies as follows:

Those Batwa who manage to find the money and are admitted to school frequently suffer discrimination, teasing and bullying. Their lunch boxes may be examined by other pupils to see if they are eating taboo foods. Children of other ethnic groups who get too friendly with Batwa will be teased and criticized by their peers. Being seen eating with a Mutwa may mean rejection by their own community. In many cases other children will not play with Batwa, nor eat or sit with them at lunchtime. Once in the classroom pupils from other ethnic groups will refuse to share a school bench with them. Many schools have special benches exclusively for Batwa students, where they often sit three or four instead of two to a bench as other children do. Batwa children are always a tiny minority and often become miserable and disheartened by the discrimination and teasing they suffer. Teachers may not be sympathetic to the Batwa and fail to take action against other pupils abusing them. Some even participate.

Given situations like this, the Pygmy children do not hesitate to withdraw from schools and get back to their forest life. One needs to note that the Pygmy peoples are generally very cautious and vigilant, and like any other human

beings; they do not tolerate humiliation and contempt. On this very issue, the first two strategies for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, namely the conversion of the non-Pygmy peoples and the commitment in the right perception of the Mbuti Pygmies are still applicable.

5.4.2.4 The quasi-illiterate status of the Pygmy parents

Beside the challenge of discrimination within public schools, another major challenge to formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies is certainly the quasi-illiterate status of the Pygmy parents. Parents play a very important role in the education of their children. They are key partners for education, along with the school, the government, and the society as a whole. As one of its strategies in education, the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey (2002) maintains that “School is a social institution and parents/legal custodians are an indispensable support for the school.” This means that parents are not only the ones who send and receive their children to and from school, but also the ones to whom their children are accountable with regard to their schooling.

When the parents are well educated, there is hope that their children will be encouraged well during their schooling period. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the Pygmy parents who have only traditional education, which is limited to the forest environment, whereas the globalised environment now aggressively challenges them. With a limited informal and traditional education, how will the Pygmy parents promote the schooling of their children? Even if the Pygmy children were willing to go to school, how can this be made possible while formal education is not part of the worldview of the Pygmy peoples?

5.4.3 Strategies and opportunities for the formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies

5.4.3.1 Strategies

Running a formal education project among the Mbuti Pygmies involves employing more suitable ways of overcoming the challenges that prevent them from having access to education than the classical didactic strategies. This is not an easy task because it implies the confrontation of their traditional lifestyles, attitudes, and worldviews of those who must deal with their education. Nevertheless, insofar as the major challenges facing the Mbuti Pygmies would be overcome through conversion and the right perception of these peoples, challenges related to formal education could easily be met. So instead of compelling the Mbuti Pygmies to abandon their culture and traditional ways of life, in order to have access to education, educational projects should rather be designed for them to accommodate their needs. This means applying an inclusive education so that they learn within their traditional contexts and culture. If done this way, formal education would be considered less as a foreign imposition on the Mbuti Pygmies.

What does inclusive education mean? The Department of Education in the Republic of South Africa answers this question by stating that, “Inclusive Education (IE) is defined as a process of addressing the diverse needs of all learners by reducing barriers to, and within the learning environment.” Then,

According to UNESCO, inclusive education is seen as “a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education.” The goal is that the whole education system will facilitate learning environments where teachers and learners embrace and welcome the challenge and benefits of diversity. Within an inclusive education approach, learning environments are fostered where

individual needs are met and every student has an opportunity to succeed.
(UNESCO-IBE Director, Clementina Acedo)

In dealing with the nomadic lifestyle and the hunting and gathering activities related to it, inclusive education would mean establishing roaming schools for the Pygmy children. Even if the educational ideal consists of having heterogeneous classrooms in terms of gender and ethnic groups in order to enable interactive learning, the disadvantages of homogenous classes with only Pygmy children appear to be less scandalous than doing nothing for them. Such an educational approach, however, is not easy to carry out in terms of educators, since it would be better that educators come from within the Pygmy culture and lifestyle. Unfortunately, this is still a big problem because the Pygmy peoples do not have yet educators within their communities. The lack of educators from within the Pygmy culture should not be an excuse that prevents the churches from getting involved in the formal education of the Pygmy peoples. They should engage in providing pioneer educators, because the mission encounter involves a *kenotic* mission commitment. It has been shown in chapter two that, for tourist and scientific purposes, there are some researchers such as Schebesta, Turnbull, Duffy and Wheeler who spent several years among the Mbuti Pygmies within the forest. Why should Congolese missionaries for the purpose of Christian mission among the Mbuti Pygmies not undertake such a commitment?

About the cultural challenge relating to the honey season, in the case of the Pygmy children who dare to attend public schools, the educational curricula can be adjusted within the concerned schools, if only the non-Pygmy peoples cope with the spirit of discrimination. Indeed, adjusting the educational curricula is not a new policy in the DRC. Because of the doctrinal claims of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDAC), for example, the State exams (the final exams of secondary educational level) which were taken including Saturdays are now taken only to Fridays. Moreover, while the schools in the DRC officially open

for six days a week – from Monday to Saturday, for the SDAC, they open only for five days a week – from Monday to Friday, and their educational curricula are equally validated by the government.

The educational process for the Pygmy children should be run indeed on basis of the implementation of the four pillars of learning as defined by Zhou Nan-Zhao, as “learning to know”, “learning to do”, “learning to live together”, and “learning to be”.¹⁰ For the Pygmy peoples, these four pillars also constitute

¹⁰ Reflecting on the four pillars of learning, as proposed by the International Commission for the Twenty-first Century in its Report to UNESCO, entitled *Learning: The Treasure Within*, Zhou Nan-Zhao (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou.pdf>) focuses on revising them through the following explanations:

Learning to know. This type of learning is radically different from ‘acquiring itemized codified information or factual knowledge’, as often stressed in conventional curriculum and in ‘rote learning’. Rather it implies ‘the mastering of the instruments of knowledge themselves’. ‘Acquiring knowledge in a never-ending process and can be enriched by all forms of experience’. ‘Learning to know’ includes the development of the faculties of memory, imagination, reasoning, problem-solving, and the ability to think in a coherent and critical way. It is ‘a process of discovery’, which takes time and involves going more deeply into the information/knowledge delivered through subject teaching. ‘Learning to know’ presupposes learning to learn’, calling upon the power of concentration, memory and thought’, so as to benefit from ongoing educational opportunities continuously arising (formally and non-formally) throughout life. Therefore, ‘learning to know’ can be regarded as both a means and an end in learning itself and in life. As a means, it serves to enable individual learners to understand the very least enough about the nature, about humankind and its history, about his/her environment, and about society at large. As an end, it enables the learner to experience the pleasure of knowing, discovering and understanding as a process.

Learning to do. This pillar of learning implies in the first place for application of what learners have learned or known into practice; it is closely linked to vocational-technical education and work skills training. However it goes beyond narrowly defined skills development for ‘doing’ specific things or practical tasks in traditional or industrial economies. The emerging knowledge-based economy is making human work increasingly immaterial. ‘Learning to do’ calls for new types of skills, more behavioural than intellectual. The material and the technology are becoming secondary to human qualities and interpersonal relationship. Learning to do thus implies *a shift from skill to competence*, or a mix of higher-order skills specific to each individual. ‘The ascendancy of knowledge and information as factors of production systems is making the idea of occupational skills obsolete and is bringing personal competency to the fore’. Thus ‘learning to do’ means, among other things, ability to communicate effectively with others; aptitude toward team work; social skills in building meaningful interpersonal relations; adaptability to change in the world of work and in social life; competency in transforming knowledge into innovations and job-creation; and a readiness to take risks and resolve or manage conflicts.

Learning to live together. In the context of increasing globalization, the Delors Commission places a special emphasis on this pillar of learning. It implies an education taking two

the four goals for which they must be given access to formal education. As full human beings, the Mbuti Pygmies also need to learn to know, even beyond what they know within their natural environment, they need to learn to do and even to improve what they do, they need also to learn to live together not only with themselves but also with other peoples, and they need to learn to be what they are and what they expect to be. This is their undeniable human right.

The above four educational pillars, which target the whole human being, are missiologically justifiable and applicable, since Christian mission is to be dealt with in a holistic manner. Thus, applying these educational pillars to the Mbuti Pygmies should not mean ignoring the fact that they already have their own kind of education, which may be better for them than the formal education. For the sake of enabling the Mbuti Pygmies to evolve to the same level as the non-Pygmy peoples who tend to discriminate against them because of their so-called good education, however, the Mbuti Pygmies also need to receive this so-

complementary paths: on one level, discovery of others and on another, experience of shared purposes throughout life. Specifically it implies the development of such qualities as: knowledge and understanding of self and others; appreciation of the diversity of the human race and an awareness of the similarities between, and the interdependence of, all humans; empathy and cooperative social behaviour in caring and sharing; respect of other people and their cultures and value systems; capability of encountering others and resolving conflicts through dialogue; and competency in working towards common objectives

Learning to be. This type of learning was first conceptualized in the Report to UNESCO in 1972, out of the fear that ‘the world would be dehumanized as a result of technical change’. It was based on the principle that ‘the aim of development is the complete fulfilment of man, in all the richness of his personality, the complexity of his forms of expression and his various commitments – as individual, member of a family and of a community, citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer’. ‘Learning to be’ may therefore be interpreted in one way as learning to be *human*, through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values conducive to personality development in its intellectual, moral, cultural and physical dimensions. This implies a curriculum aiming at cultivating qualities of imagination and creativity; acquiring universally shared human values; developing aspects of a person’s potential: memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capacity and communication/social skills; developing critical thinking and exercising independent judgment; and developing personal commitment and responsibility. It is important to note that the four pillars of learning relate to all phases and areas of education. They support and interpenetrate one another and should therefore be applied as basic principles, crosscutting themes and generic competences for integration in and across subject areas or learning domains.

called good education. This is not a choice but a must, because the world, as it operates now, requires that everyone be formally educated to survive.

The issue of formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies and all other Pygmy groups needs to be tackled amongst both children and adults. Targeting only the Pygmy children will fail as long as their parents remain insensitive to formal education. For this reason, the educational project among the Mbuti Pygmies should include at least an informal basic formal learning for the adults as well. Roaming classes for teaching basic literacy to the adults should thus be launched in the same way as the roaming classes for children. As the Pygmy peoples enjoy entertainment and crafting, then classes of basic education should include entertainment and crafting.

5.4.3.2 Opportunities

In addition to the attempts of the churches working where the Mbuti Pygmies live in the northeast DRC, Christian mission through education directed towards these Mbuti Pygmies can rely on other opportunities. The most important are languages, the Mbuti proximity to and willingness to interact with their neighbouring Bantu villagers, the Mbuti skills in crafting and entertainment, the humanitarian NGOs, and the Church of Christ in the Congo.

The languages

Languages are always indispensable tools for breaking barriers among peoples, and they are thus a practical means to succeed in the mission encounters. Though the DRC comprises more than 460 spoken languages, including dialects, there are four national languages, namely Kiswahili, Lingala, Kikongo and Tshiluba, and one official language, French. What is interesting is that, on the one hand, not only are the Bible and related works of Christian literature already

available in all these five languages, but the four national languages are also used along with French in the areas where they are spoken at the elementary educational level.

On the other hand, almost each ethnic group in the DRC speaks at least one or two of the five main languages in addition to their own local or mother languages. Even though the Pygmy peoples are scattered across the country within the forests and without any formal education, they nonetheless manage to speak one or two of the five main languages, especially amongst those of the four national ones, in addition to their own local languages that they generally share with their neighbouring villagers. For example, in the Ituri region, the Mbuti Pygmies speak Kiswahili and a few speak Lingala, in addition to their local languages. The Batwa Pygmies of the Kivu¹¹ and Katanga provinces speak Kiswahili, the Batwa or Batswa Pygmies of the province of Equateur speak Lingala, while those of Bandundu speak Kikongo, and the few Batwa Pygmies of the two Kasai provinces speak Tshiluba. Consequently, it would not be difficult to integrate them into the schools, given that they are assumed to know at least one of the foundational languages. In fact, education is made easier and more acceptable when it is done through known languages.

Languages are not only an opportunity for the educational project among the Mbuti Pygmies but also for the entire Christian mission. Thus, churches in the DRC should not hesitate to take advantage of them to reach out to the Pygmy peoples.

The proximity and willingness of the Mbuti Pygmies to interact with the villagers

In the Ituri region, the Mbuti Pygmies do not always live far from the Bantu groups but they also live nearby them in the surrounding forests. As the Bantu

¹¹ The Kivu region consists of 3 provinces: the Nord-Kivu, Sud-Kivu and Maniema.

usually built their villages along the main roads, the Mbuti Pygmies are usually only about one or two kilometres from them within the forest. Relative to this, it should be noted that the Mbuti Pygmies live consecutively in two different worlds, deep in the forest and also around the Bantu villages. During their life in the second of these worlds, the Mbuti Pygmies take advantage of their proximity to the Bantu for trade exchanges. They sell forest products, including game and honey and their own personal physical strength, while the Bantu sell staples such as salt, soap, kitchen utensils, clothes, as well as alcohol and tobacco. Through these trade exchanges, which consist mostly of bartering goods rather than paying cash to one another, the Mbuti Pygmies are often aware that they are exploited, since they are never paid a fair value and they are not sufficiently skilled in dealing with numbers. They also know that they have a lot to learn from their neighbouring Bantu. While wanting to remain in the Pygmy culture and lifestyle, therefore, the Mbuti Pygmies are also willing to acquire the skills that make the villagers capable of developing and so dominating and exploiting them.

Of course, the ability of the villagers to develop themselves,¹² and so to dominate and exploit the Mbuti Pygmies, is none other than a result of the formal education they have received. As Sacks (2003:137) points out, education leads to knowledge, and knowledge is power. It is also true that lacking the skills of reading and writing reduces the chances of finding a good job. To this extent, the Mbuti Pygmies need to be made able to understand the power and secret of the villagers so that they then freely embrace formal education. As full human beings, the Mbuti Pygmies also need to escape from the alienation that they experience. Their proximity to and interactions with their neighbouring villagers are thus opportunities to awaken a desire for an education other than the traditional one they have already received. Because of their experience

¹² Though there are also many poor and vulnerable among the non-Pygmy peoples, the Mbuti Pygmies consider all of them as developed people.

among the Bantu, churches are well placed to provide such a formal education to the Mbuti Pygmies.

The skills of the Mbuti Pygmies in crafting and entertainment

The Mbuti Pygmies, as well as all other Pygmy peoples, are known to be good crafters who are well skilled in mastering forest resources, and also as good singers and dancers. As has been said earlier, they craft many marketable things such as baskets, bows or arches, arrows, wooden and ivory artefacts, pots, clothes from tree barks, bracelets and necklaces, musical instruments such as rattles, wooden bells, zithers, *likembe*, harps, and flutes (*baruma*). They are also well skilled in hunting and collecting specific forest resources for herbal medicines. All these arts and abilities are certainly channels of communication for a variety of purposes, entertainment, social, economic, and educational. These arts and abilities offer good opportunities by means of which formal education among them can be envisioned.

Insofar as the Mbuti Pygmies spend too much time on entertainment and relaxation, and are open to visitors, the educators could take advantage of that time to show them not only the ways they can develop what they are able to produce for commercial purposes, but also the way they can manage the numbers to ensure a fair sale. This should be thus an education of immediate interest. This is, once more, a matter of inclusive education. So, Søggaard (1993:69) is right when he claims that, “For any development of effective strategy and programs, we need to discover people’s receptivity and openness to change.” If this strategy is more suitable for the training of the adults than that of their children, it could serve, nevertheless, as a basis for future formal education of the children.

The humanitarian NGOs

The three field-researches conducted in the east and northeast DRC have helped to identify that there are more than 100 national and international NGOs that claim to be concerned with humanitarian assistance to the Pygmy peoples in the DRC. As these humanitarian NGOs become involved for limited periods only, that is usually only within the framework of an emergency, churches could take advantage of their presence to set up roaming schools among the Mbuti Pygmies. Concretely this means establishing partnerships with them in order to get technical and financial support, for example, from them. Indeed, even if the churches can find educators, their great difficulty will be to equip them materially and financially. But some NGOs, such as ALPHA UJUVI, CIDOPY, LINAPYCO, MRG International and RAPHY, are capable of connecting the educational projects in favour of the Pygmy peoples to UNESCO or to other philanthropic international NGOs for a financial support. Of course, it will all depend on how churches manage to communicate the issue to NGOs. But it is important to be reminded that establishing partnerships with humanitarian NGOs should not prevent churches from engaging in the issue of the formal education in favour of the Mbuti Pygmies, through their departments of education and development, and through fundraising.

The Church of Christ in Congo (CCC)

Another hopeful opportunity is the Church of Christ in Congo (CCC). This is a Protestant Christian Council including about 66 Protestant denominations, which constitute Christianity in the DRC, together with the Roman Catholic Church and Kimbanguism. Created as a result of the DRC Continuation Committee (1911) of the Edinburgh 1910 WMC, the CCC is a strong Christian Network very experienced in managing and sponsoring spiritual and social

works of the Church such as evangelism and theological education, medical services (SANRU), public schools (from nurseries to universities), literature (Printing House and store), peace and reconciliation, chaplaincy, and many others (cf. History of the Church of Christ in Congo; Braekman 1961:270-284). It has also both authority and audience *vis-à-vis* the government. With its position and power, the CCC is capable of making possible an educational project in favour of the Pygmy peoples in the DRC. The CCC is also capable of efficiently defending the situation of the Pygmy peoples to the government, as it always does for multiple other social works.

The CCC is, thus, a good opportunity for the formal education among the Pygmy peoples, if only it would integrate these peoples into its mission agenda. The initiative of engaging the CCC should be taken by the local churches, which are working where the Pygmy peoples live. The big issue, however, remains that even these local churches do not really themselves have the Pygmy peoples on their mission agenda. From their failure and lack of care towards the Pygmy peoples, the entire society over which they have influence also does not care about these forest dwellers. As a result, encountering the Mbuti Pygmies remains a real challenge to Christian mission in the DRC. So what can one do in order to tackle this challenge with regard to the churches and their mission? Rightly speaking, the strategies and opportunities that are suggested here are not intended to solve the challenging issue of education among the Mbuti Pygmies magically. Their implementation depends strongly on the willingness and concern that Christians have for the Pygmy peoples as well as the theological understanding on which such Christians are established.

To be practical, Christians should ask themselves the following questions: “Who are the Mbuti Pygmies to us? How can we contribute to their spiritual and socio-political development? How are we spiritually and theologically prepared for such a duty towards the Pygmy peoples?” As an attempt to answer these questions, the next and final strategy in the perspective of the missional

encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies suggests that the churches be sustained by an integrated theological education.

5.5 Sustaining the Churches by an Integrated Theological Education

Discrimination against the Pygmy peoples even by Christians is not just a sociological phenomenon but also a theological issue. To tackle this major challenge that generates several other challenges, Christians should not limit themselves to conversion, the right perception of the Mbuti Pygmies, and formal education only. That is why, after suggesting the three strategies for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, the strategy of sustaining the churches by an integrated theological education is added. This is a two-pronged strategy, because, on the one hand, churches need to be sustained, and, on the other hand, Bible schools and Theological Seminaries need also to be sustained. Despite this twofold necessity, this section will focus more on the way theological education can be enhanced, because it is from it that churches are and may be theologically equipped.

In addition to spiritual gifts that undoubtedly lead to Christian commitment, efficiency in Christian mission requires a sound theological education, which is mission-oriented, that is, a missional theological education. Ott and Strauss (2010: xviii-xix) are aware of this need, and they recommend that theology be thought as a missional theology. From their understanding, one may note that:

Missional theology seeks to delineate more clearly the missional aspects of theology as a whole, placing God's mission as a central integrating factor... Missional theology is thus concerned with providing an interpretative frame of reference by which we understand the message of scripture and the mission of the church in its entirety. At the same time, missional theology is dependent on the other theological disciplines, learning from them and building upon them,

and then bringing them into relation with God's mission in the world. (Ott et al 2010: xviii-xix)

This section is built around four major issues, namely mission as the main aim of God and of theology, a brief historical look at the theological education in the northeast DRC, the syndromes of the theological education in DRC, and some proposals for an integrated theological education.

5.5.1 Mission as the main aim of God and of theology

Mission is God's affair and the main aim of God. It involves the entire scope of God's activities over the course of human history (Rogers 2003:17). Moreau *et al* (2004:314) also state that "mission is God's priority, and it will remain so until Christ returns."

Reflecting on the Old Testament account on God's call to Abraham (Gen 12:1-4; 22:18), Stott (1976) draws attention to the fact that the Living God is a missionary God. For him, the promise to bless "all the families of the earth" that God gave to Abraham is indispensable to an understanding of the Bible and of Christian mission. Then Stott (1976) puts emphasis on the fact that, "If God has promised to bless 'all the families of the earth,' he has promised to do so 'through Abraham's seed' (Gen 12:3; 22:18). Now we are Abraham's seed by faith, and the earth's families will be blessed only if we go to them with the gospel. That is God's plain purpose." If the church is the gathering of those who have faith in Christ, then the apostle Paul says, "Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham" (Gal 3:7). Consequently, the church, which is the daughter or the descendant of Abraham "will be a blessing to all nations on earth" (cf. Gen 22:18) only if it goes to them with the gospel. This missionary task is indeed the purpose and the meaning of being a church.

To fulfil the missional mandate finds its roots in God since mission belongs to him, the church really needs to be equipped through theological education that relates to God's main purpose in the world and in history. This would mean that if God and all that relate to him constitute the subject of theology,¹³ mission should be the core focus of theological education. In this sense, Bosch (1991:16, 489) refers to the systematic theologian Martin Kähler who maintains that mission is the mother of theology. Theology, according to this theologian, began as an accompanying manifestation of the Christian mission and not as a luxury of the world-conquering church. As such, the New Testament writers wrote in the context of an emergency of a church, which, because of its missionary encounter with the world, was forced to theologise (Bosch 1991:16). Therefore (:489), "it is impossible to read the New Testament without taking into account that most of it was consciously written within a missionary context."

Stott (1976) concludes his paper entitled "The Living God is a Missionary God" this way, "How dare we adopt a hostile or scornful or even indifferent attitude to any person of another colour or culture if our God is the God of 'all the families of the earth?' We need to become global Christians with a global vision, for we have a global God." In clear terms, this means that if God is a missionary God, Christians as church, need to be missional Christians, and their theological education needs to be missional theological education. In order to be a valid instrument in God's hands for world mission, the church needs to be equipped by sound theological education based on mission. What about the theological education in the northeast DRC in this regard?

¹³ Bosch (1991:489) refers to theology as an actual and individual cognition of God and things related to God, or simply, the knowledge of God and the things of God.

5.5.2 Historical insight into theological education in the northeast DRC

The northeast DRC is not only the setting of the Mbuti Pygmies but also one of the most important venues of theological education in DRC. This is one of the main centres of Christianity in DRC, after the Lower Congo in the west. One of the very best known and old Bible schools that has trained many pastors and church executives from all over the eastern DRC areas is the Bible school of Linga, in Ituri. Given the increasing need to provide more qualified executives for the churches, in 1959 the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) and the Unevangelized Fields Mission (UFM) decided to create a theological institution of a higher educational level called *Theological School of Northern Congo (ETCN)*,¹⁴ which is the current Shalom University of Bunia (USB – Université Shalom de Bunia). This Theological Seminary, which is the second oldest theological seminary after the Protestant University in Congo in Kinshasa, remained for many years the only Protestant Seminary in the whole eastern DRC, a huge area which includes five provinces (Orientale, North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga) out of the eleven provinces of the DRC. It has also trained many students from the large neighbouring province of Equateur, even from Kinshasa. As each one of the denominations that sends candidates to the USB has five to ten Bible schools or more, the USB has thus influenced all these Bible schools and the related local churches with its theological thought.

Later, in Bunia, the capital city of the District of Ituri, two other theological seminaries, beside the USB, were also created. While the USB enjoys the affiliation of five denominations, namely the *Communauté Evangélique au Centre de l'Afrique (CECA)*, the *Communauté Nations du*

¹⁴ ETCN means in French *Ecole de Théologie du Congo Nord*. Owing to the political events related to Congo independence in 1960, the ETCN opened its doors to the first students in 1961 in Banjwade, a village near Kisangani. But, in 1964, teaching was interrupted owing to the Rebellion of that year and so the School recommenced teaching in buildings lent by the Bible School of Linga, near to Bunia, in Ituri. The ETCN settled in Bunia in 1967, where it acquired its own land for a campus (cf. <http://www.unishabunia.org/history.php?lang=en>).

Christ en Afrique (CNCA), the *Communauté des Eglises Baptistes du Congo-Est (CEBCE)*, the *Communauté Emmanuel (CE)*, and the *Communauté Evangélique du Christ au Cœur de l'Afrique (CECCA)*, these other two Theological Seminaries contribute to the theological education in that area but within a framework limited to their respective churches, which are the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church in Congo. The USB, therefore, remains the most influential theological seminary, which is open to all, even outside the boundaries of its affiliated denominations.

What is the theological curriculum of the USB and all other related Seminaries and Bible schools in terms of missiology? What is the impact of these Bible schools and theological seminaries in terms of mission efforts among the Mbuti Pygmies? If the Mbuti Pygmies remain virtually untargeted and also unchurched within an area there where churches and Bible schools and Theological Seminaries are growing, there is reason to ask what is going wrong within the theological education process. As a provisional answer to these questions, it is possible that the three Theological Seminaries in the northeast DRC have been affected by what Singh (1992:358-61) identifies as syndromes of the theological education within the Indian context.

5.5.3 Syndromes of the theological education in the DRC

In his contribution to the book “Mission Mandate: a Compendium on the Perspective of Missions in India”, Singh (1992:356-362) draws attention to what he has identified as syndromes¹⁵ of the theological education. These syndromes and many others may also be seen within theological education in the DRC.

¹⁵ In the same vein, Kane (1980:301-315) talks about problems and mistakes in theological education, which he has identified as the proliferation of schools, the small enrolment, the low academic standards, the paucity of qualified teachers, the inadequate library facilities, the placement, the non-discretion in the choice of students, the choice of programme and

5.5.3.1 Small enrolment of students

Bible Schools and Faculties of Theology in DRC enrol a very small number of students. This is a worrying problem as far as the future of the church and its mission is concerned.

Taking the example of the USB (University Shalom of Bunia) and the ULPGL (*Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs*) of Goma, among many other Bible Schools and universities of the DRC, the enrolments given below were recorded in the Faculties of Theology. During the academic year 2010-2011, the Faculty of Theology of the USB enrolled 76 students out of the whole of 752 students, that is, 10% (USB Annual Academic Report 2011). During the same academic year 2010-2011 the ULPGL enrolled 142 students in its Faculty of Theology out of the whole of 3098 students, that is, 4.6%; and the following academic year, 2011-2012, it enrolled only 91 students out of the of 2640, that is 3.4% (ULPGL Annual Academic Reports 2011 and 2012).

Among the reasons that contribute to the common lack of students for both Bible Schools and Theological Faculties in DRC is the fact that Christian ministry within the context of poverty and scarcity seems to have so little to offer in the way of worldly rewards. Because the prospects for a job for those who hold a biblical or theological degree seem to be limited to the churches, which often pay very low wages, many young men and women more easily enrol themselves for studies other than theology. The obvious challenge of low wages within churches also contributes strongly to a lack of discernment in the choice of prospective students for the Bible Schools and Faculties of Theology.

5.5.3.2 Recruited rather than called students

Schools in the DRC tend to be more profit oriented than pedagogical. There is tendency, especially within public schools, to recruit more students and produce more reports in order to gain more funds. For this reason, the admission requirements are no longer stringent but rely simply on the presentation of the school reports or transcripts and diplomas no matter what the marks. Bible Schools and Faculties of Theology are not exempt from this common temptation, which is twofold.

In order to overcome the challenge of a lack of interest in biblical and theological education that results in the small enrolment, churches are almost constrained to recruiting candidates. Similarly, the Bible Schools, especially the Faculties of Theology, try to accommodate all those who apply for admission without caring about what they will do after their studies. The Faculties register the new students on the basis of transcripts and diplomas only, no matter whether the candidates are recommended by the churches which should testify their ability for the ministry or not. The justification for this kind of cheap enrolment is that, if there is not recruitment, there will obviously be the risk of closing the Bible Schools and the Faculties of Theology.

For the purpose of having their own representatives within the leadership of their denominations and development projects, on the other hand, local churches send most of their candidates to the Faculties of Theology without even checking their call to ministry. As Singh has seen so well in India, owing to the unemployment problem young people are rushing into Theological Seminaries without seriously considering their calling for full time ministry (Singh 1992:358). Similarly, because there are often some scholarships, all those young people who cannot afford to study in the areas corresponding to their real

aptitudes are often obliged to embrace theological studies in order to take advantage of those scholarships.¹⁶

As a result of this, it is necessary to assert that in the same way that there is no mission without God's call (Musolo W'Isuka 1999); there is not much that one can expect from students who are trained in Theological Seminaries without God's call.

5.5.3.3 Abundant theology without missiology

Focusing on the interdependence that must take place between theology and missiology, Singh (1992:358), in agreement with David J. Hesselgrave, says:

...we are not interested in Theology that does not missionize. Nor are we interested in a Missiology that does not Theologized [sic]. It is imperative that Theology and Missiology should go together. Without Theology the Mission of the Church dissipates and without Missiology the Theology of the Bible stagnates.

It may be recalled in the light of this observation that theological education in the DRC, which is almost wholly designed on the model of the Western scholastic and idealist theology, seems not to have much to do with realities on the ground. Not only does it not have room for missiology, which is still regarded as an affair of the early Western missionaries, but it also fails to produce church workers, officers and evangelists who are interested in intercultural mission. On the contrary, “The consequence is parochialism, the ability to dialogue with other traditions, a lack of engagement with the world, and a consequent absence of sufficiently critical theological thinking” (Cochrane, Gruchy & Petersen 1991:103).

¹⁶ In the case of the ULPGL Goma, the United Evangelical Mission (UEM or VEM) from Wuppertal in Germany grants some scholarships to the students registered in the Faculty of Theology.

Within Theological Seminaries, mission is talked about only in connection with the Western missionary era, and this does not enable students to consider that what the church does is an integral part of its mission. The theological education curriculum is abundant in terms of diverse courses including the history of missions, except for missiology as a scientific reflection on the missionary action of God and of the church in the world. In many cases, the term “missiology” is itself even unknown.

During the author’s theological training for the Bachelor’s degree in Theology (BTh) at the University Shalom of Bunia, for instance, he did not have chance to learn or even hear about missiology, as if it was a total stranger to the theological curriculum. The paradox was that the University Shalom of Bunia, which was created by the missionaries, did not have mission courses in its curriculum. So the author learned about missiology only four years later, during the Master's degree in Theology (MTh) at the Bangui Evangelical School of Theology, in CAR. This has been a challenging discovery, which, finally, has resulted in the author’s choice of missiology as a field of study. The absence of missiology in the Theological Seminaries curricula, however, is not apparent only in the University Shalom of Bunia, but it seems to be part of the history of theological education itself from the Middle Ages where a kind of divorce between theology and missiology could be observed.

How and why has theology been divorced from missiology? After clearly observing that the New Testament was consciously written within a missionary context and that, by way of consequence, mission became the mother of theology, Bosch (1991:489) notices that thereafter mission has been marginalised. To explain how the marginalisation of mission took place, he provides some historical outlines. As Europe became Christianised and Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire and beyond, Bosch argues, theology lost its missionary dimension. For many centuries, there was only one discipline of theology, without subdivisions. Under the impact of

the Enlightenment, however, this one discipline first subdivided into two areas: *theology as practice* and *theology as theory*. After that, theology evolved into what has been called the “fourfold pattern”, that is, the disciplines of Bible (text), church history (history), systematic theology (truth), and practical theology (application). Under the influence of Schleiermacher, this pattern became firmly established, not only in Germany but elsewhere as well. In fact, it became virtually universal for Protestant theological schools and seminaries and for theological education in Europe, North America, and elsewhere. In this process, theology became thoroughly unmissionary. Mission was moved to the periphery of the church and did not evoke any theological interest worth mentioning (Bosch 1991:489-490).

The above account was true, and is still true, even within the new Theological Seminaries established in the Third World for the training of native clergy. Unless, therefore, missiology finds its fair and rightful place in the theological curriculums in the DRC, Theological Seminaries that are now being created all over the country will not be able to produce church workers, executives, and missionaries who can commit to encountering people living like the Mbuti Pygmies. This means that missiology needs to be integrated into theology in order that theology becomes genuine theology, because theology is the scientific reflection on God who in essence is a God of mission. As mission derives from God, so theology should derive from missiology. In this respect, Bosch along with Cracknell and Lamb, suggest that all theological questions should be thought about from the point of view of the theology of mission, and that only in this way can a “better teaching” of every subject come about (Bosch 1991:494).

As the Protestant University in Congo, in Kinshasa, and the University Shalom of Bunia have now integrated departments of missiology into their theological faculties, this initiative should be enhanced and extended to other theological seminaries across the DRC. These two, older Protestant Theological

Seminaries in the DRC are not yet strongly supplied with qualified lecturers of experience and with books in the field of missiology. Accordingly, missiology is still considered to be an alien subject or an appendix to the mainstream theology, the historical “fourfold pattern”.

5.5.3.4 Imported theology

Singh (1992:359) says, “Consciously and unconsciously we have got this into our mind that anything that comes from the West must be the best”. This reality is seen in almost all domains of life in Africa, including theology. By the way it is articulated, theology is something that is imported into African Bible schools and Theological Seminaries from the West. Indeed this is the case in the entire non-Western world, generally called the Third World, and it is what drove Singh to think that “we teach a theology which is not born from our own experience and context. We have allowed others to articulate theology for us” (1992:359). According to Cochrane, Gruchy and Petersen (1991:101), “Current theological education does not cope with what is required, and it perpetuates models derived from other times and places.”

Bosch goes back to the missionary era and links this phenomenon of imported and imputed theology with the fact that it is the Western churches that have established the churches called daughters in the Third World. And so, “Since the ‘daughter church’ had to imitate the ‘mother church’ in the minutest details and had to have the same structure of congregations, dioceses, clergy, and the like, it went without saying that the theology taught there would be a carbon copy of European theology” (Bosch 1991:490). Furthermore, Cochrane, Gruchy and Petersen (1991:103-4) make it clear that the models of theological education as it is carried out in Africa derive primarily from two assumptions, “the need to imbibe the doctrinal basis and polity of a particular denomination, and the need to digest what the Europeans and North Americans traditionally

have decided belongs to the theological curriculum and to effective training programmes.”

This is not to say that the early Western missionaries have done wrong by bringing the gospel into the Third World, but rather that they should have focussed on a “colourless” gospel in order that it could be reflected on locally within the context in which it was proclaimed. The lack of such an approach within the early pioneering missionary venture has indeed led to the claiming of a certain emancipation among churches of the Third World. Blaser (2006:915) sees this awareness as having been violent because the churches in the South have become full members of the global community, what has allowed them to consider their history with a critical eye. As a result, under the impulse of what has been identified as “indigenisation” and “contextualisation”, as a reaction to imported western theology, contextual theologies have emerged in the Third World. Instead of resolving the problem of the imported and imputed theology, however, these local theologies have become themselves another problem of claims and struggles, which have nothing to do with the real issue of reflecting on the local cultures and contexts.

If the Western theology is blamed for having failed to address local social realities, African theologies such as the theology of liberation, feminist, and so on, in the DRC, are still far from proving anything to the contrary. Instead, they are still articulated in a merely academic and speculative fashion. The challenges of poverty, oppression, unreached peoples, religions, for example, are still virtually not addressed in relation to the way the gospel should be received with confidence. Considering such a situation as a negative element in the process of the spreading of the gospel, Blaser (2006:916) believes that the only valid way forward is the resumption of the gospel that contributes to the liberation of the oppressed and of the alienated. Furthermore, (2006:916-7) he suggests that instead of focusing on regional theologies (Western, African, Asian, Liberation, Minjung, etc.), Christians should focus rather on a conciliar theological

reflection, that is, an ecumenical theology that takes into account the different contexts within which churches are evolving. Theology is thus meaningful as contextual theology only when it relates to a local level.

5.5.3.5 More theory less practice

Another syndrome of the theological education in the DRC is the fact that there is too much theory and very little practice. The new curriculum of the five years for the degree of *Licence*¹⁷ in theology that was accepted during the last Workshop of the Roundtable of the Universities of the DRC at Lubumbashi, in 2003, consists of an average of 3 750 hours of which only about 150 hours are dedicated to practical exercises. Fieldwork is almost not provided for in this curriculum, so during the five years for the degree of *Licence* in theology, students spend all their study time between the classrooms and the libraries. Once they have completed their studies, they have enormous problems especially in the areas of pastoral duties, such as preaching, liturgy, and church management, and of evangelism and missionary outreach. So there is often an excessive gap between the theories that have been accumulated within seminaries and faculties and the practice on the ground. In addition, there is an uncomfortable relationship between the Theological Faculties and the local churches.

Within the Indian context, Singh (1992:360) has noticed so well that “seminaries produce theologically illiterate persons for the ministry. They are illiterate not only theologically but also practically... This is why most of the graduates from these types of seminaries after graduation never become useful servants of God.” Likewise, Hunter (1989:74) maintains, “Seminary professors are often academicians, not practitioners. Consequently, those who study under

¹⁷ The degree of *Licence* in DRC is the equivalent of Honours in South African system of education.

them learn by modelling how to be academicians, not practitioners.” In the same perspective, Cochrane, Gruchy and Petersen (1991:100) consider that one of the major stumbling blocks the church faces in attempting to relate to public life and practice in crisis, is the priest or the minister who so often has no tools, no background, no experience by which to understand what is needed, and, therefore, no means to think theologically or act pastorally and liturgically in relation to public practice and social crisis.

Rightly speaking, the gospel itself has no problem that prevents it from being received but it is Christians who, most of time, fail to make it relevant because of their negative attitude towards others, their lack of vision for mission and adequate methods and commitment. If theological education cannot end up in practice on the ground, it ceases to be a useful tool for the church and its mission. Theory is necessary when it serves as a basis for practice. But theory without practice is as useless as practice without theory. Education can only be a true and powerful weapon to change the world if only it is translated into action.

5.5.3.6 Inadequate library facilities

While a well-equipped library is an indispensable tool for education in addition to teachers and buildings, schools in the DRC benefit very little from this educational tool. Education is due primarily to the teaching of courses by teachers rather than to books and other documents. Where there are libraries, these are equipped either with a very small number of books or with very old books. About the number of books, many schools, including the Bible Schools and Theological Faculties, have scarcely 1 000 books in their libraries while, according to Kane (1980:305), a pastor in the United States has easily more than 1 000 books in his personal library.

The two great Faculties of Theology in eastern DRC, namely the Faculty of Theology of the USB and that of the ULPGL are not exempt from the

educational problem relating to libraries. While the library of the USB, which is 54 years old, has only 11 649 volumes (USB Annual Academic Report 2011), the library of the ULPGL, which is 27 years old, has barely 6 000 volumes (ULPGL Librarian Report 2012). In fact, inadequate library facilities have several negative consequences in education. The quality of the education is affected in all its aspects, to such an extent that:

- instead of improving education, the lack of adequate library facilities contributes to the perpetuation of old notions and principles in education;
- students become too much dependent on their teachers and are unable to learn by themselves;
- students and teachers are not motivated to acquire their own books;
- the possibility of publishing is reduced,
- there are gaps and limitations within the work of students after the completion of their studies,
- etc.

Sustaining the churches with an integrated theological education should rely also, not only upon the adequate buildings and libraries, but also upon qualified teachers with experience.

5.5.3.7 Academic qualifications without experience

Another syndrome relative to theological education in the DRC that can be mentioned in this study is, of course, the emphasis put on academic qualifications at the expense of experience and abilities in practical field ministries. To produce highly academically qualified graduates has become almost the only goal that the Theological Seminaries pursue. For this reason, the

Theological Seminaries appoint as lecturers only raw graduates who have got their degrees with distinction, regardless of their background in spiritual life and the abilities in church ministries. Theological Seminaries are full of lecturers and executives without any pastoral and missionary experience. Most of them are those young people who have studied non-stop from nursery school to the university. Appointed as lecturers, they teach, for example, the Evangelism and Church planting without any clear knowledge of how to launch a programme of evangelisation or to plant a church; they teach about the Administration of the Church without having even worked within a church even, at least, as an usher; Liturgy even without being able to lead even a prayer cell. Faced with such a situation of a proved amateurism in theological education, one can only wonder about how a non-pastor or a teacher devoid of practical pastoral issues can train pastors. How can a teacher lacking in practical missionary issues train intercultural missionaries? How can theological education led by experts without any background in field experience be a useful tool that sustains the church so that it becomes relevant in the world?

This is not to say that being academically qualified in theology is wrong in itself, but academic qualifications should go hand in hand with experience, which can be obtained only through ongoing practice. Once again, academic qualifications without experience are as useless as experience without academic qualifications. Reflecting on the integrity of mission and missiology, in this respect, Kirtzinger (2007) helps understand that theological education should be carried out in an inclusive way. This means that it should be *pragmatic* (practice), and *critical* (theory), and *epistemic* (metatheory). He, therefore, advises that these three aspects be taken into account in an interdependent way because where they are separated from one another there is an “academic shortcut” (cf. Kirtzinger 2002). Indeed, focusing only on the academical merits in a Faculty of Theology is nothing less than an academic shortcut. Academic shortcuts in theological education undoubtedly result in superficial results in the

field of ministries. With reference to these academic shortcuts, Singh (1992:360) considers that the “Seminaries need experts with experience. Theological education should be a pre-field training for those seriously called to serve cross culturally on a long-term basis. Again this is possible only through experts with experience.”

5.5.4 Proposals for an integrated theological education

To be an effective tool, which must equip churches for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies and all those who are living like them in the DRC and beyond, theological education needs to be carried out on the basis of a number of proposals. First of all, a firm decision to remedy to the syndromes related to theological education, described above, should be taken urgently. This decision should focus on the reform of theological education so that it can be aimed at implementing the Great Commission, according to which all the nations of the world are the scope and subject of mission. If theology is a science that reflects on God who is the God of mission, its main goal should be nothing other than serving as a tool for promoting and fulfilling God's mission. In this regard, Singh (1992:361) suggests that the Theological Seminaries be the task force in fulfilling the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus by carrying the gospel to unevangelised peoples. Once this main goal of theological education is clearly defined and implemented, all the other issues related to theological education could be addressed easily.

In keeping with to the foregoing findings, the following suggestions made by Singh (1992:361) need to be taken into account in the process of dealing with theological education in an integrated and encompassing mode.

- Theological Seminaries should enrol only those young men and women who are called and committed to the cause of evangelism and mission.

This should be done in close collaboration with their respective local churches. In fact, if the Theological Seminaries have failed to give the students a vision for the lost and neglected, it is well-nigh impossible for them to have that vision when they are out of the Seminary.

- Theological Seminaries should appoint faculty members who have gone through the exciting experience of giving birth to a church themselves and of commitment in other aspects of church mission. If the faculty members are not willing to accompany their students on evangelistic activities (outreach), for example, it is not fair to send raw students out into the field. Preaching, Evangelism, and Church planting, for example, can be taught effectively only by doing them.
- One should make sure that Theological Seminaries are idea-factories and research centres, which produce men and women of action and not just institutions of mere academic pursuit.
- Theological Seminaries should establish clear and close links with the church. They should, therefore, serve the church and not vice versa. Actually, theological institutions must serve the needs of the church by producing pastors, evangelists, church planters, and intercultural missionaries. It is from among these practitioners in diverse aspects of the church mission that potential faculty members should be appointed.

In addition to the suggestions given by Singh (1992), one should also consider:

- The reviewing of the theological education curriculum in order that, at least, one third of the time of the education be dedicated to practice. In DRC, this means clearly that more or less 1 250 of the 3 750 hours of the five years of studies should be set apart for practice and field work, that is, 250 of the 750 hours per class per academic year. Focusing only on

theoretical theological education leads to producing theologically literate persons who bring nothing relevant to ministry.

- Attuning the theological curriculum to the concrete contexts within which churches are evolving. This would lead, for example, to enhancing it by practical courses rooted in local social contexts, such as Anthropology, Sociology, Ethnology, Geography, Demography, Ecology, Intercultural communication, Mission strategies, Church growth, etc. It is sometimes abnormal to find that, in Ituri, one can teach Sociology and Anthropology without alluding to the Mbuti Pygmies who are an integral part of the population of that region. In relation to this, though, it is not surprising ironically to find that lecturers tend to teach more about faraway peoples, such as the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania, the Tuareg in northwest Africa, and the Aborigines in Australia, than about the Mbuti Pygmies who are their very close neighbours.
- Integration in the theological education process of a break of at least a two-year internship, after the completion of each level of studies, from the undergraduate to the doctorate. By so doing, students could evolve academically while being connected to the concrete realities of ministry on the ground. In most cases, research through books in an office or library turns out to be irrelevant with regard to the realities of ministry on the ground.
- Establishing a programme of regular ministry skills upgrading courses for pastors and all other church workers, in order to equip them with knowledge about new challenges. In fact, there are still many pastors who continue to serve on the basis of the rudimentary biblical teachings they received at the time when Western missionaries had begun to incorporate some indigenous Christians in the church management. These older pastors, who have not studied much, are very influential in decision-

making and are not always ready for change. They aim only to perpetuate the imported theology that is struggling to meet the current social realities and challenges. These older pastors and church executives can be equipped only through regular upgrading sessions and workshops.

To sum up, these proposals for an integrated theological education involve an urgent need to redefine the goal of theological education in the DRC. This involves, according to Kane (1980:309-311), the contextualisation of theology as a whole. And Cochrane, Gruchy and Petersen (1991:101) observe, “Unless the goal of theological education is fundamentally redefined, the trainee cleric and the congregation will meet in a local parish on old terms and with old expectations inadequate for our times.”

For the purpose of performing the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies and all other peoples living in similar circumstances, there is clearly a pressing need for theologizing beyond the current models of theological education in the DRC.

5.6 Conclusion

There are certainly many other approaches for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies. The four strategies discussed in this chapter, however, appear to be the most important insofar as they involve the Christians’ responsibility as Christians who have to go through ongoing conversion for a healthy communion with God, and through whom others must benefit from God’s graces. Conversion has, thus, been identified as a starting point for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, because it enables the personal liberation of Christians for themselves and for others, and, in the same way, it enables the liberation of the others for themselves and for Christians who have to encounter them. This is a way forward to enter into the world of the others, those who live

elsewhere and act differently, in order to share with them the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Through conversion, the worldviews of Christians must be shaped so that they reach a new way of interpreting the scriptures, in order to be able to implement the other strategies for the missional encounter with Mbuti Pygmies, which are:

- The right perception of the Mbuti Pygmies, as fully made in the image of God and fully part of “all nations”. This is, indeed, a way of implementing the conversion that brings about the fundamental transformation of outlook, that is, a new way of being, thinking, and behaving; which should end up in embracing the peoples from the cultures and contexts quite different from own ones. The right perception of the others, among which are the Mbuti Pygmies, is also a rational way of evaluating the scope of Christian mission and the practical means to fulfil it.
- The necessity of promoting formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies, so that they may also be open to the world in order to master it instead of undergoing it, and
- The necessity of sustaining the churches with an integrated theological education, so that they may be able to attune their teachings to all the people, in all their contexts and cultures.

From the preceding findings, it has been necessary to establish that to encounter other peoples, no matter who and what they are, is a real school in which one can learn more about oneself, about others, and about God and his mission. It is indeed very difficult and even stressful to leave one’s own comfort zone in order to encounter others who live in new and different cultures and contexts. Faced with this difficulty, which is linked of course to the unregenerate human nature,

churches in the DRC and elsewhere are forced to fall back on themselves in their missional task. But, by focusing only on itself, which is actually a shortcut, the church cannot grow in order to be relevant in the world. That is why, as Sacks (2003) believes, knowledge is not lost by being given to others but it rather grows by being shared. It is also true that Christians are not going to lose their faith by encountering other peoples. On the contrary, Christian faith grows through heartfelt mission encounters with the others. This means that the Mbuti Pygmies in the northeast DRC provide a good case study through which this exercise of Christian faith can be tested.

Churches may have several reasons to shirk their missional duty towards the Mbuti Pygmies and all other Pygmy groups, such as the culture, lifestyle and contexts that are quite different from what is expected to be the standard of life, but through a true conversion and the related strategies discussed in this chapter, those reasons can be tackled positively. In effect, Christian mission is a risk for which Christians must maximize the time and means at their disposal. Time and the four strategies for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies are certainly at the disposal of the churches in the northeast DRC. To implement these opportunities must not be a matter of shortcuts but rather of a thoughtful mission endeavour based on the model of Christ, the Master of mission. He, who did not commit sin, went through *kenosis*, a kind of conversion, in order to manifest his heartfelt love and consideration towards all the human beings. He provided his disciples with an integrated and encompassing theological education and other vital necessities, and he commissioned them to teach others to observe all that he commanded them (cf. Matt 28:20). Through Christ's mission, which is the model par excellence, it is possible to achieve a missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies.

Chapter Six

CONSOLIDATING THE FINDINGS FOR AN EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN MISSION

6.1 Introduction

This study on the missional encounter with one of the population groups among whom Christian mission in the DRC has been largely neglected is not intended to be a historical or anthropological handbook on the Mbuti Pygmies. Nor is it intended to provide easy and immediate solutions to the ill-treatment the Pygmy peoples have received as a result of the challenges facing them. In principle, such an attempt should be another kind of study. The main aim of this study was rather to explore the obvious gap that exists between the Christian mission enterprise in the DRC and the Mbuti Pygmies who are fully part of the Congolese population and also worthy of God's attention, but are scarcely recognised by Christian mission.

To more deeply understand this gap, which has been identified as a challenge to Christian mission, it was important to learn about the Mbuti Pygmies within the broad context of the Pygmy peoples in DRC, and to have a historical and critical overview of the attempts at mission among the Mbuti Pygmies in the northeast DRC, commonly called Ituri region. From the issues raised in the two preceding statements, which refer to what is dealt with in chapters two and three, the study has moved on to reflecting about Christian mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology, and then to suggesting practical strategies that could help as a basis in the process of encountering the Mbuti Pygmies. The first group to be addressed by this study, therefore, are not

the Mbuti Pygmies themselves but rather churches in the area where the study was done, the northeast DRC. These churches are not only responsible for carrying out mission in this well-known area of the DRC, but they are also the closest natural neighbours to the Mbuti Pygmies. This closeness of the churches to the Mbuti Pygmies should be understood not simply as coincidence of life but rather as an opportunity for mission that should be taken seriously. That is why, in order to attain its intended aims and objectives, the present study benefited of contributions and insights from a diversified literature, but mostly from work within the fields of anthropology and theology (missiology), as well as from the observation of the peoples studied in their natural settings. In this respect, the field research undertaken among the Mbuti Pygmies was itself a true foretaste of the missional encounter.

In summary, this last chapter ends the study by reviewing the use of the pastoral cycle, summarizing the findings, and providing some recommendations to both the DRC State and churches, and some suggestions for further studies on Christian mission among the Pygmy peoples and the Mbuti Pygmies as well.

6.2 Review of the Use of the Pastoral Cycle

How were the different parts of the study constructed so as to reach the intended aims and objectives? Such an achievement was made possible thanks to the use of the pastoral cycle of mission praxis. As the pastoral cycle of mission praxis enables learners to enter the world of other people in a way that is accessible to them, it really was a useful base upon which this thesis was constructed. Through her teachings, Karecki (2002:140) so clearly found that too often people fear those who are different from them, and so she has focused her work on challenging learners to take another perspective which consists of seeing others not as problems or enemies but rather as mysteries. This way of reflecting

on Christian mission has easily brought to light the need for encountering the Mbuti Pygmies, which provides a challenge to Christian mission in the DRC.

Undertaking any missional encounter with the forest Mbuti Pygmies, whose uniqueness of culture and ways of life makes them less known and very different from the rest of the Congolese people, is not an easy task. To tackle this obvious challenge to Christian mission, the pastoral cycle of mission praxis rightly served as a tool that guided the study step by step. This is, indeed, the way that UNISA, which fundamentally aims at contextualisation, approaches missiology. Kritzinger (2010:4) points out, however, that “This does not mean that we [UNISA] merely acknowledge the influence of context (upbringing, class, gender, etc.) on people’s views, but that we consciously integrate context analysis into theology.” In view of the preceding, the following movement of the pastoral cycle emerges through the thesis:

Table 6.4: Review of the Use of the Pastoral Cycle

<i>Thesis chapters</i>	<i>Stages of the Pastoral Cycle</i>	<i>Comments</i>
The first two chapters (One and Two)	Stage of identification or insertion into action	At this first level the study emerged by providing necessary orientations that would shed light on the following chapters. The main aim here was to highlight the research problem and question, the aims and objectives of the study, and all the other methodological tools that ground the study. Then the study evolved to practical involvement in Christian praxis that consists of learning about the Mbuti Pygmies. Once again, the main aim was to glean some substantial knowledge about the Pygmy peoples as a whole, in order to check whether the research problem and question were worthy of the study or not.
Chapter Three	Context or social analysis	The second stage of the pastoral cycle, which is that of <i>the context or social analysis</i> , involves the conscious use of analytical tools to unlock the underlying dynamics that are at work in a particular context. At this level, the analysis

		consisted of evaluating the early and contemporary mission attempts among the Mbuti Pygmies in order to determine the missional encounter as a working mission approach to reach out to these peoples.
Chapter Four	Theological reflection	Because of the insertion into action and the analysis of the context, the study moved on to <i>theological reflection</i> that aims at thinking about mission as encounter and missiology as encounterology. This consisted of a re-reading of the Bible and the Christian tradition in response to the questions raised by insertion and social analysis. From this theological reflection, it was clearly established that thinking about Christian mission as encounter was biblically and theologically founded.
The last two chapters(Five and Six)	Pastoral planning or strategies for mission	At the fourth level, the study culminates in <i>planning for action</i> . This stage of the pastoral cycle with regard to the study includes practical strategies and recommendations for the effectiveness of mission among the Mbuti Pygmies. It underlines the view of contextual theology that theology should not be abstract theories that are of no earthly use to the people of God, but instead give them direction and courage as they worship and struggle to be faithful to the gospel in daily life.

The *praxis* at the centre of the pastoral cycle is not a stage by itself but a pervasive element that informs each stage of the cycle. The *praxis* of mission is thus a motivational goal, which grounds the process of dealing with the four stages of the pastoral cycle. Moreover, the four dimensions of the cycle do not imply only a regular circular movement but also a constant interaction between them in all directions. So, as shown in *figure 6.21* below, “the two ‘blocks’ at the bottom of the diagram represent *action* and the two ‘blocks’ at the top represent *reflection*. Likewise, the two “blocks” on the right represent *text* and the two on the left represent *context* in the text-context dialectic” (Krinzinger 2010:5)

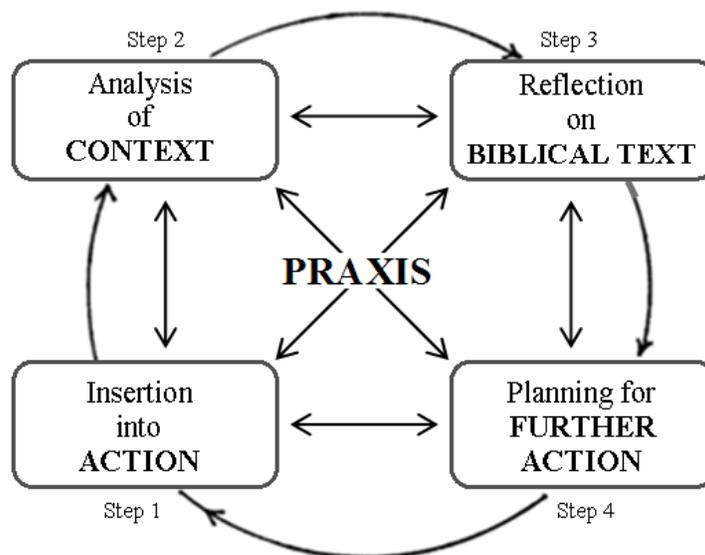


Figure 6.21: Relationship between the four stages of the pastoral cycle of mission praxis

Source: Adapted from Kritzinger (2010)

6.3 Summary of the Findings

After exploring the topic “Encountering the Mbuti Pygmies, a Challenge to Christian Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo”, the findings of this study can be summarised by means of the account of the compassionate Samaritan, in Luke 10:25-37, which reads:

²⁵And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

²⁹But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Many aspects of the topic studied have been explored, but two major questions are still to be clarified. The first question is about who really must carry out the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies. This implies thus the profile for a missionary among the Mbuti Pygmies. The second question is about how practically one can carry out the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies. The parable of the compassionate Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 is, therefore, examined here as a scriptural way forward to answering these questions. In fact, parables are a way through which readers can better understand the scriptural truths.

The parable about the Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, commonly known as the parable of the "Good Samaritan", will be examined cautiously conscious of Webb's remark, who considers that it "has been given all kinds of allegorical interpretations which have obscured the simple meaning of the lesson", and that, "As with all parables, there is a tendency to read too much into the parable."

6.3.1 Context of Luke 10:25-37

The parable of the compassionate Samaritan is unique to the Gospel according to Luke. It is told to the lawyer, an expert in the Law of Moses, in answer to the question "Who is my neighbour?" not "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

(cf. vv 25-28). The parable derives thus from an encounter through which the lawyer wanted to test Jesus about the ways and means he could inherit eternal life. But Jesus replied to the lawyer by another question, asking what is written in the Law and how the lawyer understood it. In order to prove that he was really an expert of the Law of Moses, the lawyer answered Jesus by reciting, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself." (cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18). From this right answer, Jesus said to the lawyer: "do this, and you will live" (v 28).

At this point, the lawyer seemed to be stupefied, because Jesus demanded that he practises what he was unable to do, that is, the practice of the whole of the Law. That is why, by trying to justify himself, the lawyer said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" (cf. v 29). With this last question, Green (1997:426) thinks that, "The lawyer does so by inquiring 'Who is my neighbor?' – not so much to determine to whom he must show love, but so as to calculate the identity of those to whom he needs not to show love." Likewise, Craddock (1990:150) points out that to ask, "Who is my neighbour?" could imply a selectivity, according to which some are neighbours and others are not, and, therefore, the question "Who are the ones I have to love?" could be still applicable.

In any case, the phrase "Who is my neighbour?" is the key question and the climax of the two parts of the account, the verses 25-28, which consist of the introduction to the parable, the real encounter of the lawyer with Jesus, and the verses 30-37, which consist of the parable itself through which four people and the group of robbers are introduced into the scene. Green (1997:427) agrees with the same structure by affirming that the structure of this narrative unit is straightforward, with its two parts presented in parallel. Then he suggests the following chart:

Table 6.5: Structure of Luke 10:25-37

<i>Part 1</i>	<i>Parallelism between the two parts</i>	<i>Part 2</i>
v 25	Identification of the Lawyer's motive	v 29
v 25	The Lawyer's question	v 29
v 26	Jesus' answer and counter-question	vv 30-36
v 27	The Lawyer's (appropriate) reply	v 37a
v 28	Jesus' final word, in the imperative	v 37b

Moreover, the parable of the compassionate Samaritan is given within the context of mission, the sending of the seventy,¹ two by two (cf. Luke 10:1-24). At first sight, Luke 10:25-37 seems to interrupt the discourse of Jesus to his disciples abruptly about the report of the mission that they have achieved. Considering the meaning of the parable that ends up with the statement “go and do likewise”, however, it is clear that instead of interrupting the discourse of Jesus to his disciples, the parenthetical nature of Luke 10:25-37 makes this discourse about mission rather more sensitive to the disciples and to the lawyer who certainly was around them. So, according to Francis and Atkins (2000:122), “The parable of the good Samaritan epitomizes the practical heart of the Christian gospel.”

Drawing on what might be the missional meaning of this parable with regard to the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, it is clear that this parable is full of significance. It may be unfolded through four major conclusions including the man who was victimised by the robbers, the priest and the Levite, the Samaritan as a compassionate neighbour, and the mandate “go and do alike”.

¹ Other Bible versions such as the Contemporary English Version and the Good News Bible read “seventy-two” instead of “seventy”.

6.3.2 The man victimised by the robbers

Little is said about the man who was the victim of the robbers. But what can be assumed is that this man, who was probably a Jewish,² was travelling alone from Jerusalem to Jericho by a road that was commonly known as being potentially dangerous. Francis and Atkins (2000:119-121) describe the road between Jerusalem and Jericho not only as a dangerous road, but also as steep, winding, hazardous and perilous. This is probably due to the topographical features of the area, which is a desert. In any case, this is the road the man took, and, on his way, he fell “among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.” So the man has become a needy person.

The Mbuti Pygmies in the northeast DRC can be compared to that man who fell among robbers, and who was wounded and was abandoned half dead. Innocently and probably because of a lack of knowledge and company along their way, the Mbuti Pygmies, the same way as the wounded man, have become the wounded people of history with all its components of injustice, discrimination, egotism, intolerance, exploitation, all of which can be considered as being “robbers” in the DRC and the world as well. In fact, “God’s people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” (Hos 4:6). Through the great number of challenges they face, which range from the loss of the human dignity to the loss of both identity and lands, the Mbuti Pygmies are not any less “stripped”, any less “beaten” and any less “abandoned half dead”. As long as the world is a place where knowledge about Jesus Christ is not totally spread so that people believe in him as the one who transforms lives for the abundant life, many of the uninformed, unaware and non-accompanied people will certainly fall into the ambushes of robbers.

² Morris (2004:206) says that the traveller in the story is clearly a Jew, but no stress is put on this, and he is called simply a man. For this author, it is rather the need of the neighbour and not his nationality that is important.

Because robbers are always around, doing their job of harming people, the victims of their barbarities need to be encountered by more than a compassionate Samaritan. They need to be accompanied so that together with the others, their neighbours, they become able to face up the enemies, the robbers. That is why the missional encounter, as shown in throughout this thesis, is identified as necessary for the fulfilment of the *missio Dei* among the needy Mbuti Pygmies. There are certainly several ways through which needy peoples may be reached, but as a contribution to the missiological research, this study has suggested and focused on the missional encounter as the most important way to reach out to the Mbuti Pygmies. This way of thinking about Christian mission clearly originates from God himself who, from the beginning, encounters human beings. The scriptural and theological grounds of such an encounter are found in the revelation of God, the *missio Dei*, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as the character of mission, the pre-eminent role of the Holy Spirit in mission, and the status of the church as a missional church.

It has also been established that thinking Christian mission as encounter implies obedience to the calling of God for mission, the face-to-face encounter rather than the tele-presence, the embrace that makes the other more human, the spirit of kenosis that brings about the spirit of belonging, the dialogue that unlocks Christian networks, the opportunity to learn from one another, and the courage of taking the risk, as shown in *figure 6.22* below. These practical implications of the missional encounter, whose centre is obedience to God's calling for mission, are sufficient motives that should make Christians aware of the necessity of breaking down the walls of their spiritual ghettos for encountering and sharing their spiritual gifts with others.



Figure 6.22: Summary of the implications of thinking mission as encounter

In this regard, Ahonen (2000:150) reveals that the church can reject mission gradually without even noticing that it is doing so, when it becomes isolated from the rest of the society so that it forms an island, or in the worst case, a kind of ghetto surrounded by high cultural walls, when it becomes a place of security for a small group of people, a place to seek sanctuary. In the same way, even if the churches in the northeast DRC are apparently plentiful, the noticeable absence of the Mbuti Pygmies within them proves that they are nothing less than the islands of some chosen ethnic groups. The apparent growth of these churches is purely biological rather than qualitative.

6.3.3 The priest and the Levite

Because the road taken by the man victimised by the robbers was commonly taken by everyone, the parable reads that “by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side”, and “likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side” (cf.

vv 31-32). These two religious men “saw” the victim because he was stripped naked, beaten and robbed on their everyday way. They really “saw” the victim, and they really “passed by on the other side.” Francis and Atkins portray the careless reaction of these two religious men as follows:

Here is a story of about a flawed and pious priest. Here is a man whose head is so far into heaven that his heart has lost touch with the ground. This flawed human being is so committed to fulfilling and displaying love for God that he fails to fulfil and display love for his neighbour...

Here is a story of about a flawed and anxious Levite. Here is a man whose concern for his own safety erodes his concern for the safety of others. This flawed human being is so concerned not to fall into a trap set by robbers that he gives no time to assess the real needs of the victim...

Come and stand alongside the victim and open your heart to the trauma of his experience. Here is a man who has been ignored by the priest. Here is a man who was been treated as of no value by the Levite. (Francis & Atkins 2000:120-121)

The truths about the priest and the Levite may reasonably be applicable to the churches in the northeast DRC in respect of the Mbuti Pygmies. These churches that have the duty of ministering to all the nations are working within the same area where the Mbuti Pygmies live. With respect to the carrying out mission, the churches in the northeast DRC are the real neighbours of the Mbuti Pygmies. They see them within their desperate situation, both socio-economic and spiritual, but they almost choose to “pass by on the other side”. By so doing, they highlight that encountering the Mbuti Pygmies is a real challenge to Christian mission in the DRC. In this regard, it has not been said in the course of this study that the churches in the study area are not mission-oriented. Rather it has been established that mission is undertaken in a selective way to such a point that some are encountered to the detriment of others. Hence, the Mbuti Pygmies, who remain on the mission path of the churches, are simply passed over. Against this way of doing mission, Piper (1993:217) puts it clear that “By focusing on all the people groups of the world, God undercuts ethnocentric pride

and puts all peoples back upon his free grace rather than any distinctive of their own.”

Where will these Mbuti Pygmies find help? Who are they really in terms of the scope of the Great Commission? If the Mbuti Pygmies are really included in the scope of the Great Commission, and that they remain unreached and unchurched people groups, this very failure with regard to Christian mission should be remedied. How and by whom? The compassionate Samaritan in the account of Luke 10:25-37 seems to provide ways and means to answer these pertinent questions.

6.3.4 The compassionate Samaritan as a neighbour

The fourth person in the parable is a Samaritan, probably a layman. As he was also journeying by the same road as the victim and the two religious men, he came to the place where the victim had been beaten and abandoned half-dead, and saw him, just as the priest and the Levite had. Instead of passing by on the other side as the two religious men did, he, instead, has compassion on the victim. Danker (1972:132) emphasises that the compassionate Samaritan “saw what others had seen, but he responds with compassion, as did his countrymen centuries earlier (2 Chr 28:8-15).” In fact, compassion led the Samaritan to performing six tangible deeds of mercy supported by a financial deposit and a pledge of paying whatever more might be spent. It is written, therefore, that:

He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, “Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.” (Luke 10:34-35)

Even though compassion shown to the beaten man took place within the context of a sudden encounter (cf. Luke 10:31-35), the Samaritan did not hesitate to

delay his own journey, to accept the loss of two days from his agenda, to expend energy and money, to run the risk of the danger for himself on a perilous road, and, above all, to immerse himself in the plight of the beaten man. He who was healthy during his journey, learned to suffer with the suffering man, he learned to bear the sorrow of the victim. By suddenly delaying his programme so as to care for the needy man, the Samaritan proves that nothing is more important than showing mercy towards the other, the fellow human being. On this subject, Besse (2009:22) concludes that the love and compassion that a person has by seeing the difficulties of the other may take the form of a real social investment. So by showing mercy to the victim, the compassionate Samaritan has really made a significant social investment. Bock (1996:1035), on the other hand, makes the exciting comment that, "The Samaritan cared for a person he had never seen before. Without asking questions, he served a cup of mercy to a person half-dead. By reviving life, he showed life."

Through this parable that ends by showing the model of the compassionate Samaritan, Jesus provides the core summary of the gospel by highlighting what he came to do on earth and that which his disciples should imitate. Accordingly, if the lawyer symbolised by the images of the priest and Levite also symbolises the disciples of Jesus who are called on to practice the whole of the law, the compassionate Samaritan symbolises Jesus himself. In terms of encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, the different NGOs involved in showing mercy and compassion to them within their plight might be compared to the compassionate Samaritan. Compassion by these NGOs, however, appears to be limited in terms of time, space, and content. In terms of time and space, on the one hand, it has been shown in the course of the study that the NGOs assist the Pygmy peoples only on basis of strict humanitarian principles of emergency. They may provide food and non-food supplies to the Pygmy peoples, but such humanitarian aid does not last for life.

In terms of content, on the other hand, it has been shown also that humanitarian aid is not holistic, since it is not necessarily provided as a result of the gospel so that the whole human being is reached. Talking about development in mission in this regard, Ward (2000:272) notices that, in terms of missionary activity and mission strategy, development usually denotes an inclusive process in which the physical and social needs of persons and groups are given attention alongside their spiritual needs. To this end, the Mbuti Pygmies need more than the NGOs to provide them with appropriate and lasting aid. It has been said throughout the study that the churches, more than any other organisation and even the government, stand as the only valid agents to apply compassion to the Mbuti Pygmies in a holistic manner.

Compassion is often a path less taken because it is not a shortcut. It costs in terms of time, energy, financial means, renunciation of pride, and discriminatory and prejudicial attitudes towards others. According to Kim (2009:36), compassion means, literally, “suffering with”. For her, “even in situations where suffering can be relieved by our action, we must not seek to bypass the first step of really ‘letting in’ the pain of the other before rushing to ‘cure’ it.” So, in the course of this study, the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies, as a compassionate act, has been examined as the one that can be made possible through conversion, through a right perception of the Mbuti Pygmies as being made fully in the “image of God” and fully part of “all nations”, through the promotion of formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies, and through the effort of sustaining the churches by an integrated theological education. These four practical strategies can be classified into three levels as shown in *Table 6.6* below.

Table 6.6: Strategies for the mission encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies

<i>Levels</i>	<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Personal (Christians or missionaries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion • Right perception of the Mbuti Pygmies as being made fully in the “image of God” and fully part of “all nations” 	<p>Christians and all those who are to be involved in encountering the Mbuti Pygmies are primarily the ones who are concerned by the first two strategies. The second strategy that consists of the right perception of the others is a result of a true conversion.</p> <p>The conversion of the Mbuti Pygmies, which is indeed the core basis of thinking about Christian mission as encounter, should take place as a result of the way the Christians who have to encounter them live concretely their own conversion and behave vis-à-vis them.</p>
Socio-political	Promoting formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies	<p>This strategy has been suggested as a way through which the Mbuti Pygmies can be open to the world, so that they may be made capable of mastering it instead of undergoing it. Through education common to the rest of the Congolese, the Mbuti Pygmies may be made capable of understanding their plight and thinking of the ways of overcoming this challenge. These forest dwellers have, indeed, their own kind of education, but this traditional education is limited and cannot allow them to interact freely with the changing and globalised world around them. So, promoting formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies does not mean replacing their traditional education but rather adding to it something new so that they may be well equipped.</p>
Theological (missiological)	Sustaining the churches by an integrated theological education	<p>An integrated theological education is a theological education that takes into account the different cultures and contexts within which churches are evolving. In fact, most of challenges to Christian mission in the DRC and the world as well are due to the fact that churches are not always sustained and nurtured by ongoing and integrated theological education. Usually churches work on basis of old theology adapted to eras and contexts other than theirs. But as churches are evolving in a changing world within daily new challenges, there is a need for them to be refreshed continually and shaped in terms of theological education so that they may keep on being relevant within a changing world. Theological education should always be rethought so that it addresses the concrete realities and needs of people within their concrete contexts. It should not be kept as a static creed.</p>

These strategies for the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies imply, indeed, a long, dangerous, suffering, risky and costly path, which is rightly what the Lord, the Master of mission, wants Christians to take so that they encounter everyone. By having compassion for others, Christians become their true neighbours. In light of this truth, Ott *et al* (2010:177) admit that, “Compassion is a character mark of our missionary God, who ‘so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son’ (John 3:16).”

When it comes to responding to the divine law about loving one’s neighbour as oneself in the field of missions, the spontaneous reaction is probably “Who is my neighbour?” But for Jesus, through the parable of the compassionate Samaritan, the question should no longer be “Who is my neighbour?” but “How do I have to be neighbour to the other?” By this parable, Jesus challenges Christians to pay attention to the fact that they are, and have the duty to be, neighbours to all those who are needy, whatever their culture and ethnic groups, their gender and colour, their physical features and social rank, and their beliefs and religions. The neighbourhood is, therefore, not just a socio-political relationship, but also more an opportunity for mission that the Christians concerned about the fulfilment of the Reign of God should take advantage of. Being a neighbour of the other is a great responsibility. This requires Christians to be overseers of the others, not in the sense of dominating, but in the sense of performing compassionate acts.

If the beaten man had had to choose between membership of the church of the priest and the Levite and the church of the Samaritan, the answer is very clear that he would not have hesitated to choose the church of the compassionate Samaritan. This is what happens in the study area where, when it comes to encountering the Mbuti Pygmies, churches seem to almost choose to play the role of the priest and the Levite who, because of their own hidden agendas, have chosen to shy away from the needy. As a result of such an attitude, churches have almost no Mbuti Pygmy membership. As has been said previously, only

the NGOs dare to have compassion for the Mbuti Pygmies by providing humanitarian aid within the framework of emergencies with all their restrictions. The compassionate deeds of the NGOs which are also a challenge to the churches should not be regarded only as a humanitarian aid, but also, and especially, as a warning to the churches to rid themselves of discrimination and the exclusion of the Mbuti Pygmies in terms of the mission endeavour.

6.3.5 The mandate “go and do likewise”

The clause “go and do likewise” does not consist only of the concluding words of the parable of the compassionate Samaritan, but it is also an application of the report back of the mission of the Seventy (cf. Luke 10:1-24). Through these concluding words, one may conclude, along with McBride (1982:138), that, “Jesus enjoins the lawyer to move from the level of knowledge to the level of action and what the law commands.”

The plight of the Mbuti Pygmies in the DRC does not mean that Christians do not know that Jesus has recommended reaching out to all the nations up to the ends of the earth. Christians in the DRC might also be aware of the fact that limiting missionary action to their relatives, friends, and habitual churchgoers B1, B2, B3, and so on, is merely to socialize rather than to implement Christian mission. The real problem is how to move from the level of knowledge to the level of action, that is, to commit to practicing the biblical truths that Christians have. The Mbuti Pygmies who have been studied are simply victims of Christians maintaining their *status quo*, what CL20 (2012) refers to as “a collective sin” of the Christians in the DRC, and which can be forgiven once there is a move from the *status quo* to action, from the “empty space of neutrality” to sensitivity. In this sense, the ending “go and do likewise” involves a pressing call to transformation, a transformation of beliefs, feelings, values, behaviours, and worldviews that lie behind these, all of which prevent

Christians from being true Christians in terms of performing mission according to the Lord. Focusing on a biblical view of transformation, which is both an event and a process, Hiebert (2008:310) admits that “it involves entering a life of discipleship and obedience in every area of our being and throughout the whole story of our lives.”

So too, the ending “go and do likewise” involves, not only a call to action and transformation, but also a call to the fact that Christians should not ignore the plight of those who suffer. Christians do not have to travel only, and always, by safe roads where everything is easy and accessible, but, for the sake of the needy and of the fulfilment of the *missio Dei*, they need also to travel by the dangerous roads such as the forest where the Mbuti Pygmies live. This is indeed a call to breaking cultural boundaries, a call to engaging in mission as a result of a true missionary conversion.

Finally, the words “go and do likewise” anticipate the Great Commission, by which Jesus Christ concludes his earthly mission. This means that Christians should not focus too much on their own spiritual well-being only but also and foremost on the socio-political and spiritual well-being of the others. To engage in the missional encounter with the others, such as the Mbuti Pygmies, is, thus, a way of being on the “go” in the perspective of the Great Commission (cf. Matt 28:19).

6.4 Recommendations

In light of the above summary of the findings, recommendations are formulated so that both the DRC State and the churches are awakened to the necessity of paying attention to the Mbuti Pygmies. Rightly speaking, it is the State, along with the churches, that has the responsibility of guaranteeing the well-being of people in all aspects.

6.4.1 To the DRC State

It is recommended that the DRC State guarantees the socio-political well-being of the Mbuti Pygmies by:

1. Establishing peace within the country, and especially in the forest areas where all kinds of armed groups, militia, and rebels are hidden, and from where they operate to render living in these areas unliveable. Because no one can work freely within an unsafe context, the DRC State has the duty of eradicating all the negative forces from the country.
2. Fighting against the devastation and misuse of the forests by promoting all the efforts relating to their good management.
3. Identifying the Pygmy peoples in general and their traditional settings so that their specificity as indigenous people groups with a specific culture and way of life may be recognised. This could lead to a harmonious cohabitation among the Congolese communities (cf. Bikopo & Perodeau 2011:18-9).
4. Securing the Pygmy peoples against all kinds of exploitation, and this implies:
 - Identifying and controlling all those who are involved in the issue of the Pygmy peoples, such as the NGOs, so that they may really ensure their social well-being instead of exploiting them.
 - Allowing the Pygmy peoples to operate freely in the forest spaces including the Forestry Reserves that cover the big part of their forest home. As demonstrated in chapter four, the Pygmy peoples as well as the Mbuti Pygmies are very good forest keepers.
 - Enacting laws that can help promote the specific rights of the Mbuti Pygmies and all the other vulnerable peoples. This could help to mitigate

the denial of rights, discrimination, exclusion and all other challenges facing the Pygmy peoples. Indeed, as Bikopo and Perodeau (2011:19) have observed, the indigenous communities in the DRC generally suffer from a lack of necessary information about their rights.

5. Promoting free and accessible formal education for all the Pygmy children, and a basic and professional education for the Pygmy adults.
6. Promoting the natural skills of the Pygmy peoples in general regarding herbal medicine, crafts and entertainment, so that these people may also be able to market what they easily do and produce.
7. Providing the Pygmy peoples in general with jobs in spite of their nominal illiteracy, especially in the area of the management and care of the forests and the animal species that inhabit them.

6.4.2 To the churches

It is recommended that churches in the DRC guarantee the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies by:

1. Including them in the church priority mission agenda. This would mean being involved in all efforts that should help the Mbuti Pygmies feel at home in terms of both spiritual and socio-political needs. According to Stokes (Pray for Afrika: Day 29), this would also mean being able to bridge the mistrust of the Pygmies and to help develop a contextualised form of worship. Such an undertaking should be made possible through the application of the four strategies for missional encounter that have been suggested. In fact, churches, especially the mainline ones and the pioneers that are still influential in the research area, should apply the same energy to the Mbuti Pygmies as they usually do for their regular non-Pygmy members.

2. Creating a good partnership with the DRC State, thanks to which they should easily be able to plead the cause of the Mbuti Pygmies as they always do for their regular non-Pygmy members. It is only through a good partnership that churches can help the DRC State to respond to its obligations towards its people. So, churches can cooperate with the DRC State in the implementation of the above-mentioned seven recommendations made to it.
3. Ensuring that the Mbuti Pygmies are not made subjects of “trade business”, by fighting against any kind of exploitation. In fact, most of those who are exploiting the Mbuti Pygmies for trade business and other motives in the northeast DRC are Christians, members of churches that are evolving in that area.
4. Fighting against the spirit of racial and ethnic discrimination and exclusion among Christians, which inhibits any significant intercultural mission by the church. Christians should be taught to move from the spirit of suspicion that stems from discrimination and exclusion, to the spirit of confidence in the Mbuti Pygmies. As far as the churches are called and sent in the world to participate in God’s mission – the *missio Dei*, whose target is all tribes, languages, nations and races (cf. Rev 5:9), racial and ethnic discrimination and exclusion should no longer be practised among them.
5. Having a good understanding with regard to Christian mission that should end up in a mission consciousness. Creating a mission consciousness within the churches should not be ignored if the church is to be recognised as a missional church. Awakening the consciousness of mission, therefore, is an urgent need. In the DRC, this should be done through promoting an integrated theological education that focuses on missiology. This means that churches should rethink their theology and its *praxis* so that they may be attuned to the understanding of mission according to Jesus as it is shown in

this thesis, and shaped to the reality of the changing world. Instead of still relying upon early missionary legacies in terms of theologising, working, and behaving, churches should now move forward, since times and contexts are no longer the same. In fact, Christian mission should not be approached narrowly and partially, within only one culture as a private business, but rather holistically and comprehensively as an inheritance for all cultures.

6. Paying attention to all the challenges facing the Mbuti Pygmies, so that they (the churches) may be the voice of these neglected and voiceless peoples. Ultimately, the churches, through their heartfelt commitment to the missional encounter, stand as the only way through which the Mbuti Pygmies can be released from all kinds of bondage.
7. Dealing with mission to the Mbuti Pygmies within a framework of networking among churches. Of course, the Church of Christ in Congo is a strong and useful Christian network of churches in the DRC. Its local office in the northeast DRC, however, should be sensitised about the Mbuti Pygmies in order to network its member churches about the issue of these neglected and unchurched peoples. Through collaboration and prayers, the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies can be made easier.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

According to the aims and objectives that are defined at the beginning, this explorative study has focused on a precise aspect of Christian mission among the Mbuti Pygmies, the encounter. Due to its scope and limitations, therefore, it has not been possible to address all the missiological aspects of the topic. This is why it is suggested that further missiological investigations should be conducted about the Pygmy peoples, especially the Mbuti Pygmies. These could include at least the following subjects:

1. Education as a key strategy for holistic mission among the Pygmy peoples. The possibility for promoting formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies has indeed been discussed as one of the practical strategies for the missional encounter with them. This discussion was, however, brief and narrow since the subject of education was referred to within a study, which has its own specific aims and objectives. In order to explore the way education beyond the traditional education of the Mbuti Pygmies can serve as a key strategy for holistic mission among these peoples, this topic needs to be studied in greater depth.
2. The church planting mission. It has been noticed, through the investigations, that the Mbuti Pygmies are not only nomadic, unreached, and unchurched people groups, but also not well known and accepted by the non-Pygmy people, including Christians. It has further been demonstrated that these peoples are deprived of their cultural and geographical identity. How then can one launch Christian mission and develop it up to the planting of churches among the Mbuti Pygmies? This very issue may be examined more broadly in an independent study.
3. The linguistic identity of the Mbuti Pygmies. It was shown in the study that the Pygmy peoples in general have no language of their own and that they use the languages of their neighbouring villagers. This is an important issue that needs to be tackled, especially with regard to the Bible translation in local languages, and the contextualisation of the gospel. Do the Pygmy peoples suitable use the intermediate and borrowed languages so that they may understand and receive the gospel properly? This is among the questions that should be addressed.
4. The earthkeeping mission. Another subject that needs to be explored in an independent study is the issue relating to the earthkeeping mandate. In a world where great and rapid demographic growth brings about the challenge

of consumption and garbage, for example, the Pygmy peoples can serve as a model of caring about the earth. This issue also can be explored broadly.

5. Justice and compassion as driving forces for the intercultural mission among the Mbuti Pygmies. It has been revealed, through this study, that the plight of the Mbuti Pygmies in the DRC is mostly due to the lack of access to justice as well as a lack of compassion by the non-Pygmy peoples. Justice and compassion, as the tasks of mission, may be explored as a way that can enable intercultural mission among the Mbuti Pygmies.

6.6 Conclusion

How to become a compassionate Samaritan in the sense of encountering the Mbuti Pygmies, or how to become a neighbour of the Mbuti Pygmies, was the central aim of this concluding chapter. The fact that the Mbuti Pygmies remain almost unreached and unchurched peoples in the DRC has enabled the researcher to refer to the teachings of Jesus Christ through the parable of the compassionate Samaritan. Jesus used to make use of parables as a means of illustrating profound divine truths. As a parable is, according to the Got Questions Ministries (2013), an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, this is a practical method that enables people to understand better, to think on teachings, and to awaken inquiry into the unknown. Parables challenge and may bring about change.

The parable of the compassionate Samaritan is rightly a means through which the study about the missional encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies that has been identified as a challenge to Christian mission in the DRC can be concluded. To engage in intercultural mission, Christians need really to challenge and to be challenged. It is to this end that discussions and analyses have been conducted all along the study. Actually, the lack of encountering the Mbuti Pygmies is really a sin against which the present study is opposed for the sake of Christian

mission effectiveness. Hence, instead of working within the limited setting of friends, families, ethnic groups and tribes, the study suggests that churches in the northeast DRC and beyond should have a worldwide dream and vision of mission that takes into account everyone including the neglected Mbuti Pygmies. This is what this thesis presents as ways and means of tackling the challenge resulting from a lack of encounter with the Mbuti Pygmies.

The completion of this thesis is the fruit of hard labour, but more hard work still needs to be done in terms of capitalising on the findings and contributions of the study. May the Almighty God, the source and initiator of mission, make of this thesis a tool that empowers and equips the churches in the RDC for the intercultural mission, so that the Pygmy peoples as a whole may also be part of the missional agenda.

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Interviews

AMN (Action Missionnaire pour les Nations) staff members. Interviewed on August 2012 at Beni.

CAPSA (Centre d'Appui à la Promotion de la Santé) staff members. Interviewed on March 2010 at Bukiavu.

CEPAC Projet Pygmées nurses. Interviewed on August 2012 at Boikene in Beni.

CL1 (Church Leader 1). Interviewed on April 2010 at Goma. CL1 is a pastor of the CEPAC at Eringeti in the territory of Beni.

CL4 (Church Leader 4). Interviewed two times, on October 2010 and on August 2012, at Beni. He is working within the AMN (*Action Missionnaire pour les Nations*) at Beni.

CL7 (Church Leader 7). Interviewed on September 2010 at Bunia. He is one of the staff members of the CE (*Communauté Emmanuelle*) in Bunia.

CL8 (Church Leader 8). Interviewed on September 2010 at Bunia. He is one of the staff members of the CECA-20 (*Communauté Évangélique au Centre de l'Afrique*) in Bunia.

CL13 (Church Leader 13). Interviewed on September 2010 at Komanda. He is working within the MEPA (*Ministère Évangélique des Pygmées en Afrique*) in Komanda, Irumu.

CL14 (Church Leader 14). Interviewed on September 2010 at Beni. He is an overseer pastor of 80 local churches in the ecclesiastic District of Beni.

CL17 (Church Leader 17). Interviewed on August 2012 at Beni and on September 2012 Kampala. Born in the Mbuti Pygmies area of the territory of Beni, he is currently working with the UCBC (*Université Chrétienne Bilingue du Congo*) or Christian Bilingual University of Congo.

CL18 (Church Leader 18). Interviewed on August 2012 at Lalia Mambe. He is one of the pastors of the CECA-20 in Lalia and Byakato, Mambasa.

CL20 (Church Leader 20). Interviewed on August 2012 through Skype at Goma. He is a Missiologist and missionary who has worked among the Pygmy peoples in Congo. He currently lives in Fresno, in the USA.

MP1 (see Mwenge below).

MP2 (see Musafiri below).

MP3 (Mbuti Pygmy 3). Interviewed on November 2010 at Epulu. He is the chief of the MPC Epulu.

MP4 (Mbuti Pygmy 4). Interviewed on November 2010 at Lolwa. MP4 is one of the Pygmy pastors of the *Communauté Emmanuel*.

MP6 (Mbuti Pygmy 6). Interviewed on November 2010 at Ndeisa/Lolwa. MP6 is one of the Pygmy pastors of the *Communauté Emmanuel*.

- MP8 & 9 (Mbuti Pygmies 8 and 9). Interviewed on August 2012 in the MPC of Kilewe/Mavivi. MP8 and 9 are Mbuti Pygmy women.
- MP12 (Mbuti Pygmy 12). Interviewed on August 2012 in the MPC of Lalia Mambe. MP12 is a Pygmy pastor of the *Communauté Evangélique au Centre de l'Afrique* in Lalia/Mambasa.
- MP14 (Mbuti Pygmy 14). Interviewed on August 2012 at Byane/Eringeti. MP14 is the Pygmy chief of the MPC of Byane Eringeti/Irumu.
- Musafiri, Ramu Kaisi. (2010) or (MP2). Interviewed at Goma on April 2010 and August 2012. He is a Mbuti Pygmy studying at the *Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs* (ULPGL).
- Mwenge, Diel Mochire. (MP1). Interviewed on September 2010 and December 2012 at Goma. He is a Mbuti Pygmy, and works as Deputy Director of PIDP in charge of programmes, and of a Focal point of the REPALEF/RDC in the North Kivu province. He is also a National Expert in charge of Indigenous and Minorities issues.
- NP3 (Non-Pygmy 3). Interviewed on March 2010 at Goma. NP3 is working in the Department of Social Affairs of the Town Hall of Goma.
- NP8 (Non-Pygmy 8). Interviewed on August 2012 at Byane/Eringeti. NP8 is working as a missionary among the Mbuti Pygmies on behalf of the AMN.
- NP13 (Non-Pygmy 13). Interviewed on August 2012 at Kadohyo/Mavivi. NP13 is a chief Lesse whose leadership includes the Lesse speaking Mbuti Pygmies.
- NP18 (Non-Pygmy 18). Interviewed on August 2012 at Oïcha/Beni. NP18 is a woman working in the Department of Social Affairs of the territory of Beni in Oïcha.
- NP19 (Non-Pygmy 19). Interviewed on August 2012 at Beni town. He is working with the CAMV (*Centre d'Accompagnement des Autochtones Pygmées et Minoritaires Vulnérables*).
- NP21 (Non-Pygmy 21). Interviewed on May 2013 at Pretoria. He is from the northeast DRC.
- PAP-RDC (Programme d'Assistance aux Pygmées en République Démocratique du Congo) staff members. Interviewed on August 2012 at Beni town.

APPENDICES

A. List of the Camps of the Mbuti Pygmies visited during the Field Researches

<i>Territories</i>	<i>Camps</i>	<i>Number of families</i>
Beni	• Andimape Kubetsi 1 / Mavivi	15 families with about 105 people
	• Andimape Kubetsi 2 / Mavivi	8 families with about 56 people
	• Bandidudu / Eringeti	13 families
	• Eringeti centre (3 camps gathered)	Not determined
	• Kadohyo / Mavivi	11 families with about 60 people
	• Kilewe / Mavivi	5 families
	• Undesiba / Mavivi	About 60 families distributed within several small camps
Irumu	• Byane Mundihulu	11 families
	• Idohu (met in Eringeti)	Not determined
	• Komanda	Several families distributed within several small camps
Mambasa	• Bandimaboche / Lolwa	5 families with about 22 people
	• Bengazi	17 families
	• Epulu	12 families with about 38 people
	• Lalia Mambe	27 families
	• Makele Paris	19 families
	• Makumo Base	22 families with about 140 people
	• Masenze Byakato	11 families
	• Ndeisha / Lolwa	About 45 families distributed within several small camps
	• Takumanza / Lolwa	Not determined

B. Guiding Questions

To the Mbuti Pygmies (MP)

1. Village people¹¹⁹ often use to call you “Pygmies” or “Bambutu”. How do you call yourselves?
2. What is your mother tongue? Is there a Mbuti own language?
3. Are there some ethnic groups among the Mbuti Pygmies that you claim to be?
4. What is the difference between the Mbuti *Aka, Bila, Bira, Efe, Lese, and Sua*?
5. What is the name of your Camp?
6. How long have you been in this place?
7. Why do you want always to move from place to another?
8. What is your religion? How do you call God in your language?
9. Why are you so bound to the forest?
10. What are the major activities thanks to which you gain your daily food?
11. How do you interact with the village people?
12. What are the major subjects of interaction with the village people?
13. Why don't you want to live among them within villages and so participate to their activities such as the church services?
14. Have you ever been to any of the following towns? Beni, Mavivi, Mbau, Oïcha, Eringeti, Komanda, Irumu, Bunia, Mangina, Byakato, Mambasa, Nduye, Epulu?
15. What are the major challenges you are facing?
16. What is their origin according to you?
17. How do you want to be released from them?
18. How do you appreciate the assistance from the NGOs?
19. Are there some churches involved in helping you in a way or another?
20. Which ones and how are they helping you?
21. You are often blamed by the village people as lazy, beggars, thieves and alcoholic people. What may be the reasons?

¹¹⁹ The Mbuti Pygmies refer to all non-Pygmy people as “village people”.

To the Church Leaders (CL)

1. Who are the Mbuti Pygmies?
2. How do you perceive them?
3. Can the Mbuti Pygmies become Christians?
4. How many Mbuti Pygmies do you have in your local church?
5. If there is no Mbuti Pygmies in your local church, what are the reasons?
6. For what reason(s) don't they want to go to the church?
7. Why churches seem to do not target the Mbuti Pygmies in their mission endeavour?
8. Are there some impediments that prevent from targeting the Mbuti Pygmies? Which ones?
9. What are the methods and strategies that Christians can use to reach out the Mbuti Pygmies?

To the non-Pygmy peoples (NP)

1. Who are the Mbuti Pygmies?
2. How do you perceive them?
3. Are the Mbuti Pygmies full human beings as any other human beings?
4. How do you interact with the Mbuti Pygmies in terms of socio-political issues?
5. Why the Mbuti Pygmies are almost discriminated and excluded by the non-Pygmy people?

To the NGOs working among the Pygmy peoples

1. What is the name and meaning of your NGO?
2. Are there other NGOs working among the Pygmy peoples?
3. Why have you chosen to work among the Pygmy peoples instead of other people groups?
4. How many Pygmy people are you dealing with?

5. Where are they? How many camps are they living in?
6. What is their language? To which non-Pygmy people groups are they associated in terms of language and some characteristic features?
7. Which humanitarian aid areas are you involved in among the Mbuti Pygmies?
8. Which kind of humanitarian aid are you involved in among the Mbuti Pygmies?
9. How can one move from emergency humanitarian aid to lasting humanitarian aid among the Pygmy peoples?
10. When it comes to assist the Pygmy peoples this means, most of time, moving them from their culture, natural settings and ways of life. How do you deal with this issue?
11. What methods are you using in order to address the Mbuti Pygmies?
12. What are the major challenges of the Mbuti Pygmies?
13. How do you deal with these challenges so that the Mbuti Pygmies may be released?
14. What are your partners and financial sponsors?
15. When you evaluate your humanitarian actions, what are your expectations in terms of the development of the Pygmy peoples in general?

C. Recommendation Letter for Conducting Research among the Mbuti Pygmies



REPALEF-RDC

**RESEAU DES POPULATIONS AUTOCHTONES ET LOCALES
POUR LA GESTION DURABLE DES ECOSYSTEMES FORESTIERS
DE LA REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO - REPALEF RDC**

Goma, le 15 septembre 2010.

Concerne : Autorisation pour effectuer des recherches sur les Peuples Autochtones Pygmées du Nord-est de la RD Congo (Ituri).

Chers collaborateurs et responsables des ONGs membres du REPALEF/RDC : (ACFD à Goma, CAMV à Beni, CAPSA à Bukavu, CENDEPYG à Oicha-Beni, CIDOPY à Goma, PAP-RDC à Beni, PIDP à Goma).

Monsieur KAMUHA MUSOLO W'ISUKA PAUL, Doctorant en Théologie à l'UNISA (University of South Africa), est autorisé à effectuer ses recherches doctorales sur les Peuples Autochtones Pygmées du Nord-est de la RDC (Ituri).

Prière de lui faciliter ses recherches en lui fournissant les informations dont il a besoin et en le conduisant dans les camps des Pygmées, où il pourra lui-même être en contact avec les Peuples Autochtones Pygmées dans leurs milieux naturels.

Franche collaboration.

Pour le REPALEF/RDC

Diel Mochire Mwenge

Point Focal

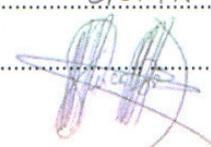
D. Informed Consent Letters**INFORMED CONSENT**

I, the undersigned, hereby give consent that Mr KAMUHA MUSOLO W'ISUKA Paul, a Doctor student of Theology at the University of South Africa, may use the information that I supplied to him in an interview for his doctoral thesis. I declare the following:

Statement	Agree	Do not agree
1. I have been informed by the researcher of the objectives of the intended research	✓	
2. The researcher supplied to me his name, address and contact details as well as the details of his research supervisor	✓	
3. I was informed why I was selected as an informant for the research project	✓	
4. I give this consent willingly, under no coercion and without inducement	✓	
5. I received satisfactory answers to any questions that I had about the research	✓	
6. I was informed of the estimated time that the interview would take	✓	
7. I retain the right to refrain from answering any questions posed by the researcher	✓	
8. I agree that the interview may be recorded by means of an electronic device	✓	
9. I agree that the researcher may quote my views in his thesis and in any subsequent publications that may flow from it	✓	
10. I require that he should present to me (for my approval) the record that he made of the interview(s), before including it in his thesis	✓	
11. I agree that he may refer to me by name when quoting my views in his thesis and possible subsequent publications	✓	
12. I accept that he will store the record of my interview(s) safely and that he will destroy it no later than two years after his thesis has been accepted	✓	
13. I understand this information and its implications	✓	
14. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time in writing, without needing to give reasons	✓	

Full names: DIEL MOCHIRE MWENGE

Place: GOMA Date: 03/12/2019

Signature: 

INFORMED CONSENT

I, the undersigned, hereby give consent that Mr KAMUHA MUSOLO W'ISUKA Paul, a Doctor of Theology student at the University of South Africa, may use the information that I supplied to him in an interview for his doctoral thesis. I declare the following:

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13. I understand this information and its implications	✓	
14. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time in writing, without needing to give reasons	✓	

Full names: ...RAMU... KAMUHA... MUSOLO W'ISUKA.....

Place:GOMA..... Date: 17-08-2019

Signature:.....