

THE CHOPIS' JOURNEY: RESTORING IDENTITY THROUGH THEOLOGY AND MISSION

by:

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STUDENT DECLARATION:

I, declare that CHOPIS JOURNEY: RESTORING IDENTITY THROUGH THEOLOGY AND MISSION 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.

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SUMMARY

This work discusses the dilemma of the Chopi people, who despite having a rich cultural heritage, were marginalized by other people, owing to menial labour they have done, such as the removal of faeces and grave digging for the city of Maputo. There is a contrast between the Chopis who were historically an exceptional people in rural Mozambique and the rejected and excluded people they have become in the city.

This study attempts, to revert this situation, through a participative process of research, action and change, and highlights some aspects related to their cultural and religious identity. Contributing factors to their predicament are political, economic, social and religious in nature. My work entails an intense endeavour towards renewing identity regarding their understanding of employment, through theology and mission in a contextual approach. Transformation and the renewal of the values of the Chopi people are crucial towards this end.

Title of thesis:

THE CHOPIS' JOURNEY: RESTORING IDENTITY THROUGH THEOLOGY AND MISSION

Key terms:

Urban Mission; Transformation; Recovering Identity; Stigmatization; Marginalisation; Menial Labour; Chopis in Maputo; Culture; Empowerment.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTORY ASPECTS

Among the Chopi community are those who work in the sewerage services as cleaners and cemetery workers for the Maputo City Council. Owing to their engagement in this worthless, vexing, shameful and humble work, they are labelled as being the lowest class of people. These people who are perpetually humiliated owing to their profession, not their ethnicity, form the core group of my research. Some Chopi people have excelled in business, education, as leaders, governors, priests and bishops. Generally they choose not to associate with the lower class Chopis and are therefore not included in the present study.

I have discovered that it is essential to try and place the Chopis in the specific context of their history in Mozambique. I have drawn from sources explaining the origin and characteristics of the Chopi people, which they themselves have neglected, in order to clarify the “now perspective”. The past, present and future are crucial to wholeness in telling and re-telling their story.

In chapter three and further chapters, I mention religious aspects, such as the adoption of Catholicism by the Chopis through the gospel in the earlier period of mission. I later expose Catholic Missionary attitudes towards the Chopi people concerning their perspectives with regards to their future. I refer to the attitude of Catholic Missionaries towards converting Chopis through the gospel message, and their orientation to work. I attempt to demonstrate how the Chopis were influenced by the Portuguese concerning their social standing altering their possible futures. Reference to the Portuguese is not an attempt to apportion blame for the destiny of the Chopis, but rather to the contribution of the Portuguese to the latter’s fall into social marginalisation. Firstly, I describe how working together with the Portuguese enslaved them, whether spiritually or physically. By exploring Portuguese attitudes toward the Chopis, even within the evangelisation process, it is evident that the Chopis were especially targeted with the gospel with a specific purpose to preserve their colonial interests (their labour force); urged and seduced with the prospect of a lucrative financial reward and good life.

The receptivity and dedication of the Chopis, demonstrated to the Portuguese and Church authorities, contributed immensely to the destiny of the Chopis.

Secondly, I present the contrast between their intelligence, capability and all their strengths, and the stigma they have acquired in the city. Thereafter I suggest possible solutions with regards to the dilemma of their reintegration into society. I mainly stress the question of their identity.

I have worked with the Chopis since the beginning of my ministry and have known Chopis from both the rural and urban areas. Two different realities regarding the Chopis have been revealed: one of dignity and honour but the other, the effects of their exclusion and marginalisation from society. I have considered questioning and tracing the reality and reasons behind these realities as a means of bringing to the surface a deep reflection of that despised group of people in the south of Mozambique.

1.2 Motivation for Study

1.2.1 Identity

Generally speaking, the Chopis hold an incorrect identity with regards to their work within the Maputo city council. Whoever is considered a Chopi, is destitute in terms of his or her true identity. No social justice is done by excluding them from the social arena.

The question of the identity of the Chopis has challenged my faith since my first contact with them. That which I was able to see and discover while meeting with the Chopis was not representative of the image imposed upon them in the past.

On my journeys out of the country I always took the Chopi people into consideration. But what motivates me the most is the work and Christian attitude of the Chopi people. Over the years I realised the identity Chopis carry in the city is not accurate. Thus I felt a need for continuous dialogue in order to recreate their identity, reconstruct the one they lost or replace the one they assume to be real.

In this current project, I am also motivated to work towards recreating a new Chopi identity with constant involvement of Chopis in ministry, exploring their spiritual and physical values, in order to help them towards freedom from their distorted identity. I became more and more aware of dimensions of their spiritual identity that can help to free them from social exclusion when engaging in social and spiritual life.

The reason I consider spirituality, is that: “Spirituality is somewhat like the air we breathe. It is so familiar to us that it is only when we stop and reflect on our experience of faith that we begin to grasp something of its richness and depth” (Okure 2000:73). Somehow the Chopi people demonstrate a deep sense of spirituality. This gift of spirituality can be used as a valuable resource in the transformation of their identity.

I also found in the Chopis a Biblical identity in terms of passion and compassion. These are some aspects I would like to further develop in the following chapters in the present study while also developing their stories.

1.2.2 Transformation

When I arrived in the city of Maputo, I “discovered” a group of Chopis whose situation was not the same as those whom I had left in Chopi-land. This group tried harder to preserve their identity, but a significant part of their identity had already been destroyed by the circumstances in which they lived for more than five decades. This second group of Chopis live outside of their own cultural environment. In other words their identity has been dislocated, and they swing somewhere in the middle between two identities. In the city, I discovered that they were not really “at home”, but nevertheless, found that they still preserved some of their cultural values, practices and expressions. This convinced me to encourage and grow their attempts to preserve their culture, in order to restore their true identity, not an identity based on the labels assigned by society.

1.2.3 Social status

Chopis in the City environment of Xipamanine, a suburb of Maputo, are still rejected, insulted, suffer discrimination, marginalized, and above all, excluded from participating

in social life, particularly those who work as gravediggers and street sweepers. They are still ignored and viewed as outcasts and to some extent, treated as objects. These patterns of colonialism, prevalent some decades ago, are still being perpetuated.

When I began to research their identity in depth, many factors came to mind concerning the link between their social status and work with regards to how their work came to influence their status. This situation has influenced the whole course of their present, how they perceive themselves in “the now”, and their future potential and status. The strongest influence remains the label imposed on the Chopi people as the “primitive bucket sewerage system cleaners”.

1.2.4 A call for the relevance of the gospel in the process of transforming the Chopi community.

My impression during my interaction with the Chopis is that they are very receptive to the gospel and Christianity. They enjoy a very rich sense of symbolism and practice of rituals. Their cultural symbols and manifestations can be employed in a constructive manner in order to root the gospel and make it relevant to the Chopis whom I approach. This aspect has to do with the manner in which the gospel was communicated to the Chopi people as well as the theological perception they have inherited from various agents of evangelisation: “Communication of the gospel also includes a theological interpretation of the images - God as father, Judge, Jesus as saviour”(Okure 2000:74).

1.3 POSING THE PROBLEM AND THESIS

1.3.1 Human dignity

Chopis are well known as street sweepers and gravediggers; therefore those who are not Chopis are immediately branded as Chopis when they work with the Chopi people. The issue is to choose or accept being called and treated as a Chopi merely by doing “Chopi” work.

The problem is concerned with the work undertaken by the Chopis, which destroys the dignity they deserve. All this is attached to the fact that slavery did not afford them dignity and the work carried out by the Chopis was always viewed as a form of slavery. This resulted in stigmatisation and a distortion of their identity. The manner in which Society as well as the Church relates to the Chopis must be reconsidered and hence a new relationship constructed. The manner in which we view them and they us, should be altered.

Since I became involved in the “spiritual interchange” with this community, some changes are beginning to take place. People are beginning to recreate a new relationship with the Chopis, and we see the Church being mobilized to share the word with the Chopi gravediggers. We have invited Chopis to attend some Church gatherings where they apparently feel free to express themselves. The attempt to return the Chopis to real social co-fraternization has been successful. This means that transforming the Chopi reality can be made possible with the involvement of the Chopi people. Their relation to wider urban society now needs to be challenged and transformed. For example, some Chopis who work as gravediggers have indicated that they experience greater respect in the rural villages than in the city environment⁵. Thus, the issue is to afford value to their activity.

An outworking of this is evident in the example of CCM⁶ in Lhanguene Cemetery, since CCM started a programme consisting of Bible studies and theological reflections so as to assist Chopis to become aware of the importance of their work, and hence their importance, and to cause society to recognize the value of their activity. Suddenly, we began to witness a shift towards improved relationships between the Chopis and other members of society.

⁵ Many Chopis, who were gravediggers and were interviewed by us, say that when they bury people at home they receive much respect, even when they sweep their gardens; yet the opposite occurs in town.

⁶ CCM is the Christian Council of Mozambique. The present author is the head of the Ecumenical Desk in the Council and has mobilized Christians to assist and advocate for Chopis regarding their work. This has brought the Chopis closer to society. Lhanguene is the Cemetery where the majority of Chopis work.

1.3.2 Social exclusion

Matos (1982:197) mentions that the Chopis are people of the forest and she affirms that the “Chopis ate small animal because they did not have cattle and savaged animals within forest”. Quoting Cabral, Matos states that the “Chopi eats everything that might cause repugnance to others: snakes, crocodiles, lizards and kites” (1982:197).

Owing to the simple fact that the Chopis eat these small animals, they were excluded from normal life by other surrounding tribes, especially the Tsongas and Rongas. They are still ignored, especially with regards to their occupation. Although the society continues to require their services in the city, they do not embrace the Chopis. Containers of waste, as well as masses of cadavers, still wait for the Chopis’ hands every day and every hour. This contact between the Chopis and waste or dead people creates a barrier that excludes them from social interaction. Of course, in Mozambique, very little has been written concerning the Chopis; some researchers such as Hugo Tracey (Tracey 1949:12) and Leonor Correia de Matos (Matos 1976:13) appear to report to their readers how and what they discovered with regards to the Chopis. It is evident that the Chopis should not only be objects of research but also subjects, there is a great need for creating knowledge themselves.

For instance Rocha says: “Most important studies concerning Chopis were already done with great quality by Hugh in a documentary he named ‘Mozambique’” (Rocha1963:61). In this documentary, Hugh offers his own opinion regarding the Chopis who say a little about themselves.

1.3.3 Chopis and divisions in society

This was a serious issue during the colonial period. The relationship between the Chopis and all the tribes of the south presented a problem. Chopis were a symbol of marginalisation in society. After Mozambique gained independence, the situation began to move in a positive direction. While, in the past, the Chopis could not be integrated with other populations because they were a strange group of people in society, currently they enjoy greater freedom of choice in this regard.

Here I raise the problematic situation of the Chopis: their conflict with urban society, resulting in the lack of rapprochement between both. That which causes the Chopis to be so enslaved to their own perceptions and concepts needs to be removed for the sake of their development and socialization. The question that arises is: why do the lives of the Chopis still remain steeped in the colonial past? Not enough progress in their quality of life, nor that of their families has occurred, even though very few people are eager to talk openly about their situation as people. The Chopis are also reluctant to approach their own reality⁹. Although they know their situation better than anyone else, many prefer to avoid talking about their reality.

Society alone cannot be blamed for the predicament of the Chopis, but rather, both society and the Chopis should share the responsibility for this state of affairs. The problem is that all spheres of society merely continue to live peacefully with this unjust situation. The Church is also to be found guilty, right from the very beginning of this problem, since it has not afforded much value to the Chopi people. Therefore, new aspects of the identity of the Chopis will be identified by those that will help to promote necessary change in social, political, economic and, above all, theological transformation.

Thus transformation will yet become a key word in the quest to transform negative elements into positives ones. Ultimately the recreation of an identity will be a result of a process of transformation; of a people conceived as shameful or worthless.

1.4 Aim of research:

1.4.1 To engage in contextual or contemporary theology and mission methods to transform the current reality of the Chopis.

The approaches of contemporary Latin American liberation Theological hermeneutics, as well as South African contextual and “black theologies”, and a re-reading of the

⁹ When I meet Chopis in their hostel they appear to be compromising when talking about their history. They are very reluctant to answer basic questions; even the older people seem to be surprised. But over a period of two years the Chopis have begun to open themselves to respond to questions. In so doing, they also discover themselves; their real identity.

missionary classical theology will be adopted in order to follow a transformative approach.

1.4.2 To assist Chopis to find a church or congregation in which they can live within their culture and real identity.

I help Chopis who suffered discontentment owing to discrimination in a former Zionist Church and therefore decided to abandon the congregation and form their own congregation named the ‘Samaritan Church’. I also assisted them to develop a liturgy that would be suited to their situation as Christians and as cemetery and sanitation workers.

1.4.3 To journey with the Chopis in their discovery of their identity as God’s children who are made in God’s image.

Through narratives, I journey with the Chopis in their cultural and social aspects to explore their spirituality and strengths, as a means for transformation.

1.4.4 To stand against the tendency to bear an identity attached to their activity.

I envisage that this work will bring the Chopis to a situation in which they consider their activity as important, to encourage them to assume that their profession is not a curse but work like any other of which they must be proud, and to develop a greater sense of consideration for their selfhood. Furthermore, the outcome should be that they must develop their relationship skills with the people whom they serve so that they might enjoy respect from society as a whole.

Further aims of the current research with regards to the transformation of the identity of the Chopi people are to:

- recreate a real and socially working identity, which is not based on what Chopis say about themselves or what others say about them, but who they really are;

- prove that the identity the Chopis have adopted, stemming from various factors such as their work with regards to sanitation and cemeteries and discrimination, can be eradicated;
- create an identity of a Chopi, which is no longer based on his or her activity in the city, language, dress or dance, but rather, a restored new and real identity, which is crucial;
- carry out an analysis of the aspects that contribute to the falsification of the Chopi identity; and
- To what extent their journey from Chopi-land has influenced and cost their own identity.

1.4.5 Engage in a critical reading on the role of the church in the past and its present role in the transformation process.

In a critical reading and evaluation of the role of the Church in the whole transformation process, I consider to what extent the Church has contributed positively or negatively to the distortion of the Chopi identity. I also explore how the Church as a whole, in Maputo, should review its position towards the Chopis and redefines its approach to them, thus theologically restoring their values and identity within a Christian framework.

As a result of propaganda in the past, our Churches have also exerted a negative influence on social issues with regards to the promotion of good relationships necessary for establishment and development of our communities.

1.4.6 To re-evaluate the concept of theology and mission in the light of the present situation of the Chopis.

I question and re-appreciate the old 'formal' theology and its influence on current situation of the Chopis, through contextualization.

1.4.7 Interact with other researchers in order to effect changes regarding the exclusion of the Chopis.

Exclusion of the Chopis, stems from the very early times of their contact with the Portuguese. For instance, Munguambe records the words of a Portuguese leader, Nicolau Godinho, who remarked concerning the Chopis: “ ..they don’t know anything about the existence of divinity in the universe at all, about curse or blessing after death. They are even not aware of good deeds or bad in this life” (Munguambe 2000:41). This attitude towards the Chopis reflects the psychology of the western mind towards the Africans at that time. Therefore, I will challenge these and other references regarding the Chopis and suggest the opposite viewpoint by referring to sources such as Hugh Tracey (Tracey 1949) and Feliciano Santos (Santos 1950). I will also take inspiration from De Beer, who stated that: ‘Old walls of prejudice and exclusion need to be demolished, where all can be included, to live lives that are free and holy’ (De Beer 2002:5).

I have been doing this research since 2002. And now the mission is to produce results in terms of a dissertation and involvement in growing the Chopi identity.

Most of my visits have occurred in the context of their work¹⁵. Our conversations have led to an analysis of sensitive issues concerning the life of Chopis. Some of these conversations could not be developed, because they are directly linked to their interior lives.

I have made the cemetery of Lhangeni, which is the most infamous in Maputo, a place of Biblical reflection, where we bring together the community of Grave Diggers. Together we recreate their history, not as “unholy” but “holy”, where they can sense the presence of Jesus redeeming them with his Divine Power, and to empower them by the reflections about Christ’s life. So when the researcher introduced the fire of Jesus, they began to appreciate and give value to their perceptions of being limited. They began to think in new ways by making use of that which they previously ignored; that is, by multiplying

¹⁵ I refer to the constant visits I pay to the Chopis in their hostels and in the cemetery where they work, even when organizing seminars, lunch and entertainment. Some recognize me while driving in town and wave. I view that as being part of the mission to build good relationships at work, in other words, to share in their activities.

their talents and gifts in order to free themselves, from exclusion. They feel more empowered by the presence of Christ in a positive form.

“The presence of Jesus with us wants to empower us, so that we will start to appreciate and use our own limited resources, and even multiply them” (De Beer 2002:13).

Most Chopis live in a cemetery environment, a kind of hostel. Some face the greatest discrimination because they deal with human corpse’s everyday. Nevertheless, I will become involved with some of these activities to get more engaged in their work.

I will also equip the Church in Maputo with theological tools that will allow a working out of a new mission paradigm in order to shift the actual concept that we should nurture the Chopis with respect to salvation and brotherhood. I believe this can transform us.

1.4.8 Looking towards the future:

While aiming to transform the Chopi’s attitude and mindset, I consider equipping them and myself with an attitude of defiance in the face of marginalisation and an ability to read their own story critically, in order to transform and recreate the past and present for a better future. It implies equipping them with the necessary skills to fight the various dimensions of poverty – both socio-economic and cultural.

1.5-Working Definitions:

I found inspiration from a Chopi author named Amancio Munguambe, who wrote on Chopi people focussing on their music. His book is entitled “A Musica Chopi” which means the Chopi Music (Munguambe 2000)He wrote on Chopi history, defining subtle aspects of Chopi culture. He also deals with Chopi ethnicity as well as Chopi characteristics and origins.

Munguambe deals with Chopi attitudes and how they came about. I used this book as source of inspiration because it brings to life many stories of the Chopi’s interaction with the Portuguese colonizers. Starting from a historical perspective, Munguambe deals with

Chopi journey through out the period of colonialism. I want to build more on Munguambe's reading and interpretations, as he writes from the African and Mozambican point of view. Munguambe also refers to the relationships between Chopis and other religions. He speaks about the Catholic Priest's view about Chopis and the way Chopis were economically exploited. He adds detail on the daily lives of people and their culture to the more specific practices in music and dance.

I follow Munguambe's analysis and develop my interpretation concerning their transformation of their identity. What Munguambe did, was also done by Hugh Tracey (1946). I also use Tracey's writings, the way he describes Chopis, and how he classified them according to their culture and their worldview. I add on Tracey's analysis new components on identity of Chopis in terms of theology and Mission. It brings transformation as goal into focus.

My interpretation will not be static but will suggest a progress and changes on Chopi people's life. I add to those authors the historical places of Chopis in their journey to city suburbs like Xipamanine and I stress the factors that mark their lives.

1.5.1 Brief introduction:

In this section, I present a brief description of my intentions as well as explain the terms in the main title of the thesis, such as:

- Chopis (their ethnicity, described by Munguambe);
- Journey (how did they reach Xipamanine?);
- Xipamanine (the oldest slum); and
- Identity (how this was distorted), theology as well as Mission (using both to restore the Chopis' reality).

I will give a brief background of the Chopi people and Xipamanine where they settled and worked; explain my theological perspective; and offer short definitions of mission.

1.5.2 Chopi ethnicity:

Amandio Munguambe, who wrote about Chopi music, states that Chopis are one of the African tribes that live in Mozambique. He adds that the Chopi people come from the shores of Lake Tanganyika, and immigrated to the south to the littoral. They are a ramification of the well known people who belonged to the empire of Monomotapa, hence, the designation of the term Mocaranga, the previous name of Chopis, when the Portuguese met them for the first time (Munguambe 2000:7). In other words, Chopis were formerly called Mocarangas, which means people from the littoral.

The term Chopi dominates all key words in the present dissertation. Throughout the pages we meet the word Chopi, or in its plural form, the “Chopis”. In local language it takes the prefix “ba” as in “Bantu” as “Bachopi”. Some years ago it was, and even at present, is still used as a pejorative term, since quite often, it was meant to humiliate and discriminate against a certain tribe of people in the south of Mozambique. There was a time when a Chopi person would hide him- or herself in order to escape discrimination by being identified with the word “Chopi”.

When I repeat the term often, my intention must not be viewed as an offence. I am aware of the sensitivity associated with pronouncing the word Chopi. Many Chopi readers will not view this in a positive light; on the other hand, others have accepted this reality. The Chopi people on whom the focus of this undertaking falls, do not form part of the elite group of Chopis who have enjoyed formal and higher education. I refer to the ordinary Chopis who came to Xipamanine, destined to a worthless occupation. I refer to the Chopi as the humiliated one, but also mention the Chopi as a gifted person equal to any other.

1.5.3 Chopis: their journey

I define the Chopis’ journey as the movement started by the Chopis who were urged by the Portuguese, to leave their homeland (Zavala) in order to live and work in the city. There are motives behind that journey. The first motive was to work in the city. The journey took the Chopis to different places in the world, also for work purposes. Some were taken as slaves to different parts of the globe. In 1909, the immigration to the South African mines on the Rand began. Some Chopi people did arrive there, but the majority of Chopis were directed to menial activities in the city. In the present dissertation, I

compare the Chopi journey with that of God's people migrating towards a new land, while also raising all the problems and horrible situations they endured along this journey. I also present all the inconveniences that emerged from that journey. I do not wish to consider the journey a catastrophe, rather, I wish to raise consciousness, to transform this journey to an instrument with which to repair all the damage caused by the many factors along that journey and to transform that physical journey into a spiritual one. I wish to assist the Chopis to journey with Christ, and in so doing, the journey will gain meaning and a sense. In biblical terms, I will refer to the people of Israel and their journey to the "promised land", Abraham, Isaac and also Jacob (Exodus 6.8).

I will argue in terms of the people of Israel suffering and being persecuted in a foreign land with "no identity", in other words, not being considered as people with rights by the people of Egypt, even when they engaged in work in this foreign country. In conclusion, I refer to their exclusion, exploitation and marginalisation.

1.5.4 Xipamanine: A well known slum.

Xipamanine is among the oldest of the slums of Maputo in the inner city, in which a popular market is found. It became a place of survival for the Chopis where, until the present, they have been living in small but organized communities of sellers. There is an informal market where all sellers are Chopis. They live in strong solidarity.

I concentrate my attention on Xipamanine because this was the new home for the Chopis when they left Zavala. Xipamanine became better known for this population group because of the presence of the Chopis in that large informal area, which I have already mentioned. They travelled to Xipamanine to live with other people, but initially, they arrived as municipal workers (the city cleaners). The Chopi community at Xipamanine is recognisable by its attitudes and habits. They live in a hostel which the Portuguese built for them, like the hostels for mine workers in South African companies. Xipamanine had a "Chopi-land" within it. They became a caste living separately from other peoples.

Xipamanine was the "promised land" for the Chopis when they departed from Zavala. They expected better living conditions, good work (employment and a salary) in

Xipamanine. The reality for the Chopis was totally different, because once there, they experienced discrimination, insults, and all other forms of ridicule, all as a result of the occupation in which they were engaged there. Some people including myself even visited Xipamanine in order to see the Chopis “who carry buckets full of excrement”: I personally witnessed that scenario. To be a Chopi at Xipamanine was painful: one’s identity was reduced to that of a mere object.

In summary, in the present dissertation, I want to suggest a “new Xipamanine” where Chopis can dwell peacefully together with other people without any form of stigma. A “Xipamanine”, which will return or restore to the Chopis their identity or personhood.

1.5.5 Defining identity

The *Oxford Dictionary* (2000. 6th edition), defines identity as “the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others: a sense of national / cultural / personal / group identity”. I refer to this as a technical, not theological or biblical, definition.

Identity also has a theological biblical foundation. As Russell says:

“In the history of the Church, the doctrine of election points to the need for identity as human beings in the world. Those who are nobody affirm their own self worth as children of God by claiming that God has chosen them and enabled them to live faithfully. In this sense, to be chosen by God is to be granted full human identity and worth as a gift of God’s love” (Russell 1993:169).

I will place the Chopi identity within the entire African or Bantu search for an identity. The Chopi’s identity problems have also been influenced by the whole colonial concept imposed on them. Theirs is not an isolated case, since they form part of the whole problem of identity of any Africans who are reacting to this problem in order to replace or restore their own identity, whether theologically or in other forms. Kwame Bediako referred to the problem of African identity as being generic in that it is related to the Western impact on African life and adds that Africans perceive the problem in the light of that impact: “It is the African reactions to the accumulative western impact on

African life and on African self identity which have shaped and conditioned the twentieth-century perception of the problem” (Bediako 1997:5).

The Chopi identity also suffered from this impact of Westerners, especially in terms of religion. Munguambe writes, on the Portuguese influence over the Chopi people, that “[t]he long Portuguese colonial domination in Mozambique caused deep transformations on Mozambican people. During that period of five centuries, people used native languages, because they had no access to official schools. Despite all limitations imposed by colonialism, people transformed themselves, gradually, from generation to generation, up to nowadays. “Among Chopi people there were many transformations” (Munguambe 2000:38).

My concern regarding their identity is how the Chopis, as Africans, reaffirm it. I will begin with the word “Chopi” which is used to refer to their very person. The words “Chopi people” are used in a similar manner to the common African word for person “unthu”. The word “unthu” in the Chopi language refers to a person, but more than meaning a person, it refers to his / her personhood. When a Chopi refers to “unthu”, s/he also means the whole person; the integrity of a person. It includes his or her way of proceeding and living alone and with other people. It refers to all aspects of that person. So within the Chopi context, they refer to “unthu” as denoting someone’s identity. This identity should not only be singular but also plural or communal. Normally, within the Chopi context, “unthu” depends on “vathu” (plural of “unthu”). Usually the value of “unthu” is defined within or among “vathu” (Bantu in other African languages). A very offensive statement was made against the Chopis when one Tsonga person reported a bus accident to the community saying, “There was an accident but no one died except two Chopis”. In other words, he said that Chopis are not people or are not “*Bantu*” or “vathu”: they do not have an identity. This became a very popular proverb that for many years reflected how Chopi identity was underestimated, all owing to the employment activities of the Chopis in the city. In my understanding, identity is attached to all aspects of personal and communal life that identify a certain person or people (*Unthu or Vathu*).

All their ways of manifesting themselves as a particular people include traditions, rituals and other manifestations. Richardson avers that it is in its rituals that the community

remembers its past, honours its ancestors, holds up its values and understands its corporate identity (Richardson 1996:139). The identity of the Chopis is usually expressed through ritual, some of which I present in this dissertation.

Identity is the main focus of this dissertation, which is dealt with in order to assist the Chopis to reclaim their dignity. Identity becomes a key word since it often results in other mentioned problems being solved when it is restored. All these problems are directly linked to the fact that the Chopi identity was distorted by both internal and external factors. I argue that the Chopis have acquired two different identities. One must be considered a “false identity”, by which I mean the stereotyped one, which derives more from their typical income-generating activities. It is false in a sense that it ignores the natural qualities of the Chopis and labels them with “extra acronyms”. This has created a misperception of a Chopi person that has exerted an influence on their older and younger generations.

To be more direct, I affirm that by “false identity” I mean the “faeces identity” since they were known as faeces collectors (in the city). By “home or real identity”, I mean the true identity of the Chopis without these labels. Identity is not static. No. Rather, it is dynamic; therefore this dynamism of identity should reconstruct the Chopi identity without “extra labels”. For example, back in their homeland, the Chopis carry out the same work as in the city and are proud and not labelled while in the city their work is a cause for stigmatism. This identity to be recreated or restored must be based on the communal life rather than related to the individual. It is a collective identity. This identity is not only one by which people can relate to the Chopis but, also another according to which the Chopis can see the “self”.

The Chopi identity is forged from a communal base. Whatever the Chopis do they do so freely for themselves and for their community (such as burying people and collecting faeces). In the city, they do this for others with whom they do not have any kind of relationship. They are no longer part of a communal identity, and are compelled to live in an individualistic manner, which is more like the Western way of residing in society. This is the main reason for this stigma being attached to them. In order to understand and

compare this situation, Bannuelas provides an example that distinguishes two different models of forging identities:

‘The modern Western subject forges a self-identity by distancing himself or herself from community (for example family) and tradition in order to achieve autonomy and independence; the U.S. Hispanic, on the other hand, derives his or her identity from that very community, which remains an important part of self-identity even if the person should physically leave the formative community’ (Bannuelas 1995: 92).

Restoring identity to the Chopis is to bring back their fullness of life and respect by other people around them. It is a matter of an identity crisis that needs to be positively re-oriented.

In conclusion, identity will constitute the wholeness and the fullness of the Chopis regarding all their aspects of life as community. More than that is their integrity as a people who belong to a certain tribe, with their specific values.

1.5.6 Theology in context:

I mainly take inspiration from Latin American theologians of liberation such as Torres and Eaglesson (1977); De Santa Ana (1977); Gutierrez (2001); Boff (1991/2004) and other contextual theologians such as Speckman and Kaufman (2001); West (1993); Bevans (1988); Bosch (1991); Schreiter (1991); and Russell (1993).

I refer to the contextual and contemporary theological approaches of Latin American scholars as well as the South African contextual theological approaches in terms of reconstructing a relevant contextual theology in order to cause the Chopi people to be seen and understood in the contextual interpretation of their story. For instance, the remark by David Bosch that “[f]or this very reason the contemporary theologian’s task is not really different from what the New Testament authors set out so boldly to do. What they did for their time, we have to do for ours” (Bosch 1991:21), encourages and inspires me in my work.

I also incorporate the 'enculturation approach' in my contextual theology. I will analyse Chopi aspects relating to contextual biblical theology. I will refer to this as a liberating process in this journey. I will refer to the Bible as a source for inspiration and I will apply Bible stories in my reflections towards transformation of the Chopi community. West suggests:

“...instead of denying that we are shaped, for example, by our race, culture, gender, and class, and these factors influence our readings of the bible, a commitment of contextual bible study is that we acknowledge and recognize the environmental factors that have formed us. However, a contextual bible study is also more specific about context”(West 1993:13).

In this respect, “It is indeed gratifying to note that the Bible is an important source of inspiration for contextual theology proponents” (Speckman and Kaufman 2001:99). And West adds: “The Bible is and will continue to be a significant source for ordinary people in the Church and community” (West 1993:21).

I believe that theology in its contextual form can play a vital role towards transforming the Chopi community. I employ a contextual Bible reading as a theological tool with which they can re-interpret their stories in the light of Biblical stories. Bible stories are quite often relevant to those of the Chopis. The aspects of enculturation may also offer a major contribution towards such transformation. For example, the Exodus story may theologially reflect the exodus of the Chopis from Chopiland to Maputo, also that of journeying from a bad situation to a better one. This theology will offer a new vision and interpretations for the Chopis and reveal new dimensions to their perception of themselves. This contextual and biblical theology may become a liberating tool for Chopis when it is adequately contextualised in the light of what Chopis understand within the context they live now. The contextual theology I will work on will be the source of inspiration for Chopis to acquire new horizons in an attempt to redefine their identity and to look for a different future with dignity. In contextual theology Chopis will find new resources that connect them to God. This contextual approach will always be associated with a contextual and a liberation theology. According to Gutierrez “the heart

of liberation theology is the notion of salvation, which he considers as the central theme of the Christian mystery' (Gutierrez 1997:276). I also place the key element of liberation versus salvation of the Chopi people in the mission of Christ to the poor Chopis, whose "mission is addressed to the unfortunate, the poor, to whom he already announces the end to their suffering" (De Santa Ana 1977: 13).

The Chopi expectation that they would discover better conditions in the city can be worked out through contextual theology to create a different image of this new place - the city; for example the book of Isaiah speaks about the beauty of the city (Isaiah 40.9). I take the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament hoping that the Old Testament will help to understand the meaning and their context in the New Testament, since the Chopis use the latter more than the former.

In contextual theology Chopis find their inclusion within God's plan of salvation. Enculturation also conveys dignity to the Chopis as they are recognised and included as part of worship.

In this regard I defend the use of the Chopis' local sacraments, the inclusion of their art (music, poetry and dances) as an application of a theology that will liberate them from all sorts of enslavement and domination: using the Chopi's cultural elements as well as the religious ones because there is domination over all sorts of oppressed minorities, who are subjected to discrimination (Torres and Eagleson 1981:21).

To this end, I associate myself with the following comment: "The contextualization of theology - the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context is really a theological imperative." (Bevans 1988:1)

1.5.7 Mission

Bosch says, “I have suggested there that Jesus’ mission, according to Luke, consisted of three thrusts: Empowering the weak and the lowly, healing the sick, and saving the lost” (Bosch 1991: 523).

Kritzinger (1990:147) extensively dealt with Bosch’s definitions and interpretations of mission and mentioned some of Bosch’s views of mission: Mission has to do with the crossing of frontiers and is the task of the church in movement, the church that lives for others. Also, with reference to David Bosch, he considers mission as the symbol of the Church moving towards the world. He presents Bosch’s view of a mission that takes place where the church, in her total involvement with the world and the comprehensiveness of her message, bears her testimony in word and deed in the form of a servant with reference to unbelief, exploitation, discrimination and violence, but also with reference to salvation, healing, liberation, reconciliation and righteousness (Kritzinger 1990: 147).

My understanding of mission is basically to engage in the entire process of transformation of the people and the society as a whole. This transformation should bring about changes in the present situation. These changes must touch the whole person, which includes the context of his/her environment. This must also involve the society and all its components. It is an engagement in a process of liberation to all those who are oppressed and marginalized or slaves (Leviticus 25:39, in Good News Bible). It is also a process of liberating people from all sorts of oppressive forces. In other words, “Mission is helping people who are unjustly treated, persecuted, oppressed by internal and external forces, to liberate themselves, to experience the liberation, the salvation, and the redemption brought to all by Christ” (Bellagamba 1992:53).

I view the work with the Chopis as a way of carrying out and conveying their mission to peoples. It is a “mission-Dei” to the nations. The work of the Chopis and the harsh conditions under which they have been working carry a dimension of servanthood. Their attitude portrays certain patterns of a transforming mission through love and perseverance. To carry out Chopi work for many decades under harsh conditions is not merely a desire to have a profession. More than that, it is to accept the reality that causes them, pay the price of serving people. I assume that “mission” is a process in which we

are involved in order to transform and effect changes among people as well as to build new relationships among those whom we serve and those who benefit from services. Mission also serves as an invitation to participate in the great meal (Luke 14: 15-24).

Russell wrote that “sharing the vision of the possibility of a table at which not just one hundred and fifty knights are welcome but where the whole world is offered God’s hospitality begins with opposing those systems that require ‘limited’ seating at the table” (Russell 1993:58). My main concern here is the fact that the Chopi never exclude anyone from their meals; even the stranger is invited. I have experienced this myself. Hospitality is a characteristic of the Chopi, especially when they gather around the pot and eat with their fingers.

I also view mission as a part of the Chopi identity since they carry the cross of Jesus in His or Her presence. The presence of Jesus within that mission of the Chopis “wants to empower” them in the same way that “[t]he presence of Jesus with us wants to empower us...” (De Beer 2002:13). I would also emphasise that the power can also be found on the cross through Christ, in the sense that He was victorious over death on the cross. The cross is a symbol of victory and also an empowering force as we carry it together with Christ, since Boff emphasises that “Jesus is not alone on the cross, his followers are there. They take on His cause, imitate his life, and follow out His fate” (1993:55).

1.6 Subject / research relationship

The relationship between the present researcher and the Chopis hails from very long ago. The researcher started in Zandamela (the last district in Gaza Province of Mozambique), the place to which he was located after finishing his basic theological training and where he had to learn about some basic characteristics of the “strange” Chopi culture. Sometimes he failed to understand them, but they also misunderstood him. We have been living with the Chopis for some years and the great challenge was to re-interpret their stories in the light of the Bible.

I experienced a great challenge in my attempt to change or mould their worldview model and their perceptions and thinking to that of my own. Soon I came to realize that it was

myself who was supposed to change my perception with regard to the Chopis. Nevertheless, learning the Chopi cultural symbols was another great education. I needed to learn all about the relationship between certain symbolisms in relation to the Chopi personhood. Since I was a part of that community, I had to learn how God could reveal Her/Himself even in a culture considered as strange in relation to other cultures. After living with the Chopis for some years, I experienced the privilege of being transferred to Maputo, where I was given another significant opportunity to meet them within their new environment of work. I found their identity connoted negatively: The same Chopis but another identity, another reality.

In the present study, the involvement of the research subject is crucial. The subject appears as a co-researcher in terms of bringing his/her internal person to confront the topic of research. In this case, the researcher has been a part of the community where his ministry is carried out in the realm of the Chopis. This signifies that the subject's primary information is to be confronted with the information the researcher has acquired in the experience process. In fact, the researcher has shared some aspects of Chopi life in the rural area and also works practically as a chaplain in the hostel of the Chopis as well as in the graveyard where more than 90% of the workers are Chopi. This aspect has contributed to the building of a good relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers (the Chopis), which has helped to re-tell the story with different insights, thus making the story relevant to both.

I am not a Chopi, but have been involved with Chopis at different levels of ministry and their culture. It has rendered me critical to the story and the opening of a space for my collaboration with the Chopis in this research work.

1.7 Exposition of the contents of the dissertation:

The current research project has been divided into nine chapters.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This has already been dealt with in the current chapter.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

In Chapter 2, I provide details on how I will deal with the cultural aspects I have selected in order to help to carry through this dissertation successfully. I will also include a short explanation on what I do through the “Pastoral Cycle” (De Beer and Venter 1998:80), which I found crucial for the practical work that I carry out.

CHAPTER 3: AUTHOR’S INSERTION PROCESS:

In Chapter 3 I refer to aspects of my insertion into a Chopi community. I tell about the history of the Chopis people, tracing their origins, mentioning some historical facts, such as “slavery”, some remarkable events of the Chopis on their journey to the city, Xipamanine, as well as their occupation and relationship with other people.

CHAPTER 4: CULTURAL RICHES (MUSIC, DANCE, POETRY AND RITUALS):

In Chapter 4, I look at their culture, and the riches that it bears, such as music, dance, poetry, and rituals, focussing on the importance and meaning of circumcision for the Chopis. This chapter concerns how the Chopis behave culturally and how this culture relates to their identity.

CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL ANALYSIS IN RELATION TO IDENTITY:

In Chapter 5, I deal with social analysis. I mainly pay attention to the identity of the Chopi, and reveal two types of contradictory identity. The one I regard as being false, owing to its social prejudice, which is the dominant identity that has labelled the Chopis as inferior. I also try to work out the real identity of the Chopis, meaning the identity that instils pride. Political as well as religious aspects that have directly or indirectly contributed to their situation in the city are also mentioned. The role of the Church,

stigmatisation and social repercussions as a result of all these aspects are also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6: THEOLOGY AND NARRATIVES

In Chapter 6, I deal with my theological and missiological understanding and approach. I employ Chopi narrative stories, exploring the Exodus perspective, linking to a Chopi Church, which named itself “Samaritan”, a split from a major church as a result of exclusion. I also refer to Isaiah (40.9) and the Luke Perspective (14:15-24) in this chapter in terms of Jesus being crucified with the Chopis as well as considering the meaning of the cross to them as a way towards victory.

CHAPTER 7: MISSION IN RELATION TO TRANSFORMATION:

This chapter refers to a mission that transforms the situation of this community. It investigates a Chopi Mission in the City, a mission that is very important. The Mission is also extended to the Samaritan Church as a Chopi Church; the need for contextualisation of the Samaritan Church in order to see Jesus amongst the “Chopis of Samaria”.

CHAPTER 8: PLANNING TOWARDS RENEWAL:

In Chapter 8, I work on planning towards a renewed community. I apply liturgy as a transforming element. I also mention a case study related to a liturgy translation with respect to the Chopis in a certain community (Chiziane). I also focus on praxis planning with regards to the Chopi Cemetery workers (at Lhanguene), and the need to care for Chopi women as cemetery workers. I also consider a way forward.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUDING REMARKS:

This chapter consists of a summary in the form of concluding remarks.

I will summarize the key points I have mentioned along the all chapters and try to draw a short and direct conclusion on Chopis perspectives for the future.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

2.1 The present situation:

A brief introduction

At present, the Chopis do not value their importance as persons hold nor the important contribution of their profession to the city. They tend to ignore the majesty and wholeness of their function while they accept their actual situation as a curse or as predestination although they are aware of the fact that what they do easily, others cannot freely carry out. I employ a methodology of transformation about which Bannuelas avers that “[t]he significance of this methodological emphasis on transformation as fundamental for theology cannot be overestimated”. (Bannuelas1995: 90).

In order to achieve the transformation of the mindset of the Chopis I will organise them into various groups for reflection and debate as well as for bible studies and prayer gatherings, counselling and discipleship. This also forms part of my long process of insertion that began some years ago. I will go through the steps of the hermeneutical circle that are crucial to the present research and which Cook defines as “the continuing change in our interpretation of the reality, both individual and societal. “Hermeneutics means having to do with interpretation”. (Cook1985: 106).

My approach in terms of the pastoral circle starts from my insertion. I only place narrative stories in the beginning to illustrate how such stories will accompany the whole dissertation. I start from my insertion in a Chopi community.

I follow Holand and Henriot in their description when he considers insertion as the basis for any pastoral action. I note below all the aspects I will refer to because of my insertion in the Chopi community: “The first moment in the pastoral circle - and the basis for any pastoral circle - insertion. This locates the geography of our pastoral responses in the lived experience of individuals and communities. What people are feeling, what they are undergoing, how they are responding-these are the experiences that constitute primary data” (Holland & Henriot 1983: 8).

My insertion was very direct and practical because I was physically in the field. Narrative stories were also very important in the process of my insertion. This is why I take narratives along and across my thesis. Narratives also helped me to journey with the Chopis. It is also a result of my ministry praxis.

The hermeneutic circle, I am using, is taken from the manual by Stephan de Beer and David Venter, workbook one, with the title “Doing theology in the city”; but I also make use of Holland and Henriot in their “social analysis”.

I will follow these methodological steps:

- **Narratives (Stories)**
- **Insertion**
- **Analysis**
- **Reflection**
- **Planning**

2.2 Narratives:

I use narratives to speak about the Chopis in the Church, showing how they came to be converted; I mention the slavery of Chopis and religious and social as well as economic and political factors. Major sources will be based on narratives because I think these offer a reading of one’s reality put alongside another. It becomes a mirror where people can see their “self” in the other’s self:

We think that people are continually constituting each other’s “self”, and that there are many possible stories about my-self, your-self and other’s people’s selves. While no self is “truer”, than any other, it is true that particular presentations of self, are preferred by particular people within a particular culture (Fredman & Combs 1996:35).

The reason I base my work on personal experiences is that since this work is a result of interactivity with the Chopis’ experience, I want to present what is real and what is the

ideal for Chopis. And to interpret the expressions (and thus the interpretations) of others, we have to rely upon our own lived experience and imagination. The most that we can do is to “identify” our own experience of the experience as expressed by others” (White 2000:79).

I had the privilege of discussing directly with Prof J. Muller¹⁹, how a narrative journey is done successfully. In that interaction I also noticed that such a journey during research is not an easy task. There are several elements to be observed with greater attention. In this approach I will respect the image and integrity of those being researched (Chopis), I will try to avoid victimizing them, as they already have been victims of misinterpretation across their history. They are not to become victims again. Ultimately, the product of this research should be to the benefit of those Chopis who are the research subjects and not only objects.

I use the narrative approach to hear their stories. Their narratives reflect on what they have gone through and on what they have felt across those years. But more specifically about the “now”: “The now must be described as the very first step of narrative research. In the first instance the researcher must try to see what is happening”, says Professor Muller in his seminar paper at IUM (17th Jan 2006).

Narrative stories will be a way of checking their stories and revisiting their past towards a recreation of a new identity. I adduce facts that marched their lives, that have meaning to them and together we re-examine those important facts. I shall present facts that will create a motivation for their struggle toward this re-acquisition of identity and the transformation of their lives. I will listen to their narratives with the clear objective of understanding their stories, pain and joy in the light of the present situation. In these narratives I will compare what they have said with my own reflection and I will also compare those narratives to the narratives Portuguese and other authors have already mentioned, such as Ilidio Rocha, Hugh Tracey (Rocha 1962:1) and (Tracey 1949:1) and Andre Fernandez (Munguambe 2000:42&43).

¹⁹ He delivered the paper mentioned in the text. For him it was important to concentrate on “now”. And for him those being researched are the most important aspects of research.

The Chopis said much about the Portuguese and the research offers a place for deconstructing and reconstructing their narrative approaches, hopefully without bias. Any bias I may have shall not influence my understanding and judgement on Chopis.

In this work I will use more narrative stories, because there is some written material but little was written by Chopis or from their perspective. So as co-researchers I use their material, based on their daily stories and life experiences.

Basically my methodology is to hear the different stories, told by Chopis and by non-Chopis, and bring them to analysis. I will not include all of them here. These stories are going to comprise mainly oral narratives, such as regarding daily work (interviews) and cultural manifestations: the way Chopis call to each other; the meaning of their dances and poetry and what they express through all these, such as irony or heroism. With this methodology, I present different Chopi identities according to their interpretation and I want to reach a conclusion where their identity will be defined not by what they did or are doing, but by their real identity in terms of who they ought to be in the face of God. I want to do justice to this identity, as their identity should be defined as they are. It is an attempt to retell the story of the Chopis in a way that will be different to the most common oral tradition, including social stigma¹⁷.

I will engage in a living dialogue that will deal with my faith as a Christian. I would even prefer to call this interaction a faith conversation. I will go over and over the Pastoral Circle again in analysing the facts. I will examine the elements I gained from insertion. In order to concretise this journey with the Chopis, I will engage as a methodology, the focussing “on now”. I will journey with them from their homeland to the city. I will try to “reflect” on what the outcomes of their journey are. I will furthermore question their responses to the current situations. I am inviting Chopis to doubt themselves in the past, present and future and together journey to a real identity:

¹⁷ For instance there are stories about Chops that only emphasize discrimination, including the anecdote regarding the bus.

2.3 In insertion:

I deal with my process of insertion especially in chapter 3. I will describe my present action and faith experience among Chopis in the city but also reflect in terms of past context and experience, considering how I became involved with them and what fruit has been borne since then. It is a journey together within their context and experiences of a shared life.

2.4 Social analysis:

According to Holland and Henriot and after insertion, the second moment of pastoral circle is that of social analysis: the understanding of those experiences “in the richness of all their interrelationships. This is the task of social analysis, the second moment in the pastoral circle” (Holland & Henriot 1983:8)

In Chapters 4 and 5, I offer various analyses such as the history of the Chopi people, and also deal with their identity, cultural aspects and stigma, and I analyse certain political, social and economic aspects.

I will bring to these analyses the following questions:

- How Chopi people are seen within these contexts.
- How do they see their “ego”?
- How these spheres have interfered in determining Chopi identity.
- How various aspects have contributed to the stigma of Chopis.

2.5 Theological reflection:

In the pastoral circle, theological reflection is the third step. This will be a very crucial task, since this work deals with theology as a tool for transformation. Holland and Henriot refer to it as “an effort to understand more broadly and deeply the analysed experience in the light of living faith, scripture, church social teaching, and the resources of tradition.” (Holland and Henriot 1983:9)

In Chapters 6 and 7 I reflect on Theology and Mission. This is mainly theological and missiological, in nature, and I will adduce some sources from the Bible, for instance a passage from the gospel of Luke (Chapter 14:16-24)

I will compare Chopi stories to:

- Different Church traditions that have influenced the Chopis' life and daily situations.
- The Chopis' spirituality, which is very rich in rituals that can be applied in a constructive manner of doing theology as well as for these people's transformation.
- Interaction with Chopi's spirituality within the context of their work and our input in that. In other words we are sharing our spirituality with them.

I also interact with contemporary Theologians such as: Bosch (1991), Gutierrez (2004) and West (1993).

2.6 Planning

Because I work for the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), I was in a position to invite many other Church leaders to gather with the Chopis for reflections. CCM is privileged to represent the official Protestant churches in Mozambique. Owing to that privilege, I have "used" CCM to deliver some food and clothes to impoverished Chopis. Once a year, CCM and I organize a Christmas celebration in one of the member churches premises. The majority of those invited are Chopis. Then some of Church leaders in Maputo showed interest in reflecting on the Chopi people in the city. Some of them did identify with Chopi streetsweepers and gravediggers and their stigma. Through Bible studies they will be ones again united and transformed.. This action will be continued through further planning.

I end my work with planning as the fourth moment in the pastoral circle: "Since the purpose of the pastoral circle is decision and action, the fourth moment in the circle is crucial: Pastoral planning" (Holland and Henriot 1983:9). In Chapter 8, I therefore prepare a planning action for future involvement with the Chopi community. I will mention certain events that I have been holding monthly, together with the community of Chopis. In using those biblical reflections we have shared, I consider these as a very

helpful tool in working towards a change of attitude: a self-underestimation and an unnecessary pride.

I use Bible reflections on stories regarding Jesus' relation to outcast people, Gentiles etc. I urge Chopis in this method to mirror and judge themselves, but not in the social mirror. I, for instance, use Jesus' invitation to the meal in Luke 14-15:24 (Good News Bible) aiming to create tools of transformation. "Transformation in this sense flows from liberation" (Van Schalkwyk1996:49).

2.7 Some actions carried out

I, as the researcher, requested permission from the Maputo municipal board to visit Chopi workers in the hostel in order to provide some biblical reflections and share their experience. A Permission was given by the director of the municipality who offered a venue to hold some gatherings. Worship and liturgy was offered in the Chopi language. The reflections were centred on the Chopi journey from Zavala to Maputo. Each Chopi told his/her own story. The theme of the gospel of Luke Chapter 14:15-25, was introduced there. Now, from that biblical reflection, their journey is turning from being victims, to responding to an "invitation to take part at the meal table of life". The same was done with the cemetery Chopi workers, mainly gravediggers. The gatherings take place within the space of the cemetery. In terms of the literature I use Munguambe most frequently, a Chopi who wrote on their music (Munguambe 2000).

2.8 The co-researcher's need for involvement:

The practical methods, such as interviews and other forms of research involvement, will be concretised in the form of regularly visiting the Chopi community, doing some activities with them at their place of work, such as on the street and in the mass-grave at the cemetery of Lhanguene in Maputo. Bible studies and food sharing are part of this engagement and. interviews especially with gravediggers were carried out by other people who are neutral. Some of these are recorded in this thesis.

I have tried to get the Chopis engaged as much as possible in this process. After a long period of visitations and conversations I came to the point where the Chopis could tell what they could never mention before. By respecting them as co-researchers we have journeyed together and they have discovered more about themselves. This was contrary to what other researchers had done in the past (only speaking on their behalf).

It is also a risky task: when the co-researchers discovered that the researcher was not of their culture and beliefs they started to question “Why is he/she so interested on the subject? They were also fearful, asking: “For what reasons does he want to know about us. Others have also thought the researcher was engaging in political matters.

I asked the Chopis to tell their own stories. Some were very shy; others attempted to be as open and honest as they could. But the question remains: “Is this the Chopis’ reality or have they tried to disguise their past?” “Is the way the researcher has put his questions influencing their answer?” For instance I have discovered some negative attitudes as well as some very positive ones amongst them, not necessarily what they have suggested nor what the people have said on their regard. I have become aware of how complex the question of the Chopis is, if we read on the surface as many missionaries, including priests, have tried to do. What must be done is to engage Chopis in the whole process of the transformation of their lives.

Our current political systems are being slowly decentralised, so that the Government will have sufficient control over urban structures, yet the situation of the Chopis is still far from being solved, especially for those working as sweepers and gravediggers. Hence I will visit some of the processes that are occurring towards this betterment of their situation and search for new models to improve their work conditions. I will try to come up with some proposals for the problems Chopis are facing presently. I will demonstrate some of the activities that led to society’s intervention or at least recognition of the Chopis; in addition I wrote some letters published in a newspaper focussing on the suffering and marginalization of Chopis, as well as promoting some celebrations that they have never enjoyed. For example, during the celebrations of international Labour Day a meal was offered by the government to Chopis in order to celebrate with their families, due to some of the researcher’s interventions in the media.

CHAPTER 3

My INSERTION PROCESS:

3.1 Introduction

These thoughts that I will present in this chapter are a direct result of a deep involvement within the Chopi community, where I served as a pastor for four years. The sociability of the Chopis and among them led me to a deeper penetration into their worldview. This will help my work to present, with conviction, some important aspects of that group of people as well as its history.

This Chapter also provides a brief history of the Chopis, including the context of the country, as well as the history of the Chopis in the context of forced work versus slavery.

3.2 Insertion

To summarize:

I describe my whole process of being engaged with the Chopi community:

- My experiences of this community
- My journey with Chopis from “Land-land” to town.
- My involvement and sharing of life with the Chopis.

After finishing my basic theological education I was placed in Zandamela, which is predominantly a Chopi area, about 300 km from Maputo, the capital city of Mozambique. That was a strange and poor parish for a new young Minister. I had never been in direct contact with Chopi people. So everything seemed to be new. I found Chopi attitudes unique and I could not understand some of their reactions and thoughts. In fact I had to learn much. But what has challenged me the most is the Chopis’ love, work and hospitality. Then I journeyed with them for about four years, before I went to Britain for a year.

In order to be effective in this activity I had to spend quite a long time trying to live and learn from their daily experience. During a couple of months, I was working out the

following themes: “Doing; looking; thinking; planning” (Freire 1993: 47-51), facing their daily “death” and motivating them to “resurrection” and to move from “creation to recreation”. This exercise required involvement in and commitment to our human and social spheres. I have engaged in understanding the Chopis’ attitudes and habits as well as their level of understanding and analysing their own history, and have invited them to share what they do have and consider useful to their lives. In fact, Chopis have demonstrated a great level of creativeness although they are seen as the lowest among other tribes and cultures of the South of Mozambique.

I looked at their cultural activities (music and dance) as a source to be used in “liberating” the Chopi liturgy. I also considered some social and systemic issues that contribute to their lack of action towards development. The ultimate reason for this insertion was to engage in a continuous process of reflection, development and social change. I was challenged to engage in this continuous “doing, looking, thinking and planning” in cooperation with them.

Paulo Freire refers to a dialogical theory of action where “subjects meet in cooperation in order to transform the world” (Freire 1993:148).

Here I see the process of incarnation taking place, so that transformation will take place in that context. It is worth thinking how the incarnation of Christ made possible the transformation of the “word”. Bosch says: “if we take incarnation seriously, the word has to become flesh in every new context” (Bosch 1991:21).

The Chopis’ story is to some extent very complex and somehow it betrays one’s memory. This means that their story is different for outsiders who are already biased in terms of social attitudes and prejudices towards Chopis. My insertion process helped me to really identify with Chopis. On the other hand Chopis can tell their own story boldly and authentically. They can also tell and retell their story in different ways and from different angles. As a researcher, I needed to listen to these authentic stories. By examining the Chopi story I was inserting myself in the Chopi world as well as discovering the story behind the story. This was a crucial exercise as it determined the authenticity of the relationship between us.

The story of Chopis is to be re-told and new perceptions need to be brought to the surface. In their study of the Chopis, some scholars have tried to look at some of the key aspects of their life and culture. However, they failed to interiorise Chopi's understanding of themselves. They failed to insert themselves into the Chopi world.

Because I have been engaged with Chopis for a couple of years I have learned from their attitudes and ways of speaking. I now feel more challenged to journey together with them in their sorrows and joys. Yet, I still have to learn more deeply what these manifestations are hiding, what their cultural manifestations are really meaning.

In order to realize this activity I had to spend a quite long time trying to live and learn from Chopis daily experience. In all that period during which I have decided to live with the Chopis I was able to learn and analyse more questions, which are connected to the system as well as the role of the Church. For several years I have experienced their ways and attitudes, although I could never become the same as they are. I have entered into the world of Chopis and engaged in a process of mutual and continuous discovery.

I will continue engaging myself in this cycle, being a part of the Chopi community and reality. To incarnate myself in the world of the Chopis would be an appropriate term to mean my engagement in this adventure. This is what "insertion" entails in the context of this research project: "our initial experiences within a specific context" (De Beer & Venter 1998:50).

3.3 History of Chopis

"They have less obstacles to embrace our Christian religion, they are slow to accept our habits. They are entirely cruel, without any sort of education." (Munguambe 2000:42).²⁰

This statement, made by a Catholic priest, Fernandez, shows the tendency that was already present to make the Chopis submissive to the Portuguese authorities. This statement is not an isolated case. It is embodied in the spirit of civilizing African tribes through the word of God. Catholics were the first to evangelise the nation and the

²⁰ Andre Fernandez is writing from Inhambane to Goa, India, in the 15th Century, demonstrating his willingness to evangelise the Chopis.

Portuguese government was also represented by the Catholic Church, more officially after 1930 (the Colonial Act)²¹. The Colonial Act in its article 9 clearly refers to the “moral obligation” of the Portuguese nation, to colonize and evangelise the natives exerting its power in the light of “padroado”.²²

The term that the Portuguese used the most was “Cafre” instead of natives. later on, the Chopis were asked to work as selected people for a Portuguese man called Gil Vicente²³, who was running a private waste removal company. After this, the Municipal Council of the City (Maputo, the former Lourenço Marques became the major employers of the Chopis. Chopis have ever been the lower “Cafres”.

According to a researcher, Rita Ferreira Matos (Matos 1982:185), it is an unnecessary task to attempt satisfactorily tracing the migratory movements, during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, which is supposed to have caused differences between the Tsongas’, Chopis’, and Bitongas’ cultural aspects. In other words Matos presents a complex analysis of the roots of the Chopis. The research of different people during the last century has produced many controversial approaches. And anthropologists increase the complexity, when they present the Chopis mingled and interacting with other people in the region. This study does not put much emphasis on the history and the origin of the Chopis, but what interests us the most is their nature that emerges from their interaction with other people, especially their differences and attitudes towards other people and to themselves. For example what is very interesting is to understand how they became so inferior in relation to other people within society, and even more how they became servants in the city.

²¹ The Colonial Act of 1930, proclaimed by Dr Antonio Salazar, aimed to control the native labour force.

²² Since the 15th Century different Popes stressed the right of Portugal to colonize and civilize the indigenous population overseas as a sacred right.

²³ Gil Vicente, whom some call Santo Gil, employed only Chopis in his company. Initially only Chopis from Zavala, and later on other Chopis also became gravediggers, after which Chopis began working for the municipal Council or for the Portuguese Government (this is from oral tradition). Mr. Jaime Tembe a Presbyterian Elder and Sarmento Mungoi, also a Presbyterian Elder. Mr.Sarmento worked for 19 years as a Chopi gravedigger, and was also a Presbyterian Elder. His sermons were rejected for he had been working in a cemetery. When he was appointed for preaching his sermons were he was rejected by his fellow Christian because of his attachment to cemetery work.

3.4 Chopi origins

In 100-1000 BC the Bantu migrated to Mozambique; Chopis originated from the whole of the Bantu tradition, prior to Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese navigator who discovered Mozambique in 1498. Matos (1982:185) starts from the early Iron Age period, when small Bantu clans spread throughout the coastal area during the first millennium BC. These people of the coast, previously called “Khokas”, were also known as “Mocarrangas” (1982:186). They used bows and arrows (Munguambe 2000:8) as their main weapons and have also been considered the owners of the land, owing to their capacity of knowing well how to deal with rainfall.

Again according to Matos, Chopis were named after those who used bows and arrows to fight their Nguni enemy who invaded them in the 19th century. They stemmed from multiple ethnic origins (Matos 1982:189). According to historians such as Matos, many factors contributed to the formation of the identity and performance of the Chopis. Matos refers to the cruel political and economic conditions imposed by the leader of the Gaza Empire Nghungunhana, a great indigenous ruler who tried to conquer the Chopis and their land during the 19th century. All these were allied to the progressive transformation of the ecological environment. Besides the environmental aspects, there is also the question of Chopi immigration, across the shores, and last but not least, the tribal wars in which the Chopis were involved and were defeated and enslaved.

According to other oral tradition, the Chopis are believed to have originated from the shores of Lake Tanganyika and immigrated to the South. The name traces its origin from a Zulu noun referring to the users of the bow and arrow. It was a manner of fighting and hunting. The Chopis are also considered to be among the earliest inhabitants of Mozambique. Migrating from the north of Africa, they settled in the southern areas in the provinces of Inhambane and Gaza. Zavala became the headquarters of the Chopis. For Munguambe, “there is an evidence of connection between Chopis and Venda people from South Africa” (2000:48).

Slavery, as carried out by the Portuguese, was the system that supported the concept behind the treatment of the Chopis. If we analyse the facts behind the story, we can

conclude that the Chopis were targeted and prepared to accept that kind of work. Their attitudes towards the work have also contributed towards their present internalisation of the conditions of slavery, oppression and marginalisation. In the past, the Chopis were seen as strange to some tribes of the south. They could not share food or drink with other people, merely because of their place and work in the society. The only possibility of sharing life with people occurred in the case of a need to remove “dirty stuff”, for example after a woman gave birth to a child at home. The head of the family might invite a Chopi to his home and after lunch or tea would ask him to remove some refuse from the home, as in a case of an abortion or a pregnancy (story told by a Chopi).

Thus the relationship between the Chopis and society focussed on aspects of work, which was more like the relation of subject to object, even to the extreme of a Chopi being called a “no person”, “a person of faeces”, because their work involved the removal of human faeces. This created within the Chopis a spirit of defensiveness, which was encouraged by the Portuguese Government because of the need for such “work” carried out by the Chopis.

Many years of independence have passed by, yet the Chopis still preserve the same patterns of life. They form the majority of employees in the sanitation services and are still attached to their past of marginalisation. Very few are able to progress while their children continue to follow the same route that brought their relatives from Chopiland to Maputo.

3.5 Chopi “slavery” in the city

Marks of slavery are still visible on the Chopi’s face, which Schreiner so aptly illustrates: “Slavery may, perhaps, be best compared to the infantile disease of measles; a complaint which so commonly attacks the young of humanity in their infancy, and when gone through at that period leaves behind it so few fatal marks” (1992: 104).

The oral tradition refers to the local Chopi rulers who used to hand over disobedient Chopis to the Portuguese authorities to be enslaved in the city. This tradition also refers to the fact that Chopiland was the easiest place in which the Portuguese could dominate

the people while the Portuguese authorities used local chiefs to recruit people as slaves, even after the official abolishment of slavery.

Chopis arrived in the Xipamanine Compound as if they were arriving in the South African Compounds to work for their own salaries. The only difference is that the Portuguese Colonial authorities had already targeted and secured only the Chopis for the cleaning up of all sorts of waste, rubbish and excrement and city maintenance. Because of the loyalty they had shown to the nation in the eyes of the Portuguese, they were selected from among the other local tribes of the south. This profession, as cleaners, traced a new relationship with the local population who immediately connected their work to their caste. People around Chopis began to see them not as equals but as second-class citizens. In some cases, people refused to share even a glass of water with the Chopis. In addition to their marginalisation, they had to learn to live their history with this heavy burden as if they had nowhere to live.

In their homeland, Zavala, nothing was done in terms of economic and social development, since by 1911 their area was declared as a reserve of cheaper labour for work in the city. In some cases, the Portuguese authorities defended the Chopis from marginalization and all kinds of attacks, which they suffered from other people, but this protection was in the interest of the work they were doing for the city and not really for justice and equality, which therefore constituted total social and economic exploitation.

The Chopis still feel socially and economically exploited. It is important to reflect on these aspects so that a social analysis can help to draw a new course of history. The Chopi people, who were always considered to be hard-working people, have undergone a transition after the experience of poverty and isolation. Their “loyalty” to the “Portuguese” nation, through their good attitudes towards work, did not generate any income at all; the result was to continue as a lower caste in the margin of society.

3.5.1 The relationship of the Chopis with other people

“Nevertheless they say no God, no heaven, no hell, no good works, nor bad works everything is indifferent; they do not have souls only life and nothing will

rest from them; they had a great 'Cafre' the father of everyone and their mother was a white. But I believe, they say we are children of one father and **one** mother, and for their honour they say their father was a black" (Munguambe 2000:42-43).

The Chopis tried to create some kind of relationship with the Portuguese Europeans. They displayed a greater loyalty to the Portuguese than the other tribes, which resulted in jealousy and initiated a kind of revenge from their neighbours.

Politically and economically, the Chopis were viewed as the adoptive children of the Portuguese, not because of their importance or considerably, but because of their utility to the Portuguese as a dominating order. It was a kind of domestication still in the caste system. After the war of Portuguese domination in the south of Mozambique, Mouzinho (the Portuguese Governor), delegated Major Alves to "direct the Chopis along the lines of work, dignity and prosperity" (Rocha 1963:7).

Herein lies the beginning of the story of the obedience attributed to the Chopis, because of the status they received as a result of their loyalty. The Chopis agreed to obey the Portuguese laws at work. The basic belief was that prosperity would stem from such acceptance of hard and cheaper work while other groups of people had other opportunities.

When the Chopis reached Maputo, probably by means of a "recruiting" bus (maybe that is the reason the term Chopi is associated with bus stories), they were directed to a hostel where they lived under the control of the Portuguese Municipal authorities. This situation did not help them to interact with other people. Later, the Chopis were directed to funeral services as cemetery personnel. They were also in charge of removing all human excrement from toilets in the surrounding suburbs. This work exacerbated the stigma. In popular hermeneutics, the Chopis were a lower class of people associated with buckets of faeces (the term Chopis is always associated with such a bucket). Their culture and symbols were rejected by society and even Church members.

3.5.2 Major events in Chopi history

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 100-1000 BC | Bantu Immigration reached Mozambique; |
| 1559 | The Jesuit Priest Goncalo de Silveira baptizes about 400 Chopi people; |
| 1754 | Slaves destined to the French Islands, departed from Inhambane province; |
| 1833 | Slavery is abolished in the Portuguese colony; |
| 1898 | Lourenço Marques is declared the capital of Mozambique; |
| 1909 | Immigration to South African mines on the Rand began; |
| 1911 | Zavala was declared the indigenous reserve of a cheaper labour force, targeting the Chopis for municipal services in the capital city of Maputo, the former Lourenco Marques; |
| 1947 | Approximately 500 workers were deported to St. Tome & Prince, among them were a certain number of Chopis; |
| 1948 | Approximately 43 men were condemned to “xibalo” (slavery) and deported to Saint Tome & Prince. Here we notice that slavery had ceased within the Portuguese territory, but it continued in its various forms, such as hut taxation. The arrival of the Chopis in the city was also a result of this situation; |
| 1956 | Introduction of agricultural cooperatives in Zavala; and |
| 1976 | Lourenco Marques is named Maputo. |

3.5.3 Zavala, the Chopi capital:

The territory of Zavala (the heart of Chopiland) occupies an area of approximately 2 498 sq/km and contains an estimated population of 87 492 with 35 inhabitants/sq/km (Matos 1976:139). Also, Inhambane province is referred to as the province that offered quality slaves in large numbers.

3.5.4 Conclusion:

- The Chopis originated like any other purely African people. They were free like any other group of people in Africa.
They went to the city as slaves, and although slavery had been abolished by then, the modes of work to which they were submitted were harsh and cruel.

- I have presented the places where I met and socialized with the Chopis as well as their brief history. Their urbanization was a long process that was planned and organized by the Portuguese hierarchy. The Portuguese did not take into account the future consequences for the Chopi people.
- They were only interested in their labour force, which resulted in a very painful process.
- The plan was conceived within the whole concept of “civilizing” natives through work. Their coming to Maputo was not to form part of the city population but to serve in vexing work. Nevertheless, the Portuguese claimed the capital of Chopiland, Zavala, as the reserve for a cheaper Chopi labour force.
- Owing to that difficult situation, the Chopis’ rights were alienated and their identity greatly affected. Their sense of belonging to a certain culture with certain important values was neglected.
- The Chopis in the city were transformed into instruments or objects. In the city they faced a major stigma associated with their menial labour, which was extended to the next generation that had followed the same route to the city. In conclusion, we may say that this caused the total distortion of any identity of a group of people and a total dismissal of respect of their cultural values. On the other hand, we must admit that all these events occurred during the period of a fascist and oppressive colonial rule in Mozambique.

CHAPTER 4: CULTURAL RICHES (MUSIC, POETRY AND RITUALS)

4.1 Introduction

The Chopi culture appears to be unique in its characteristics among the people of Mozambique. This was the reason many analysts and observers of Chopi culture have offered suggestions and displayed their concern with regards to the Chopi culture. I refer to music, dance, poetry and rituals, which resulted in them being admired and their identity enhanced.

The present chapter deals with certain aspects of the Chopi culture, which is dynamic and complex. It is rich in initiation rituals (circumcision) and other rituals found in song, poetry and dance. From my experience among the Chopis I am also under the impression that they conduct funeral services with pride, although I will not discuss this here. These rich elements will be explored in this chapter in order to understand how these can contribute towards changing the situation of Chopis and restore their dignity.

4.2 Chopi culture

Boff states that “Human life is always cultural just by being human. All human groups develop all of these instances in its own way”(1991:4).

Chopi culture is very rich in terms of habits and activities. For example, Munguambe wrote:

“In our days Chopi men join Chopi woman to work in the field together. They no more observe a rigid separation of functions between man and women, it means no more Women were dedicated to work in the field and men to hunt and build thatched huts. Now, they develop diversified activities, not based on previous distinction in labour. It was common for 20 to 40 men join forces and go hunting together. They would spend one or two weeks in the bush without returning home. During that hunting they killed many animals. They would survive on the kill and bring the rest home after drying it in the sun or by fire”.(Munguambe 2000:39).

Concerning their relation with others, Tracey said that the Chopis related very little with their neighbours, in relation with whom they saw themselves as inferior (Tracey 1946:vi).

This situation may promote discrimination from other groups of people³². In schools, factories and even in churches, the Chopis are not “visible” on the first plane. They have made great efforts to adapt themselves into new situations. But their attitudes towards themselves and the way they read others do not assist them in their integration. Considering the past, Chopis avoid reaffirming their qualities in the midst of other people and culture. These attitudes are further entrenched as time moves on. They still need to adopt a more helpful approach towards social interaction.

In association with their work, the Chopis have also been referred to as a “corpse in movement”, “abnormal people” or simply “ghosts”. As a result of that situation the Chopis have admitted such “false identity” and to some extent given over to alcoholism as a way of escaping from their burden.

Even though the Chopis actually do recognize the importance of their work, they do not feel accepted by society in terms of the value they carry as workers. Society underestimates them and the importance of their work because of their marginalization.

The manner in which the Chopi people regard themselves is historically contradictory, since they are not different from other tribes or peoples. As a Catholic Priest named Padre Fonseca, a Chopi from Zavala told in an interview, I assume they are not different from other people or tribes. “No tribe was made superior over others”⁸ The problem is that for many years they have assumed they are poor and inferior, and likewise their discrimination as well as distinction from other people as possessing a special calling related only to them. This situation must be challenged and questioned. This is not easy exercise: “Now how can we convince the poor, that they are indeed God’s children” (De Beer 2002:34). My great challenge is for the Chopis to assume we are all equal.

³² I mean Chopis before independence, was shameful before others.

⁸ I quote a Chopis -Catholic Priest, Father Fonseca, from Munhuana Parish, in Maputo working with Amizava (the Association of Friends and sympathising of Zavala), interviewed by Marcos Macamo on 25th August 2006.

4.3 The Chopis and their music and dance:

Music is the predominant manifestation of the Chopi identity. Munguambe relates some of the highest moments in the history of the Chopi Music performances: On one such occasion, 1st of July 1939, when the Portuguese president Carmona visited the colony of Mozambique, he visited the historical place Magul-a where Chopis had helped the Portuguese to fight their fellow natives. On his arrival, one hundred timbila musicians and two hundred dancers welcomed the president. The president was so impressed by the orchestra that he invited the master player, Mr Katine, to perform in various concerts in Lisbon during the summer 1940. During the period 1950 to 1975 the Chopi orchestra was invited to perform under the Portuguese banner in all the administrative areas where Chopi communities existed, every Sunday afternoon. (Munguambe 2000:46-47).

Chopis, considered master performers, especially on xylophones locally referred to as timbila. Through timbila they employed their talents to express their anger, joy and anxiety. They usually expressed themselves through music in every sphere of life. Since their arrival in Lourenço Marques (Maputo), they have been admired for the way they express themselves culturally; in social gatherings and even in a cases of judgement, their dance ritual is used to instruct and counsel. "They sing critics and praises" (Tracey 1946:vii)³¹. This is the way they also use to express their identity; they have been performing in the urban environments of South African in various companies while searching for work.

The Chopi are a tribe that is internationally very famous for their music. In 1940, the above group of Chopi Musicians was invited to perform in Lisbon-Portugal, and UNESCO declared their music to be a cultural heritage in 2005 through the World Patrimony Award.

Their music has been compared with other orchestras in Africa, Asia, Europe and America, where a similar music style of music has been found. Chopi sweepers and gravediggers are also good musicians and poets, despite the humiliation they experience in their work. I attended their Sunday afternoons dances at the Xipamanine slum, where they lived in a hostel. They would start playing in different tunes with each tune

³¹ Hugh Tracey in his study presents all the characteristics of Chopi music and poetry.

reflecting a specific feeling. Sometimes they would play louder and suddenly pause as they fall down like a dead person, spending couple of minutes in a terrible silence. Suddenly they would stand up and shout and jump demonstrating triumph. Those performances express important elements of their imagination.

In Maputo, Chopis are considered excellent entertainers. In the past they held snakes while performing dances. This ritual unfortunately, Chopis distanced them from other people.

Dances are present in all important events, such as in guerrilla warfare, and other expressions of anger and conflict resolution. As Tracey said, "Their dances represent the actions of Guerrillas - all well expressed" (Tracey 1946:vi). They also express their emotions of sorrow and joys in dance. Chopis express everything in dance, whether happy or sad. We have seen them in churches and at funerals expressing their joy and sorrow through dance. Chopis have also presented their dance with their music internationally.

4.4 The Chopis and poetry:

Daily expressions of the Chopis are filled with poetry as well proverbs. Its is normal to sit around the fire the in evening to hear adults and children ask the meaning of the proverbs they mention; then someone must guess the meaning and win the competition. Those meanings are based on their daily life experiences and are used to teach and correct one's way of living. Those words are used to avert many situations that could bring someone's life into danger. Practically, those are authentic schools of poetry.

4.5. Chopi rituals and sacraments:

"Sacraments enhance the individual's dignity, they offer power to protect and defend it, when it is violated; and they are inserted in the lives of people to make them grow and mature according to God's plan." (Bellagamba 1992:58).

Chopis are well known for their powerful rituals, such as song, dance, and circumcision. In the present chapter, greater attention has been paid to singing, or music and a traditional dance performed by the Chopis, known as "timbila", as it was accompanied by timbila instruments. This was a unique Chopi way of expressing their main cultural identity. Circumcision is also a clear indication of the Chopi identity.

All these symbols can be employed constructively so as to build and establish the Chopi community as a whole. Nevertheless this symbolism can occupy a place of sacrament, offering a moment of sharing and mutual support and celebration of their identity as Bellagamba explains, "Preparation for the reception and celebration of the sacraments offers a further opportunity for conscientization." (1992:58).

4.5.1 Circumcision as part of rituals:

Circumcision forms an important aspect of a Chopi's life. An uncircumcised Chopi is considered as betraying the rest of their tribe. Circumcision also bears the connotation of "purity", manhood or womanhood.

According to oral tradition, circumcision inculcates a sense of belonging to their community. It is really a shame for those Chopis who are not circumcised. It is a matter of identity for individuals as it brings a sense of belonging to their families and friends, and above all as part of an African tribe with its own world view. The ritual marks the beginning of an adult stage of life. An elder who knows the Chopi tradition executes the ritual. The community trusts this person and he has a responsibility to perform the ritual successfully. The rite is followed by a sound of drums in a way of celebration.

I now present a case study of circumcision in the Chopi tribe so as to indicate the manner in which the missionaries (Anglicans) dealt with that important ritual. I will base the reflection on an Anglican medical report published in "Libombo Lives":³³

Because circumcision was carried out on traditional basis, the missionaries intervened in an attempt to minimize the negative or painful aspects of circumcision. The school of

³³ Medical report of 1927, no 49; first quarter volume xxvi: A quarterly Anglican publication, Libombo Lives. That was a Report on some aspects of Mission among African Communities in the South of Mozambique.

circumcision for the benefit of the Chopi boys comprised a tribe in the vicinity of the mission station, according to their tribal law. A witchdoctor always performed the circumcision. The Anglican Bishop of Maciene (an Anglican Chopi Cathedral) established a school of circumcision in order to accommodate the Chopis.

As the missionary stated, the witchdoctor was so barbarous in the execution of such a “horrible ritual”, the Anglican bishop established a school of circumcision in order to improve the method that employed by the local witchdoctor and to avoid the pain and stress the ritual often caused. The ritual was to be approved by parents and their children. Young Chopis also recommended that practice to other boys. The circumcision made a great impact on Chopis. The ritual was accompanied by drums while being traditionally performed on a shaped rock, which was unhygienic, posing the risk of death. The missionary intervention helped Chopis to improve certain aspects of that practice. Above all, a circumcision engenders a personal pride in the Chopi. For Chopis, circumcision means maturity and purity. But it also forms part of their identity.

Conclusion

Chopis have their unique and different characteristics. The way they think, talk, eat, sing, dance, the way they wear their clothes. The manner in which the Chopis “do things” reflects their attitude. They are very quick to arrive at a conclusion. Their pacifist nature allows them to live separately from the common people of the south. They are not familiar with robbery nor are they ashamed of poverty. They learn any kind of job rapidly. They avoid quarrelling. They accept any kind of vexing and humiliating work. Mr Mucumbi said, when I interviewed him on October the 9th 2007 at the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), that Chopis are very patient and humble, they accept every condition, but sometimes they hide their stupidity.

CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL ANALYSIS IN RELATION TO IDENTITY

5.1 Introduction

Social analysis forms part of my methodological engagement. I therefore present such an analysis as a prerequisite to understanding certain factors that influence the present situation of the Chopis. I search for them in their markets, at work and in the religious realm, in the places they are seen and where they socialize with others. I analyse this process of socialization by considering how they relate to others and how other people relate to them. I suggest the motives behind the relationships and customs of the Chopis.

In this analysis I will deal separately with the influence of social, economic, religious and political factors on the formation of the Chopi identity. I will also mention the social elements that have played a key role in these aspects and try to formulate actions that should be taken in order to transform the Chopi community.

“Social analysis offers a scientific opportunity to look at all concrete aspects of the situations in their historicized manifestations and a greater chance to determine what actions should be taken.” (Bellagamba 1992:58).

In the next Chapter 6 (Theology and Mission) I will suggest how to identify some aspects of the Chopis’ true identity.

5.2 Economic factors

In 1911, the Portuguese declared Zavala a native labour force reservation. Hence Europeans did not occupy large portions of the land there. The Portuguese were only conducting small businesses in the area, where there was also no industry. Consequently the Chopis from Zavala searched for their work elsewhere. The Portuguese forced them to cultivate crops and sell them the produce for a cheap price. The Chopis were not able to resist that situation.

In 1956, the Portuguese introduced in Zavala the Native Agricultural Cooperatives (Matos 1976:13), to benefit themselves (Munguambe 2000:36). This offered a further reason why the Chopis left Zavala for cities in South Africa and Maputo.

As previously mentioned the Chopis were seen as instruments of work to serve the purposes of others. They were not allowed to become agents of their own economy. In order to shift the economic paradigm which forms their reality to a large extent, the Chopis will need to adopt new strategies, forcing themselves to turn from being objects of economic exploitation to agents of economic empowerment.

Labour force

The Portuguese used natives as a source of income for the Government. While other tribes migrated to South African mines every year, a labour force had to be secured at “Home” (in the colony). This was carried out in the light of racial division, according to the Portuguese policies of separation. For the natives, the city represented exploitation as well as prosperity (to earn money meant prosperity) since it was also linked to “xibalo” (slavery).

According to Munguambe, all men between the ages of 18 and 50 years were required to provide proof of employment, either as a servant in government or a peasant with more than 50 cattle, otherwise they would be taken into “Xibalo” (Munguambe 2000:35). Consequently, many Chopis migrated to the cities in order to escape it, but once there they encountered a “modern xibalo” (modern slavery). Taxation in the rural areas was enforced as a means of driving the natives from their zones to the city. No one was able to refuse. Racism and fascism were still predominant.

5.3 Xipamanine: an example of urbanization in terms of economic factors

The arrival of the Chopis in the inner city of Maputo occurred in the context of the rural exodus of the natives to the city (Maputo-Xipamanine). But in the case of the Chopis their route was demarcated, from Zavalaland (the capital of Chopiland) where the Portuguese Government had introduced the cooperative farms, to the city. It is

interesting to note that in Zavala the Portuguese authorities did not build any infrastructure to develop that area. The objective of the Portuguese Government was to obtain a group of people who would be systematically recruited to serve in the city as “slaves”. All the old Chopi staff, confirm that they came to town as slaves.

In Maputo, between the 1930’s to 1950’s, an elite group of African Workers was formed. It is interesting to observe that the allocation of employment to African natives had obeyed the stratification of society in which differences were measured in terms of opportunities.

The Chopis attempted to flee to the South African mines in order to find better living conditions but that was not easy for them. The Portuguese referred to the caste system in order to classify people, even in terms of job acquisition; if somebody had been baptized as a Catholic or had reached grade four, he or she was supposed to qualify for better living conditions. Civilization appeared to be synonymous with being a Christian. Even a Chopi, if baptized, would not be considered in the same manner as other “kafres”. Social status depended on one’s social level. This is what was called the “policy of assimilation” which was implemented by various means: for example, the introduction of a passbook, known as “caderneta indigena”.

In that passbook all personal information was recorded and according to that information a person was accorded a certain social status. Throughout this process, the Chopis were omitted because of their role in the city. They had already been defined as a specific group of people whose work was to care for the cleaning of the city. This was the beginning of all kinds of reprisals by other natives against the Chopis in the city.

Despite this poor background, they have been very attractive to many potential employers because of their positive attitude at work and their rich cultural expression in poetry, song and dance.

Chopi natives were able to hide in the city’s Xipamanine quarter, mainly a black township, where they were free. There were many restrictions against natives, but the Chopis were considered as those who kept the city tidy and were hence protected by the

authorities. Their work, but not necessarily their personality, was protected. In the case of attack or threats by other people, the Chopis enjoyed a legitimate right to be protected by the Portuguese police.

5.4 Social factors: stigmatisation

Stigmatisation began as early as the first contact with the Portuguese. The Chopis always appeared to be an inferior class of people among other tribes. Matos, quoting Cabral, affirms that the “Chopi is considered as an inferior relative of Batongas and Landis, is despised, and is supposed to humbly submit himself”(Matos 1982:190).

Three generations of Chopis in the city have been stigmatised, especially those in the Xipamanine quarter.

During the decade of the 1960s, I often used to hear a commotion and people running away in fear of others. It was difficult to understand the problem. I also had to run. But the situation was normally provoked by a group of young people who hurled insults at Chopis, who called on each other to respond to the humiliation. The Chopis responded to the provocation by immersing their hands in faeces they had collected in buckets during their working day. Chopis tended to unite in order to defend their identity and did not accept provocation associated with their dignity, which is an indication that they did not choose their profession but that they had no option. Such a reaction is a form of revenge. On the other hand, Chopis are humble and compassionate people, thus they retain discontentment within themselves. These aspects force one to investigate the factors underlying their humility.

Matos mentions that male activities became domesticated among the Chopis. This may have led to a choice of less risky activities, different to Tsonga attitudes that were more violent than Chopi people who seem to “stagnate”. The need to end this stagnation arose from the rich capacity for creativity with which the Chopis are equipped. The stagnation of the Chopis is also related to their interior personality. Matos concludes that their “capacity of creativity and his or her physical and psychic ability have developed an

interior sense, pacific, domestic and sedentary as in the political, social, and economic arena as in the field of artistic manifestations” (Matos 1982:198).

While working and living with the Chopis I felt compelled to share various aspects of their lives, mainly with those who for many years have been marginalized from society. The absence of the promotion of their moral and ethical values, the absence of a fraternal spirit and a relationship between them and society were the most painful aspects that made their life burdensome. There is a gap between the Chopis and the community in which they live and serve. These issues were really difficult to tackle because they are so sensitive and somehow affect their spirituality.

Thus I was challenged to exercise my spirituality in an attempt to bring about some transformation within their community. Above all, I detected isolation as being the main problem. I needed to attempt to introduce a new approach to the Chopis which could result in a more acceptable relationship with society; one of respect for and recognition of the work they do as well one to engender esteem and self-esteem among the Chopis, so that they view their work as being valued by society. I also search for a means to create an improved work environment that can provide a reasonable climate and also to open new perspectives in order to develop their community. This would also provide them with some inspiration in order to overcome their stagnation.

I also engage in this work (in practical terms) along with the current research. There is some indication of a shift of understanding from both sides (Chopis and society in general).

5.5 Case of Chopi gravediggers interviewed in Maputo

(All interviewed by Mrs Isabel from Maputo on the 15th June 2006)

Socially, the Chopis are immediately identified with the term “ghost” (if they work in the cemetery) and “rubbish” (if working with excrement). These form the predominant identity when referring to the Chopis in the city of Maputo in particular. Below, I present the conversations with the Chopis who work in the cemetery as gravediggers. These are

slightly edited verbatim translations into English, in order to preserve the colloquial flavour.

The following self-description will demonstrate how social identity has contributed to the marginalization of Chopis in the city.³⁵

In the beginning only people from Zavala and Inharrime were employed for this work, many decades ago, but the same scenario seems to prevail. Some examples of young employees are cited below.

- **Vasco Maguaiela (Retired): gravedigger from Zavala**

Vasco was born in the District of Zavala, in the province of Inhambane, the locality of Quisiko; he is married and has 5 children. He now lives in Maputo but the family lives in Zavala.

“I worked in South Africa for 7 years, under a Wenela contract to the gold mines, but after contract I returned to my homeland Zavala, then I came back again to stay in the former capital which is Maputo today. I don’t remember the year I came, but I had a placement within the former ‘Câmara Municipal de Lourenço Marques’ in the area of urban services and cleaning. After independence we were given a chance for choosing the area we wanted to be affected in such as markets, cemeteries and urban sweeping.

I did choose to work in cemeteries, because I was so familiar with this work because back home we bury our relatives at home alone, that is the reason we were so many Chopi people who did accept this work. Since we were mostly Chopis I found the work so easy and we had a great solidarity. I have worked for 25 years as grave digger. That time the funerals were not as many as they are now.

I did not attend school, I was a peasant and my time was not enough, but I have an art: I make baskets, sweeping and pondering objects etc. Working with palms, I am able to sustain myself because what I earn from my retirement is not enough to

³⁵ These interviews, were carried out by other person who is not researching but interested and committed to Chopi work, within Lhanguene Cemetery, when I went to ask some questions I got some responses. Interviewed, on the 15th of June 2006 by Mrs Isabel who is a senior worker at Maputo Municipality.

sustain my family. I worship in the Old Apostles Church. I believe and I trust God. He is my protector. When I was young my dream was to become a driver.”

- **Carlos Job: gravedigger from Zavala**

Carlos was born in the District of Zavala, in the Province of Inhambane, also in the locality of Quissico; he is married and lives in the hostel associated with his work

“I did my first studies in the Mission of St. John in Zavala, until I finished grade 3. I could not further my studies because I was poor. My dream was to become a journalist. I had a passion for journalism, because I did like a lesson we had at school about the life of a journalist. I came to Lourenço Marques (Maputo) in 1968, looking for better conditions of life. First I worked in St Isabel Bakery in the quarter of Infulene, thereafter I had a job in Municipal Council of Lourenço Marques (Maputo) in 1971. There I was placed in the area of urban sanitation and I was living in the hostel of Xipamanine. In 1974, we were selected to work in the cemetery. Since then this job was reserved for Chopi people, and I did not know why, if that was despised I did not know either. The shangana people never wanted to do this work. I did opt on my own to work in the cemetery, and during the first days I had no many problems. It’s true that working for the dead is not an easy task. When I started to work in the cemetery by 1977, we only had up to six funerals a day, but from the time of war the number of funerals have raised over and over either by war or cholera, AIDS and other diseases and the cemetery is full.

People have called us by such mocking names that it is not pleasant. But we know our Mission: To console the families that lost their beloved, to respect the dead and their families, and not allow provocations.

I worship in the Assemblies of God Church. My family lives in Zavala. I believe in the existence of God. I always, as I can, go to visit my family; I have fourteen children.”

In summary one can say that Chopis are ordinary people like others; their profession or activities do not alter their inherent character. For instance, the Chopis assume that to bury people is a very normal activity, deserving respect as in their homeland (Chopiland).

The main problem is how other people relate to them, especially in town. Burying relatives at home is different from burying people without any relationship to them. The dilemma is that at home they are welcome while in the city they are despised.

5.5.1 Political and religious factors

“Colonial Government wanted to control Mozambicans through Catholic Missions, since the majority of Catholic Priests, served the Portuguese government, and they wanted to use the cross of Christ to attract Mozambicans to submit themselves under colonial government. After the withdrawal of the first Jesuit Missionaries, who worked in Chopi area during the first decade of the 20th century, the Chopi area was handed to Portuguese Franciscan Missionaries who worked in the region until the independence of the country in 1975.” (Munguambe 2000:44).

Chopis assimilated Christianity during the period of colonization and this religion had deeper roots within their lives. Christianity penetrated and rooted itself within the Chopi society (Munguambe 2000:41).

5.5.2 Political factors: previous and present situation

Unfortunately for a large number of this group of people, nothing appears to have shifted from their previous situation to the present. Chopis still face a certain level of marginalization as it existed years ago, prior to the independence of the country. They are still striving to survive. Not much attention has been paid to them. They continue with the same work and are even facing greater difficulties, particularly since they are not provided with adequate equipment for the job nor protective clothing such as boots, gloves, masks etcetera. This applies to both sweepers and gravediggers from the main

cemetery of Ihangene in Maputo where they bury thirty to forty people a day. The only difference is that people from other tribes can now also engage in such work; however, the Chopis are still the representatives of that activity.

The political systems and rules that played a vital role in the process of Chopi enslavement in the past have now changed but this has not affected the situation of the Chopis. Within the context of globalisation, the Chopis strive to find a place in a new social and global order as well as a clear identity and to make that known³¹. They read of similar contexts elsewhere in the world, and thus will find an appropriate methodology with which to fight against political injustice.

5.5.3 Religious factors:

Catholicism accompanied Portuguese colonization. This can be deduced by the record of 400 baptisms of Chopis in 1559 (Matos 1976:22). Some authors affirm that the Chopi people were the first group of people in the region to receive the Gospel. The religious influence of Chopi people during the period of colonization is a major issue that should be addressed separately so that the details of the manner in which Christianity penetrated and rooted itself in Chopi society can be described (Munguambe 2000:41).

The manner in which Catholicism was communicated in the Chopi society may have resulted in certain consequences for their future. Other missionaries such as the Methodists and Anglicans have also worked among the Chopi people. The Chopis appear to readily accept the gospel, which may reflect their pacifist nature. Mr Maunde, a Chopi worker interviewed by the author on 15 March 2005 in the Maputo-Xipamanine hostel, said that “We are immediate followers of Jesus wherever we are”.

Maunde’s attitude, reflects the manner in which the gospel was communicated to the Chopis as humble servants, following Jesus in the lowest tasks without question. In his very small manuscript, on “tindando ta ukhongeli” (songs of praise in the Chopi idiom), the Catholic Father Feliciano dos Santos places the first page at the end: “May God wish

³¹ One of the ways in which Chopis can face globalisation and make their voice heard, is through art and music. This needs to be accompanied by rigorous social analysis and engagement.

that the diffusion of this work can contribute to a rapid and intensive nationalization of the natives (indigenas) of the colony of Mozambique for the well being of the Empire.” This offers an answer with regards to how these people were directed towards the destiny the Portuguese colonialists wanted under the guise of Catholicism.

In the exchange of letters between the Portuguese Catholic priests from Goa(India) and Catholic priests from Inhambane province in Mozambique can provide more details about Chopi people. Such letters described the good qualities of the Chopis as well as the aims of the Portuguese government concerning their future. The information the Portuguese authorities revealed in this regard was to instruct them to work, an imperative echoed by the Catholic Authorities.

The Church was a vital instrument to concretise the Portuguese aspirations. The existence of a Catholic Chapel very near the Chopi hostel in Maputo may suggest the historical partnership between the Church and State in Mozambique, since the church served the State. In this sense the church contributed to the stigmatisation of the Chopis while pretending to civilize them through work. The Catholic doctrine of “obedience” and assimilation may have played a role in the domination of the Chopis. Chopis are presently very shy and self-oriented. The majority of Chopis suffer from an inferiority complex, although they do believe in more specific values of life. Some Chopis had to “assimilate” a new way of living, giving up some part of their identity while others never accepted this process of assimilation. This occurs when dominant groups can accept assimilation voluntary, resist assimilation, or just slowly give in (Venter 1998:9).

Another aspect that places a responsibility on the Church with regards to the Chopis, is the fact that Catholics wanted the Chopis to be Catholics and not Protestant converts. The Catholic purpose was to own them, and to direct them to work through obedience. On the other hand, it seems that the Catholics succeeded in their project to civilize the Chopis “only for work”. Many Chopis were brought up in the Catholic doctrine of obedience and confession. Many of them were schooled by the Catholic Mission and were moulded in the moral patterns of Catholicism. The Chopis were educated in pacifism rather than activism. Some Chopis who attended Protestant Schools were not accepted in the Catholic environment. Unfortunately the Protestant church has

contributed very little to embrace the Chopis in the light of the Biblical teachings of Christ. Acceptance of the Chopis in the Church therefore continues to prove difficult. The question of civilization was really a problematic one. Munguambe explains more fully that “As the time was passing it reached the situation in which the ‘sine qua non’ condition to all Mozambicans to pass on grade four was first to be baptised as Catholic.” (Munguambe 2000:43).

Quite often the Chopis did not present their culture and language as being worthy for worshipping God. They have “denied” themselves and have seen others as superior to themselves. They have also created their own obstacles. The situation was even worse in the urban environment, because Chopis enjoyed less contact with the local population in their compound. They could only perform their songs and dances in the afternoon, after a day’s hard work. The Chopis have been outstanding in presenting their art and music before the Portuguese, but they could not do the same before God, the creator, the reason being that the Chopis did not offer the practice of their own rituals to God; they failed to recognize that despite marginalization and isolation, God still manifests an interest in them. Paul states that: “Surely you know that you are God’s Temple, where the Spirit of God dwells. Anyone who destroys God’s Temple will himself be destroyed by God, because the Temple of God is Holy; and that Temple is you” (1 Cor.3: 16-17). If the Chopis would become a Christian community then “that community is the Temple of the Holy Spirit”(also see Gutierrez 1971:109).

If a Chopi is still marginalized both in the Church and in society, he or she is not part of the Temple of God. If He or She is the Temple of God then it means he or she is also holy and not only despised person. Through Christ, the identity of the Chopi is restored to its fullness, and all the negative aspects of being human gain meaning in God: “Here the human, finite, imperfect, weak and negative becomes itself a divine element in God himself” (Moltmann 1993:91).

Reading in a wider and more global perspective we can affirm that all “Chopis” of the world are Divine elements in God and they can overcome their difficulties.

5.5.4 A new approach to the Chopi situation

We need to shift our approach from the colonial perspective to one which is contextual. The fact that Mozambique is now enjoying the fruits of more than thirty years of independence may lead us to a new reading of the Chopi situation. The proclamation of independence on June the 25th 1975, which also proclaimed equality among all the people in terms of equal rights, witnessed the end of “official tribalism and racism”. Since then many other people besides the Chopis have joined them in their work and they began to work together. The other people had to accept being called Chopis as well. Our discourse is to engage in the entire process of combating tribal differences. This work is no longer reserved for Chopi people only, but all tribes. In other words the whole of society is called to become “a Chopi”. We are engaged in fighting absolute poverty, a struggle in which all spheres of society must participate. Chopis are to be invited to read their history of the past within a certain system, which resulted in their discrimination. Now they must search for a new model for their story, from the “NOW” perspective, utilising their gifts, as Vanier explains, “If we are not faithful to our gifts we are harming the community and each of its members as well” (1996:63).

5.5.5 The Chopis’ self-identity of the and their analysis of the factors that form their world

It is important to reflect on these aspects so as to perform a social analysis that can facilitate new course in history. According to Holland and Herriot, “Social analysis examines causes, probes consequences, delineates linkages and identifies actors” (2002:8).

Some of our experiences in the case of the Chopis may create certain doubts and even accusations concerning the responsibility of those involved in the process. Chopis view themselves as victims, the offended and the excluded, but rarely will the Chopi hold another reading of the story. They underestimate their responsibility in the process of transformation.

In this confusing situation, the Chopis do not appear to play their role as active actors in the process. In the midst of the entire story, a misunderstanding may prevail, and some

speculation may direct our perspectives in a wrong direction. We need to admit that some of our experiences may lead us astray if not evaluated properly. Both the “oppressor” and the Chopis must re-evaluate their approaches towards each other. When Chopis take responsibility for their own lives and fight for a better life, the result will be a change of identity, restoration and a mutual respect between the Chopis and other people.

5.5.6 “Present” identity(the inner identity: that is always present within themselves).

Despite this burden of a “false identity” or a labelled one (people of sorrow), the Chopis carry within themselves a “real” or concrete identity of which they are proud. This identity is manifested in their cultural and spiritual way of living, their humility and the patience they claim to possess. Somehow they feel joy in who they are. They are aware that the identities which people ascribe to them and their own do not correspond. But we cannot ignore that even presently the Chopis still remember that their identity is directly connected to slavery. Thus, to talk about the identity of the Chopis is painful and suggests a reference to slavery, and also a mental slavery. Furthermore, the Chopis had to carry this “mission”, which was their responsibility to other people.

The nature of their identity soon captured the attention of the Portuguese authorities who immediately maximized the socio-economic, and above all, the political advantages, over that humble ethnic group. The Chopis had already started their long journey from the north, moving slowly to the south. But maybe they never realized they would end up in the city as servants. Chopis are rural people in essence and are also known as people of the coast. Hence they simultaneously developed various activities for their own survival and have acquired much experience in various fields, especially art.

Chopis see prosperity arising from the spirit of hard work and obedience, which they claim to possess. While always seeking to set an example, the Chopis have ended in a situation in which they are ignored by other local tribes. Consequently they experienced a long period of isolation and injustice, which they continue to experience. They are victims of certain systems of power relationships that have led them to a painful situation

and stagnation. In spite of this, the Chopis have never lost their sense of confidence and believe in their qualities as a “people of servanthood”.

5.5.7 “Home” or “original” identity (what Chopis are by nature)

“Home identity” is a cultural notion. Chopis rarely call one another by name. They simply say: “*wamhwani*” (meaning “from home” in Chopi idiom). The way they work, talk, and eat renders them unique, by placing an emphasis on “home”.

By home identity, I refer to the identity that the Chopis bring from their homeland, and which is never determined by the positions they hold or their activities in society. It is an identity void of any discriminatory label. When they reached the city, they were immediately labelled with an identity not theirs. Some Chopi intellectuals used to hide their Chopi identity for fear of the stigma, even when occupying high positions in society.

As previously mentioned, while in the city, they were called derogatory names; on the contrary, they feel proud of their identity when at home, where they work in the midst of, and for, their relatives.

We must regard the Chopi identity as unique and different from that of other tribes in the southern regions of Mozambique. The Chopis have developed their own particular identity and characteristics.

It is evident that it is easy to suggest that for a very long time²⁴ the Chopis have not been accepted by other people in their vicinity. In other words, the Chopis did not share aspects of life with the other tribes, especially the Rongas, Tsongas and even the Bitongas.

²⁴ “In the context of Maputo where I grew up, we had to run away when meeting a Chopi, because we believed that Chopis were savage and strange elements in society. In other words, to see a Chopi was painful.” (Maunde, interviewed by Macamo on the 15th March in Xipamanine at 10 AM.)

Matos quotes Caldas Xavier, a Portuguese governor, referring to the Chopis as being “the most savage, although they are hard workers and industrious”(Matos 1982:193).

Chopis are very energetic and creative. He almost covers all fields of art such as manufacture, agriculture and entertainment. Man and woman work side by side, intensively, in agriculture. For example we find Chopi men and women working together in a farm, which is not happening with other people in the south. Since Chopis lived in a forest they have learned to produce heavy tools, and carving heavy wood. But they also used to produce heavy alcoholic drinks. That led Pr. Fernandez to write from Inhambane to his colleagues in Goa in India . “They behave well unless when are drunk” (Tracey 1949:65).

Chopis are very vulnerable, but also possess a strong potential within them in terms of their culture and spirituality, which enables them to face trouble effectively. They are considered to be among the most gifted people of the world. Tracey has conducted a thorough study in his book, *Chopi musicians, their music, poetry and instruments*. He stated that their art is not found in any part of the world except in Java and Bali² (Tracey 1949:vi).

Despite these gifts, the Chopis are a people of few words even where an opportunity arises to express themselves freely, yet, they feel confident when they speak among others. They place other people first. But despite this attitude, they do manifest the importance of their personalities individually and even collectively. Interestingly they often remark on the town being dirty now, implying that they attribute this situation to the fact that they are the only ones who can keep the city tidy.

Chopis are proud and speak well of themselves, but only amongst themselves when they are alone, when they may even speak evil against other tribes and those who hate them. Among the strengths they mention are those of obedience, being hard workers and pacifists. Their attitudes are never openly exteriorised.

² Professor Tracey is a well known researcher in Chopi Music and Art. He took a group of Chopis people to Durban to study their melodies in detail. He wrote several articles on Chopi music. In 1940 he started to record Chopi music in Zavala (Munguambe 2000-58).

It appears that the patterns of colonialism and slavery are still fresh within them. It is also certain that Chopis bear strong reflections of the past. As has been mentioned the rival groups of the Chopis are the Shangaan and Ronga people who are not polite to one other. They still experience difficulties with a cultural dialogue.

Conclusion

There is a need for the “recreation of a new dynamic neighbourhood relationship, which is important for most urban dwellers” (Gilbert and Gluger 1991:165). A new understanding of life should occur when new relationships will be created between the Chopis and their neighbours through the sharing of their life stories. “The ways in which we understand our lives are influenced by the brother stories of the culture in which we live. Some of the stories we have about our lives will have positive effects and some will have negative effects on life in the past, present and future” (Morgan 2000:9).

Often, the stories told about the Chopis are those of humiliation, which causes them to stagnate. Every work or opinion mentioned by a Chopi is a sufficient reason to be scoffed at. In conclusion, society evaluates the Chopis because of the work they do, not by their importance as people or citizens.

I have analysed the processes that the Chopis have undergone socially. In general, they are not well positioned in relation to society as a whole. Some attitudes towards them and themselves must be changed or reflected upon. I suggest theology and mission as one of the important tools to transform their reality and create a renewed identity.

CHAPTER 6:

THEOLOGY AND NARRATIVES:

6.1-Introduction: Definition of Theology and Mission:

“Theology has often been defined as faith seeking understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*)”(Schreiter 1995:75). David Bosch suggested mission should be seen as *Missio Dei*: “In attempting to flesh out the *Missio Dei* concept, the following could be said: In the new image Mission is not primarily an activity of the Church, but an attribute of God” (Bosch 1991:390).

I have chosen theology and mission as the key factors to reflect upon the Chopis’ circumstances and perhaps to propose a solution to the “Chopi dilemma”. For example I present Chopis in a given church community, where they feel discriminated against, and as a solution they split and form their own denomination. I go beyond the reason for that and I argue theologically and biblically, as to how they are supposed to create their theology and how their mission should be perceived.

This chapter deals directly with theology and mission in an attempt to “recreate” new concepts; a shifting from old theological and colonial patterns of theology and Mission approaches that will challenge Chopis to transform the current scenario and the preconceptions they have towards God and themselves. As Bosch has referred to mission and colonialism: “During the fifteenth to seventeenth century both Roman Catholics and protestants were, admittedly in very different ways, still dedicated to the theocratic ideal of the unity of Church and state.” (Bosch 1991:303)

The predominant theological background as well as the mission patterns among Mozambicans in general and Chopis in particular still suffer the influence of a Catholic dominance in terms of a theology that was embroiled in a strange cultural mixture of dominance and “casticism”-a system of castes or tribalism. In this chapter I will search for a theological shift from the past approach to missionary theology that instead of valuing African spirituality, including Chopis, built upon western dogmatics and a pietist

model of salvation. Nurnberger refers to the necessity to alter theology resulting from specific needs” and points among other reasons to the influence of a Roman cultural heritage, the development of the Catholic Church into a legal power structure, common fear of eternal condemnation during the time of Luther, the individualism of pietism and the revival movements, amongst other factors (Nurnberger 1990:208). The splitting of Chopis to form a new community, for example, I perceive as a type of revival.

I will make use of some biblical reflections mainly based on contextual Bible studies, which will consist of re-interpreting bible stories in the light of the current scenario or context I approach. For example: comparing how the people of Israel conceived their liberation to the Chopi context.

I will also theologically explore some of the Chopis’ human qualities, such as their humbleness, which is part of their identity. It is a result of colonial attitudes. So in my opinion, humbleness should be viewed as positive and not necessarily as negative.

6.2-Chopis in the church (theological aspects which influenced the Chopis’ lives):

We now move in search of certain religious and theological matters that had affected Chopis within the church environment, which did not always allow a free space for them. The same discrimination the Chopis experienced outside the Church was also faced even within the Church. This chapter illustrates some of the incidents that were caused by this social prejudice. Consequently their hymns, songs, dances and other manifestations, though valuable for their Christianity, were also rejected, The chapter deals with the repossession of such lost important elements, through theology.

In this chapter I will refer to a Chopi congregation, mentioning the case of a Zionist Church, splitting from another one in 1997 (the Apostolic Union Christian Zion Church of Mozambique (ISUACM)): the Chopis named the new church the “Samaritan Church”³⁴.

³⁴The Chopis faced discrimination (for example, not being visited by leaders as others were); hence the split

Munguambe considers there are three major categories of Chopis as regards Christianity:

- a) Those who assimilated Christianity in their way of living, acting and thinking;
- b) Those who refuse to embrace Christianity and still live and obey traditional religion, and paganism, literally;
- c) Those in the middle (possibly the majority), between Christianity and traditional religion, trying to bridge both (Munguambe 2000:44).

Theology deals with the sense of identity. Chopis experience their own identity not as individuals but as a group or a community. As a family they relate in community. Chopis find “God” in communion; in contrast with the Western model of identity, which sounds more individualistic, Chopis search for God in terms of a collective identity:

In the Church, whether Catholic or Protestant, Chopis were not welcome, ever since the colonial era. Hence over a long period, they have been striving to find their own way of worshipping. The reason for this discrimination within the Church is still linked to the preconceptions and mythology regarding Chopis. Some, however, became great evangelists and even priests. Some of them had to ignore their identity in order to avoid censure, such as Sarmento Mungoi who worked for nineteen years in the cemetery of lhanguene, and faced this trouble while working together with me in my small parish named Mungoi-branch. (I interviewed him on Christmas Day, the 25th of December 2003 in Chamanculo, near Xipamanine in Maputo.)

In this respect Bate’s comment is apposite: “A local Church emerges within particular community sharing common culture so that the people within the culture are evangelised and live their faith within the cultural understanding.” (Bate 1995:19)

6.3-Emerging “Samaritan” Church splitting from:

The “Igreja Siao Uniao Apostolica Crista de Mocambique” (ISUACM):

As was recorded in its constitution (Estatutos / ISUACM / Preambulo, Po Box 40, Maputo), Mozambican miners on the Rand (South Africa), who were contracted through the Wenela recruiting agency, brought their affiliation to Mozambique.

In 1922, a Mozambican named Simone Cumbe, born in the Inhambane district of Homoine, converted to Christianity in South Africa. He attended the Zion Apostolic Jerusalem Church. Another convert named Johanesse Mavalangane Miambo, born in the province of Gaza in the district of Manjacaze, was attending a Church named the “Apostolic Jerusalem in Sabath”. This man, a Chopi, returned from the mines, lived in Matola in Maputo and started to preach the Gospel with success. He went to his hometown in Manjacaze in Gaza where he converted many of his relatives and friends.

Many leaders and Christians in that church died in prison, because the Portuguese did not want that Church to survive in Mozambique. Another Chopi man who had returned from the mines, Xavier Tualufo Boca, met the Portuguese authorities asking for permission for the Church to work in Mozambique. This man was known as a prophet. He led revival type meetings, claimed possession by the Holy Spirit and also claimed to be a second Moses (Moreira 1936:62). Finally Boca was able to unite the above mentioned Churches and called the new Church the Igreja Siao Uniao Apostolica Crista de Mocambique, which means the Apostolic Union Christian Zion Church of Mozambique (ISUACM). Many Chopis adhered to this church, in which they exercise healing. He remained a strong figure of authority and exercised leadership to make Chopi Christian people depend only upon him. The Chopis were arguing for a new style of leadership: a “congregational leadership”, based on the participation of the community of faith in the reign of God (Smith 2001:20).

However, many senior leaders of other Churches would never listen to any external advice or counsel from those who are not considered as “people”, yet who can contribute with their knowledge. Hence the Chopis themselves unlearned to trust their experience and their own knowledge.

The name “Samaritan” was taken – according to one of the founder members – from the Book of Acts chapter 8:1-40. In this Chapter the Chopis found an explanation of their “persecutions”, referring to Saul (Paul) who was persecuting the church, (Chopis) and who was responsible for the death of St. Stephen. But they also evoke Philip as the one to whom the people were listening, when he was preaching the gospel.

In this new Congregation now they can hear the Gospel from “Philip” (who may be a Chopi) who proclaims the good news, healing the people and casting out demons, something they lacked previously.

The Chopis have rejected the Gospel they received from their former Church and the Samaritan Church is growing. It has about 500 members in Maputo city and it is spreading to Chopi-land. They now evangelise their own people. The Leader of that church is a “Bishop” who runs his own business, while the secretary of the Church is a worker at the Sanitation offices in Xipamanine. Presently the members of this Church are engaging themselves in improving its administration. This activity is very crucial for a church that had never been part of formal church structures and administration. This will constitute part of its growth, not only in terms of organization as such, but also within the spiritual dimension: “Administrative or organizational matters are not non spiritual as such. They are indeed a very natural, and essential dimension of church life” (Smith 2001:18)

Now the Chopis face the great challenge of enculturation. The liturgy that is in use within the Samaritan Church still reflects the patterns of their formal previous congregation. Now they face the greater challenge of incorporating their own songs and Symbols so that the “Gospel of Philip” will become relevant to their situation. They now strive to exhibit a “congregation’s active character” (Venter 1998:7). They are now actively involved in developing their own ways of worshipping and working, learning new forms of management of their work and even developing their labour skills, striving to fight poverty. They continue striving for a new identity, combating the status quo.

6.4 The Samaritan Church: a case study of contextualization.

The case of the Samaritan Church has to do with a particular social group within a congregation. They did not experience recognition as they really are and were forced to create a new space to live in order to exert their preferences with their own authority, having to decide “whether they need to construct a new social reality.” (Balcomb 1993:140).

It seems that the evangelization of the Chopis was colonialist and oppressive since their current culture was ignored or rejected. The message did not take root in the Chopis' hearts since they were seen as outsiders. "If the message of the gospel is genuinely heard in the local culture, that message must find a place among the most fundamental messages of that culture, with concomitant change in code, signs, and the entire sign systems" (Shreiter 1995:157). Bevans stresses the importance of the contextualization of theology, saying: "contextualization is part of the very nature of theology itself" (Bevans 1988:1).

Ngada, speaking on behalf of the African Independent Churches, makes the following comment: "the reasons why our Churches broke away from the main-line Churches were political as well as spiritual, because in the main line Churches black people were discriminated against and oppressed solely because of the colour of their skin" (2001:50). The former Chopi congregation, though it was not a "western" congregation, had the same attitude as in the "western" model congregation towards Africans in the era of colonialism. The exclusion negatively marks the nature of the church as a whole since the "church is viewed as the people of God and by implication, then as pilgrim church" (Bosch 1991:373).

6.5-Healing through enculturation:

I am aware of the difference between "enculturation" and "inculturation" both of which seem to me valid for the Chopis but I incline towards "enculturation". It stresses that there must be a dialogue between the Chopi culture and the Gospel. It is not merely a question of the gospel coming "in" to the former.

The community has been injured over many years. It now presents itself as suffocated and tired of injustice and exclusion. Hence its culture calls for restoration and safeguarding. It is a long process of healing, like that of the South African reality of exclusion and aversion. Healing in this context means to let them manifest their "ego" (culture); be proud of themselves.

“The role model of enculturation role can be understood in terms of the healing of culture which the local Church is called to evangelise ‘to the roots’. Consequently the process of enculturation actually becomes a process of healing or rather the healing ministry should become the major manifestation of the enculturation process” (Bate 1995:19). Bosch also refers to “inculturation,” which according to him “is, however, not only a local event. It also has a regional or macro contextual and macro cultural manifestation”. (1991:453). So the Chopi approach may bypass local boundaries and even become a model of the contextual message for other people around the world, according to Bosch’s perception. For instance, speaking about Chopis, one may refer to people of Samaria and not only to those from Zavala (Chopiland).

After this background I will firstly provide a reflection based in the story of Jesus in Samaria, because of the name “Samaritan Church”. This chapter presents the story of that church and how this came to exist.

Secondly there will be an exposition of the theme of Jesus as crucified in the midst of Chopis and for Chopis. It is an application of Jesus’ passion in the context of the Chopis.

Thirdly there will be an interpretation of the Bible (Acts 8:4-25) when the gospel was preached in Samaria. And last but not least, the theology of mission to Chopis will be discussed, since a theology of domination controlled the Chopi people. Their identity was and still is excluded from the plan of salvation in the light of the gospel. Not only has the Catholic Church a debt to pay to the Chopis but also the Protestants or evangelicals as a whole. Nevertheless, during the colonial period Chopis who accepted the gospel were very prominent and active members of the Church.

The most dedicated members of the protestant and Catholic Churches, were Chopis. This was a result of the work done by different Missions to the area: “Besides the Catholic Church, working in the area of the Chopis, were the Anglican Missionaries, with their head quarters in Maciene in Gaza Province, and the protestant Missions such as the Methodists, and their Mission was placed in Juleteni in the locality of Guilundo in the district of Zavala in the province of Inhambane” (Munguambe 2000:44).

In this regard I should like to mention some members of different denominations of Protestant Churches, as well as Catholic churches both in Maputo and from Chopiland, including Zavala. Chopis give their best in spirituality and worship. The best example of this dedication resides in the fact that we even have bishops from both the Catholic and Protestant Churches who are originally from Zavala. Among Chopis from Zavala we may find prominent and very respected figures of religion like the former Archbishop of the Catholic Church D. Alexandre, a member of the State Council (I only refer to the prominent figures whom I have met directly), and the Right Reverend Bishop D. Dinis Sengulane, the leader of the Anglican Lebombo Diocese, actually the Chairperson of the Christian Council of Mozambique. These are the most visible personalities who are Chops and the most respected in the country. This shows the fact that Chopis have overall retained a certain sense of great dignity. So their exclusion from “the table of the Lord” was not correct, because Christians are to shape a new order as Christ offers: “In the Nazareth Manifesto as in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaims the shape of the new order breaking into the world in his person.”(Campbell 2002:50).

Jesus continues to be a living example to reverse the situation of exclusion and marginalization. His teachings and deeds can be seen constructively as a way of doing things that can liberate us from the dominant powers of marginalization. Jesus fought strongly against all forms of injustice and social exclusion, all forces of destruction that could prevent people from liberation and from being in God’s presence and communion: “Jesus’ last supper was not an isolated event. Rather it was the culmination of the radical ‘table ministry’ He enacted throughout his life. Within the context of Jesus’ story it is not surprising that Jesus’ final meal with his Disciples provides the context for his strong challenge to the dominant systems or that a meal serves as the image for the radical reversal of power he embodied throughout his ministry” (Campbell 2002:51).

We must remember that traditions have to do with identity. Who people are is well expressed by tradition. So the theology that Chopis are willing to practice must contain this component of linking their tradition, their rituals and their symbols within their context to the Gospel. It is however, crucial that most definitions of contextual theology include the importance of tradition:

- “1-God seeks to understand socio-cultural contexts
- 2-God seeks to bring a minimum number of changes in socio-cultural contexts
- 3-God seeks to communicate directly with people of a specific culture through Christians
- 4-God interacts with culture through Christians
- 5-God seeks to transform and liberate both individual souls and socio-cultural structures” (Speckman & Kaufman 2001:99 & 105).

Again, for Bosch, inculturation is very important since it is one of the patterns in which “the pluriform character of contemporary Christianity manifests itself” (Bosch 1991:447).

I assume that context and “inculturation” should be placed together. “... context includes the experiences of a person’s or group’s personal life” (Bevans 2003:5).

A number of the Chopis’ life experiences of discrimination are still fresh in their minds. Sometimes to talk about their stories of life may harm their minds and souls instead of encouraging them to move their lives forward. But those stories and experiences can also be told in a way that creates a new way of reading the same stories, and that could be more constructive if our engagement is for the purposes of transformation.

Many of the stories and experiences Chopis have to tell are direct or are indirectly connected to their past of colonization and exploitation, but at the same time such stories can be used for the rereading or reconstruction of them as having a deep meaning for the justice of God and reconstructing the way relationships between people must be built in a just and pure way. For example Mr George Buque, the oldest Chopi worker brought to the city as a slave, told the researcher proudly that “over a long period people have recognized our position and how they did need our work”. And, of course everything was done in the spirit of mutual respect.

He remembered when a citizen of Maputo invited him for lunch, and at the end of the section he kindly invited him to remove some blood and the like which resulted from a childbirth which had occurred at home. Similarly if an animal dies at home and

decomposes, people know that the Chopis are the unique people to remove it. In some way, the Chopis were happy to be recognized by the community. Hence the same story of humiliation can be reconstructed in a positive manner. Instead of seeing a Chopi as a remover of excrement one can see him as a “nurse”. The most important issue is to let the Chopis speak on their own behalf, and interpret their own stories and experiences. In reconstructing social views, these experiences can be completed by other people’s experience in such a way that “my story is your story”.

In this regard, “In the social construction view, the experience of self exists in the ongoing interchange with others...the self continually creates itself through narratives that includes other people who are reciprocally woven into their narratives” (Combs 1996:17).

The Church has been fearful in approaching the stories and experiences of Chopis. Only very little has been done, if anything, to “listen” to their cry through their theology. But the Chopis have also done very little or nothing in order to alter the social position they were placed in, even against their will.

With all kinds of rituals the Chopis are now equipped with very rich liturgical material to express their religiosity and spirituality, to re-affirm their personhood, through deconstructing the way theology is done to the Chopis of the city: “There is a vital need to deconstruct how we do our theology of the city and to face some painful truths about our complicity in the state of our urban communities” (Davey 2003:98).

In contrast, the Samaritan helped an unknown person who was injured (Luke 10:25-37). There is a reversing of the situation: a Samaritan appears in the frontline in the Salvation plan of God. The notion of the Good Samaritan is an expression of the Chopis regarding themselves as compassionate people, obedient to God in the same way.

Furthermore, the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-30) could symbolize the attitude of the Chopis in their stagnation. She did resist the invitation Jesus issued to her. She could not believe it. After Jesus had shown her what she did not expect she assumed the responsibility of spreading the gospel on her own to her compatriots (John 4:30). When the Chopi members of the Samaritan Church started to preach to their own people, they

tried to expand the gospel to Chopi land. This accorded importance to the Chopis as a group of people who also deserve salvation. All wrong beliefs including that of their exclusion from the kingdom were removed, and all kinds of doubt found their explanation. A new direction was established in the Chopis. They think anew, and reject all patterns of the past of slavery.

In altering their attitudes the Chopis should see themselves as responsible for others, not to lower themselves further. They must respect as well as be respected. Symbols of dignity and ritual can help them and neighbouring communities to overcome differences so as to eliminate the gap that was created by the dominating power. But not only external forces are in charge. There is also a question of focussing on the internal forces that have bound the Chopis. In building a new Samaria Chopis are in the position of reconstructing their story as a real history. They are to work and walk to a new identity, a new heaven and a new earth, a new social sphere, where they can exert their freedom in mind and spirit. They will discover their weak points that have led to stagnation across three generations. In the gospel of Samaria Chopis find room, and sense the truth, understanding the Crucifixion of Jesus in their context. Within the Samaritan context, as in the Chopis' context, Jesus "crosses barriers". For example, Jesus, a Jewish man, is sitting with the Samaritan woman: "a metaphor for the church in struggling urban places" (De Beer 2003:10).

6.5.1 Jesus among Samaritans ("Chopis of Samaria"): A Bible reflection.

'The resurrected lord announces that, after Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria will be the recipient of the gospel. (Acts 1:8). The Samaritan mission suggests a fundamental break with Jewish attitudes" (Bosch 2004:91).

The scenario in which the Chopis live is that they are perceived as illiterate by the Tsonga and Ronga people. They are seen as not deserving to receive the gospel of Christ. They are viewed as cursed. Christ breaks that barrier and brings the good news to the Chopi, taking Samaria to the centre of salvation.

For them, Samaria is of great importance because it was understood in the context of their exclusion. Since the Kingdom of David had been divided partly because of the attitude of Solomon, Jews and Samaritans had become separated, similarly to the Wall of Berlin. The presence of Jesus in Samaria opened a new era, a new space for the relationship between Jews and Samaritans. Through Jesus a dialogue was established. For ordinary Jews the woman was not supposed to receive the Gospel of salvation. In the same way it was considered an abomination to worship in the Chopi language for some congregations.

With the coming of Jesus to Samaria, the doors of the “holy” city are open for the Samaritans to receive the Gospel (John 4:29-30). They can now drink from the pure waters of their own wells. This story in Samaria tells the Chopis how possible their transformation is, through Jesus Christ. With the Chopis, “We can stand tall as an Urban Church: We can celebrate, because Jesus is sitting at our wells and we have to tell our stories, and let others come and drink with us” (De Beer 2002:12).

In theological reflection the stories of Chopis can help to break down the walls of discrimination, separation, exclusion. Chopis have rich stories to share even with those who despise them and brought them to the margin of society. All need to learn from the Chopi experience, in order to establish a constructive dialogue that is powerful enough to shift the situation of Chopis to a relatively better one.

Being the minority, Chopis may potentially even reconstruct our theology. They could create a particular context that can enrich our way of thinking in theological terms: their experience is precious. The Chopi context is a different one and needs to be analysed separately. If we privilege the context in which the Chopi story takes place then we would have walked halfway to establishing the theological meaning of the story in their context. The same stories will not convey the same meaning if dealt with in a different context to the Chopis’. So, contextualization is crucial. Its importance is well defined in Bevans: “The contextualization of theology - the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context - is really a theological imperative.” (Bevans 2003:5)

6.5.2-Jesus crucified as a Chopi:

“People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus”(Matthew 27:39, Good News Bible). I relate this to the daily insults of Chopis while they are carrying their “cross” (the menial work) yet stay patient. They need to see how Jesus played the role of scapegoat. The crucifixion occurred in very harsh circumstances. Jesus had to play the role of a social and a historical victim of injustice. He was crucified unjustly yet accepted all consequences, even the political ones. The system was unjust, but it was his decision to bring people out of their situation of stagnation.

I have referred to Maunde (interviewed by the author on the 15th March 2005), defending Chopis as the followers of Jesus in a previous chapter, resisting injustice for instance. In all this Chopis must assume there is a resurrection afterwards. But it is important for them to bear in mind that: “resurrection can only be spoken of after Crucifixion” (King 1995: 76). If the Chopis accept such a crucifixion with Christ they will be raised with him (2 Corinthians 4:14).

6.5.3 Exodus’s perspective (Exodus 3.8):

“The Exodus is the long march towards the promised land in which Israel can establish a society free from misery and alienation. Throughout the whole process, the religious event is not seen apart. It is placed in the context of entire narrative, or more precisely, it is its deepest meaning.”(Gutierrez 2004:89) Similarly the story of the Chopis is all about the story of migration to a “promised better life” (the city). This was also a political action, as Gutierrez would refer to the liberation of Israel by God from the “land of slavery”: “The liberation of Israel is a political action: it is the breaking away from the situation of despoliation and misery and the beginning of the construction of a just and comradely society. It is the suppression of disorder and the creation of a new order.” (Gutierrez 2004:88)

Migration was a long and painful process, to the promised-land: “the city”. The journey from Egypt was intended to find a place or a land of comfort, a place of joy, and prosperity; economic and social justice. Egypt for the Chopis is their homeland, where

Portuguese colonialism was enslaving them in their own land. Then they moved to Maputo city, and encountered a worse situation. So they still need a “land” though they had aimed to reach a stable position in society; to be sustainable themselves and to sustain their families, able to create income, using the terms of Dr. De Beer, “to achieve long term sustainable efficiency and development (De Beer 2002:62).

In fact the Chopis fought against the Tsonga people (against the King of Gaza, Ngungunhana). Since he was colonizing the Chopis he may be regarded as akin to Pharaoh. On the other hand the Portuguese Governor could also represent for Chopis the king of Egypt. Before this oppressive power they also expressed their reality in poems, and written songs, as a way of fighting for their exodus. King Nghungunyana and the governors are now symbolised by the Shangaans and Rongas as they humiliate the Chopis in the city. Hence, a huge circle of oppression, of colonisation as well as exploitation is evident.

The following song which the Chopis sang, expresses their dream for freedom:

“Malala, ung’ angule,
Wogula ngu maso utchiwonetela.
Utchiwona to ‘biha, utchiwona totsura,
Wogula ngu maso utchiwonetela”.
(Munguambe 2000:78)

Meaning:

“Be quiet, lift up your eyes and see.
If you see something bad,
If you see something good,
Lift up your eyes and see.”

In their stories they would refer to the Portuguese in a mock polite way, but expressing their feelings honestly in words they knew would not be understood. These narratives were used to express their sense of deep grievance against their enemies in a very poetic

manner. This may point to the fact that the Chopis do not manifest interest in talking about themselves. It means there are many aspects that the Chopis may hide.

In order to discover those aspects, which are crucial, the researcher requires a deep sensitivity of analysis. Dealing with the Chopis' history is not easy. Their stories carry wounds and reflect negatively on their situation, and to some extent they manifest forms of pessimism concerning social transformation. The researcher therefore needs to create a space for constructive dialogue. For example: During all the interviews I conducted the Chopis could not express themselves openly in the first session. Only in the second or third session could one hear the Chopis telling a final version: what was behind the story.

The Bible must be interpreted in the perspective of liberating all the aspects of the life of the Chopis, but its 'more healthy' interpretation will help the Chopi community to discover their own liberation paradigm. The Bible is very rich in terms of feeding poor communities with strength to fight for their own liberation. But we need to place our interpretation in the right place, and especially when we refer to the grassroots Chopis, it is necessary that an appropriate context be found: "The bible is very important in the life and growth of grassroots communities. But its importance must be put in the right place. It is something like the motor of an automobile"(Snyder 1992:42).

For example: The People of Israel in Egypt needed liberation, according to Isaiah's perspective (Isaiah 43:1). God has called His / Her people by name because in all troubles people are aware of God's love for them. This text may represent the Chopis' feelings and experiences since they travelled to the city with much expectation of enjoying the riches and beauties of the city. The Bible frequently speaks about that city 'Jerusalem', especially the Prophet Isaiah:

6.5.4 Isaiah's perspective (31.5; 40.9)

"Isaiah is a book about Jerusalem. It begins and ends with Jerusalem and consistently talks about it... And because Jerusalem is God's City, God has a dream for it" (Reid and Moris 1993:10).

The people of Israel were experiencing anxiety and were also desperate regarding the situation they were facing in the strange land of Pharaoh. The way they were perceived by other people must have been negative. They could not affirm categorically that they were at home. Instead, they were thirsting for their home. The Chopis' perspective is similar. They are not in their own environment. Somehow, they feel isolated and abandoned by their own friends and by the community as a whole; and hence abandoned by the Church of Christ and by the Government?

Hence they need to hear a message of God, one of hope and consolation and above all of liberation. In the case of the people of Israel, the Prophet Isaiah was ready to address his message to the people of God, in that horrible situation: "In other words, Isaiah is asking God; "what on earth can I say to people who are so desperate and depressed and who feel that their situation is hopeless? (Reid and Morris 1993:45).

This is the situation we encountered when first we visited the Chopis in their work environment at the cemetery. They could not believe in our Bible. There was a great need to develop an exercise in order to find a space within their hearts. Like the people of God, Chopis feel very poor in the urban environment. In other words, Israel's story of liberation must be translated or reflect the Chopis' liberation. As a point of reference, the way of thinking is common in both stories. Their situation results from sin. I refer to original sin but also to the sin of people: individual sin, social, religious, economic and political. Our ultimate goal in this matter is to convince all the Chopis, as Isaiah did the Israelites, to understand, in the midst of their sorrows that: "God's response is recorded in verse 8-yes, the people are in desperate situation, but God's word of promises still stands" (Reid and Morris 1993:45).

Interpreting the Chopis' situation in the light of the Biblical view of liberation is a very hard theological task. It requires from the researcher a great sense of penetration into the Chopi reality as well as a deep analysis of their life encounter as Chopis live with a "burden", not of work but of the social atmosphere they work within everyday. The bible study group that was founded in the light of their context needs to be very flexible and sensitive. The New Testament has proved to be the main tool in addressing the issues of Chopis concerning their salvation and their participation in the Kingdom of God.

As Jesus has considered the Gentiles, inviting them to the Kingdom of God, Chopis are also invited to take part in his table.

6.5.5 Luke's perspective towards hospitality (Luke 14.15-24):

Russell maintains that: "Hospitality is open to diversity because it aids formation of community by moving the focus from centre to margin" (Russell 1993:175). Mission of Chopis may be understood as through an invitation to a meal: Luke 14:15-24. One of the key Bible passages we have been using to approach the Chopis is concerned with this invitation to participate in a special meal. In the passage Jesus was straightforward in his approach, according more importance on those who seemed not to have been invited to be a part of the kingdom of God: Those who stood aside; the marginal, like the Chopis.

This way of introduction has called for a greater interest within Chopis themselves. Since they are those excluded from that meal (socially), they feel lost without a space in the society where they can be accommodated and comforted. The Biblical passage could awaken an interest in the Chopis spiritually as well as in challenging them to a new call to participate in the kingdom of God. Those who were officially invited to take part in the meal presented their excuses, causing sadness on the part of the one who had invited all of them to take part.

The Chopis celebrate their life in the midst of hardship: The passage in Luke urges them to understand that they are fulfilling a mission; a mission to which many were invited but did not respond.

As we mentioned earlier, the Chopis were to some extent motivated or compelled to enter the city, at least to find work. It was also mentioned that they have helped in propagate the faith about the city and the need to move to town. This action of invitation is still present today: they continue to mobilise (invite) their fellows to join them in the city. In the beginning was a mere Portuguese plan to force the Chopis into a new environment. On the other hand they had no choice. But despite this entire compulsory element, they appeared to have been the only people to accept this "invitation". The

Portuguese may have invited other people from other tribes to enter the city, but none of the people in the south were ready to answer the calling (invitation) immediately.

Many of those invited to take part in the banquet presented their excuses. But in the Chopi case we find fewer excuses and more motivation and voluntarism. For the present context of the story Luke is telling, this may offer a meaningful interpretation.

The “invitation” by the Portuguese was on one hand a betrayal of the Chopis but on the other a challenge, placing them into a new search for life, especially as regards the case of their identity. It was indeed a separate, isolated table – not the feast of the Lord. In the story of Luke, what interests one the most is the invitees’ capacity to answer the calling that was addressed to them, compared to the arrogant attitude of those who could not participate in the celebration. They are now invited to become a church or a community that is free from all kinds of dominance.

6.5.6 The meaning of salvation for desperate Chopis:

The Chopis have considered themselves as saved people since colonial times. For them, obeying the Portuguese was a fulfilment of their obedience to God. Many Chopis have often referred to themselves as “the people of salvation / the chosen people”. This attitude has fed their mentality with attitudes of stagnation and total pacifism. They do not have the courage to complain simply because they are obeying the “divine”, whether they mean God or the ancestral spirits. This was the pacifism that was evoked by Portuguese in order to exercise control over the Chopis, either through political authorities or the Church “catechism”. The major problem I identified in Chopis’ attitude regarding salvation is that they do not struggle for the ‘salvation’ which is their liberation from all kinds of oppression. They are supposed to formulate their own salvation through God’s plan, like the people of Israel. Klaus Nurnberger offers some suggestions on salvation that can be reflected within people’s experiences, like the latter people:

The Israelites are enslaved (in Egypt) by the Egyptians. Salvation takes the form of the Exodus. In the desert they are starving. Salvation takes the form of manna

and quail. They are roaming nomads. Salvation takes the form of a successful conquest of Canaan. Their neighbours oppressed them. Salvation takes the form of charismatic military leader, later a king. King Saul was persecuting David. Yahweh gives Him Saul's throne. During the exile salvation is perceived to be the return to Jerusalem. During the time of great empires salvation takes the form of the apocalyptic promise. All of history will culminate in the Kingdom of God which will bring all imperial oppression to an end (Nurnberger 1990:207).

Hence, salvation for the Chopis should refer to all their integral life because, "salvation embraces all persons as a whole; the liberating action of Jesus Christ - made human in the history marginal to real human life - is at the heart of the historical current of humanity; the struggle for a just society is in its own right very much a part of salvation history" (Gutierrez 1971:97).

Since the Chopis have been living in a situation of oppression, exclusion and a general stigmatisation, now the time has come when they need to reaffirm their real position in the plan of God's justice and salvation. There are many manifestations of an African spirituality in the Chopis. Their culture embodies its spiritualities, manifesting at same time, sorrows, praises and critics, playing a critical and punishing role (Tracey 1946:iii). Chopis need to shift their spirituality from their negative position to a better one in which their identity as people and community, is clearly affirmed, through celebrating spiritually within their tradition: "In traditional dances, processions, or other ceremonies the people re-enact the story of their origins, and of the other great events in their history. The community becomes much stronger, and united through celebration" (Doll 2003:196)

Conclusion:

"The oppressed should be convinced about this truth: Liberation starts from within your conscience and in the restoration of your own identity, done through a consequent practice. Trust you will never be alone" (Boff 2004:23) (direct translation from Portuguese).

The Chopis possess all the spiritual “instruments” necessary to escape from their negative situation, all the components needed to rebuild their own image, to recreate their own attitude and to build up what has been stolen from their reality. Through theology and mission they can reach out to what they deserve. Finally, they can combat the negative attitudes towards them. They will have space and their perspective can be reflected in the scriptures and in the form of mission. They will find their salvation in their real context. I will use Nolan’s words to summarize what salvation for them is supposed to look like: “Again salvation in the prophets is not primarily and immediately eternal salvation or heaven. They foresee a future time of blessing prosperity, peace and happiness and justice in the concrete terms of return from exile or deliverance (liberation) from war, from domination, from captivity.” (Nolan1982:18).

CHAPTER 7

MISSION IN RELATION TO TRANSFORMATION

7.1 Introduction

A few of us Mozambicans had once thought of the work with the Chopis as part of a mission in a deep sense of the word, even God's mission. All we thought about was the distressing and humble work to which a certain group of people were predestined. For some of us, their destiny was even considered as God's punishment. So instead of associating ourselves with that "noble mission of God", we hated the Chopis and disqualified them. In this chapter I would rather challenge those old concepts and consider work with the Chopis as a mission in its fullest sense, as a "vehicle" for the transformation of the Chopis. I will refer to mission in its diverse dimensions.

I would like to start by defining mission according to Nurnberger who views "mission as the broken but defiant involvement in God's redemptive action" (1990:216).

Nurberger speaks of involvement in God's action, "which therefore, is and remains a humble but stubborn active anticipation of the eschatological salvation" (1990:216). I believe that redemption is directly related to the transformation of human beings as well as the entire world, through our involvement in the "*Missio Dei*".

Mission is crucial to the whole process of the transformation of this community of people. Mission must be considered in all its dimensions, in order to provide tools for the transformation of the Chopi community. In contrast to previous missionary activities, the Chopis must participate freely in the mission process.³⁷ It is necessary to once again journey to Maputo and re-read their mission in the city. In this case, mission can also be understood as the whole lengthy process through which the Chopi people have travelled and continue to journey. They carry out the work that is a mission to others, including their enemies and all those who despise them. Through their work they can transform people.

³⁷ I view mission as the whole process which the Chopis had endured, in serving in town, in the midst of hardship and humiliation. Bellagamba's analysis regards mission as liberation in which Christians live in a situation of total or serious oppression and injustice (Bellagamba 1992:53).

In this chapter, I will re-examine how the Chopis perceived their mission in the past. I will also discuss mission in relation to liturgy and how this can form a bridge between culture and their self-realization of the Chopis. I present the case of a Presbyterian Church in Chiziane. Chiziani is a Chopi rural village, situated some 300 km from Maputo in the province of Inhambane in the district of Zandamela, which introduced a Chopi Liturgy after many years of using the Shangana language.

7.2 Biblical base of mission

In the New Testament, mission was quite often regarded as an approach to the Gentiles. Bellagamba places great emphasis on the relationship between Jew and the Gentile, mainly as recorded in the book of Acts. He calls attention to the fact that with reference to the Bible, “each situation must be looked at and judged in the light of the situation in which they presently live as described in the bible, how God judged it, and how the people acted on it, under the guidance of Yahweh (1992:59).

The “Gentiles” in my approach can be understood as the Chopis, who for many years have been marginalised by society, including the church. It is important to place the Chopis within the specific context, their journey from their homeland to the city, because “mission consists in incarnating Christ in the given time and place, allowing him to be reborn in the given life way” (Luzbetak 1991:133). Thus, mission refers to all people, everywhere in every circumstance. In Matthew 28:18-20 we read that, “Full authority has been given to me, both in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations”. “In all nations” includes the Chopi people, not only as people of a nation to be converted but also to convert the nations.

7.3 A great Chopi mission in the city

The Chopi mission can be compared to what Okure called “local Mission”, a “shifting from being mere objects of mission to being both agents and subjects of mission” (2000:80). As previously mentioned the Chopis were objects of a mission in terms of earlier missionaries who evangelised them, but in Okure’s perspective, the Chopis also become co-missionaries. According to her mission is “a natural consequence of believing in Christ and sharing life in his body, the Church” (Okure 2000:14).

The Chopis have always believed they have a mission to people, although from the very beginning, they considered themselves expatriates. They could view their mission from two different perspectives, either positively or negatively. Since they were brought to the city under conditions of slavery, they could have felt inferior to other tribes. But by viewing the reality, the Chopis accepted the work as a means of subsistence and even considered their coming to the city as a “blessing” in terms of prospering and having money to build their houses.

The question of exploitation was not relevant. At first, the Chopis viewed their mission in town as utilising their capacity to demonstrate the power of work. But for other groups, the Chopis were merely expatriate people who came to the city only to serve other people. Because the Chopis were viewed as mere expatriates, they could bring nothing positive to the people of the city. Their being expatriates can be likened to being “in Egypt” (Maputo), yet this did not cause them to withdraw from being carriers or bearers of their own experience and culture, which is acceptable in God’s purposes. We also need to discuss the Chopis as expatriates, as a Church where “the expatriate can also be the bearer of the lived experience of other Communities, experience that challenges and enriches a local community” (Schreiter 2001:19).

The local church has dismissed the Chopis’ experience in order to enrich itself. The richness of Chopi culture could have enriched the work of the local churches near the Chopi communities in the past yet the “walls of prejudice” and exclusion is yet to be demolished. Such walls cannot be immediately demolished since these benefit the dominant groups.

The same Church has excluded the Chopis as a part of God’s children. On their hand, Chopis have viewed themselves from the perspective of consuming what they were given by other people and other cultures. Chopis viewed their cultural elements as not forming part of the church rituals. They also neglected engaging in their customs in a constructive manner in order to develop the local churches’ worship. Despite their potential for worship Chopis have accepted being poor and dependent, even theologically. In this case De Gruchy’s statement holds true when he states that: “Many

poor people come to accept this image of them, needy people whose well being depends upon being a client of service providers” (De Gruchy 2003: 20, 39). Thus, the Chopis left Zavala to become local people’s clients. It could be worthy for Chopis to become service’s providers.

The Chopis have soon understood that they not only came to be servants but to fulfil their mission to teach the natives to work without complaint. Besides their identity, they brought their experience and courage to feed the city, although the city did not acknowledge them as they had expected. Despite the absence of a human embracing of the Chopis, they did not surrender. They still assume their position at work. The Chopis became a symbol of resistance against all kind of discrimination and hate. The way they assumed their duty in the city took the form of communicating their nature, abnegation and dedication to the local natives who by any means would never work for “any compensation”.

The mission of the Chopis still continues as in the past. Chopis have become the ambassadors of unpleasant work, such as removing dead animals. Is this not a mission? It is clearly known that the Chopis will carry out any activity, which would normally constitute an offence to any other. This situation demonstrates the extent of the meaning of humility and above all “a work of obedience”. What we need to look for here, I believe, is the character of being ready to serve in any circumstance.

The mission of the Chopis in the city was also a means of preserving their urban identity. The Chopis did not abandon their identity despite the fact that they were not visible among other tribes, yet they found it difficult to manifest this identity in public, which caused a problem in their mission. In their mission, they must carry an identity. The Chopis sought to maintain their name. It took courage to demonstrate to the people of other tribes (mainly from the South) how they represent integrity. Their rituals were constantly present and their traditional habits were always evident in whatever they did. In their mission the Chopis were always conscious of the fact that they represent a different group of people with a purpose to live; a group with experience to share with others. Above all, the Chopis assumed they have a special mission to build and maintain peace with their “enemies” (the local people). Their desire for a peaceful coexistence with other tribes is one, among many, aspects of their life in the city. All these processes

were always followed by conflict (emotional, spiritual and even physical). In the process of building peace through the intervention of the Church, in order to develop a peaceful coexistence we need to recognize that change cannot occur without “contradictions”. The mission practised by the Chopis should play the role of liberating the people from the “fear” of touching dirty stuff, and living with all kinds of rubbish. Their courage and determination must show people how their spirit of servanthood can be constructively employed for the benefit of their brothers and sisters from the city. Doing so freely, with joy and courage, would assist people to reflect on the manner in which they treat the Chopis, including the Municipal authorities, so that they should begin to help the Chopis to emerge from marginalization to liberation.

Consequently, the researcher identifies with the following concept of mission:

“Mission is helping people who are unjustly treated, persecuted, oppressed by internal and external forces to liberate themselves, to experience the liberation, the salvation, and redemption brought to all by Christ.

Since nobody can truly experience salvation and redemption unless they are totally free from enslaving forces, mission is the means to help people achieve this liberation and redemption which, is given by God in Christ.”(Bellagamba 1992:49)

In order to assist the Chopis to overcome such a negative situation, it is necessary to ‘conscientize’ the Chopis with regard to the whole process, in order to make them aware of the social, political and cultural aspects that have contributed to the negative situation of discrimination. It would be helpful to refer to the texts of Freire regarding the pedagogy of the oppressed in order to stress that freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift (1993:29). It is a matter of conscientizing not only them, but also the entire society, merely to understand that the Chopis form part of the city family with acceptance because they carry out important work for the community, albeit humble. They need to be integrated within the city community as if they were in their homeland.

To conclude, training courses such as computer skills and arts to Chopis, especially the young ones, and the improvement of Chopi conditions are urgent for their insertion into

the city community in order to do their job not as an obligation or charity, but as a normal activity or profession like others in the city.

7.4 Mission as “mutuality” (mutual complement)

The inspiration for this subheading occurred to me when Bosch referred to mission as “the Church with others” and as the “bread of Christ” (1991:369). Here I see mutuality in terms of doing “with” rather than “for”. I suppose this could bring a new expression of being Chopi in society.

When I refer to mutuality in mission, I also mean this in terms of “involvement in God’s action” and “the ultimate aim of comprehensive well being in the fellowship of God.”¹ (Nurnberger 1990:216). When citizens disassociate themselves from the work of the Chopis, cooperation with people who are not Chopis ceases and they no longer participate in the resolution of problems regarding sanitation in the city, resulting in a gap between them and the Chopis, that is, no mutual action. I stress the importance of a mutuality in mission, because, mission cannot be carried out in isolation, since, as Nurnberger suggests, “...It derives its specific tasks from the specific needs of the people whom it serves” (1990:216). We all have different tasks and different needs, and therefore need one another in the mission process. In this mission, the Chopis are crucial to the process of transformation, not to transform themselves, but also to transform us as society. They are not mere spectators, but moreover active agents of transformation, complemented by the rest of society. “And so Mission is perceived as mutuality of sharing, of learning, of helping, of prodding” (Balagamba 1992:59).

So when we cooperate with the Chopis, we simultaneously cooperate with God in his mission of saving us all. I say this because I believe the Chopis care for the environment and that God is in control of it. This concerns our involvement in the Chopis’ mission. The activity is no longer relegated to the Chopis or regarded as only a Chopi activity, but there should be reciprocity or mutuality.

¹ Again I refer to Nurnberger, who speaks about God acting redemptively through our actions. So I assume God acts through other people who can complement our action.

7.5 Mission as reconciliation and liberation for the Chopis

The Cross also represents the reconciliation between estranged individuals and groups, between oppressors and the oppressed. Reconciliation does not, of course, mean a mere sentimental harmonizing of conflicting groups (Bosch 2004:514).

We need to reconcile society, the church and the Chopis. The promotion of ethic and moral values in the light of our theology as a liberatory process is crucial. Certain values that characterise our society are very noble, such as the spirit of brotherhood that is among one of the key characteristics of a “modus vivendi” of our society. In order to fulfil these most important values, our characteristics, it will be of crucial importance to work for the improvement of neighbourhood relationships between society and the Chopi gravediggers. This is what must be envisaged at the very present moment. The building of humanity relations is one of the key areas in the transformation of the Chopis.

At this point I would like to add or suggest reconciliation in different categories. Portuguese colonial society was based on categories, which means stratification of people's group. Chopis belonged to the lowest category. One of those categories were the “assimilated”, those natives considered as Portuguese citizens. Those “assimilated” are the people who perceive themselves to be in a higher position, in other words the “upper class”, in which I would include the Church. The Church must reconcile with the Chopis by drawing closer to them “through action” and adopting a new approach to Chopis. This attitude, should be different from the inherited spirit of a Christian's superiority when relating to other cultures, such as that of the Chopis. In my view this problem occurs because, as Bosch sees it, “During the past few centuries, Christians did not, on the whole, have any doubt concerning the superiority of their own faith over all others” (1991:291). Why the need for reconciliation? For many decades, the Chopis were considered “strangers”, even within certain Christian denominations, both catholic and protestant. We may compare the following remark:

“Such as Jesus of Nazareth, who in his historical existence experienced rejection on many occasions was accepted only by a few, was despised and misunderstood,

had several serious cases falsely brought against him through every jealousy, ignorance and malice he was done away with” (Schreiter 1991:175).

I believe the kind of relationship between the Chopis and their Christian brothers and sisters was more mechanical, with an absence of solidarity. Here I refer to a verticality of relationships, with built-in concepts of superiority and inferiority; hence the separation and social exclusion. So Chopis were “inferior people”; “sinners”, without God, while others viewed themselves as being “above” with God. I would like to refer to Nurnberger’s thinking when he refutes the idea of God being above. He says: “Again God is not ‘above’ in the sense of being the big boss up there who legitimates the smaller bosses down below. On the contrary, He deliberately moves down into solidarity with the downtrodden. He does not enjoy their misery but He leads them out of their misery” (1990:218), and Nurnberger quotes from 2 Corinthians 8:9. For Nurnberger, “God horizontalises vertical relationships!” (1990:218).

In conclusion, I argue that it is necessary to establish a horizontal relationship with the Chopis so that reconciliation as well as transformation will occur. But it is also necessary to keep in mind that mutual action is important and that the Chopis should also strive to overcome “mental slavery”, a sense they developed over many years. I here understand the Chopis as “the oppressed, having internalised the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom” (Freire:1993:29).

For this reconciliation to come to fruition we cannot ignore the need for conversion or repentance for the Chopis not having played their role. For many decades they have passively accepted their “inferiority and dependence”.

I will end by using Nurnberger’s conclusion: “Where we are truly reconciled with God, the source of reality, we will be reconciled with the whole of reality, including our neighbours” (1990:218).

7.5.1 Mission as literacy and education

Paulo Freire, in discussing education for critical consciousness, suggests that: “we want a literacy program which would be an introduction to the democratisation of culture, a program with men as its subjects rather than as patient recipients, a program which itself would be an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts, one which characterize search and invention” (1973:43).

Adult education programmes or simply literacy programmes were the main focus in Mozambique before and after independence. Some missionaries had produced a systematic booklet used for Mozambican adults to teach them English spelling. This small book was published in different versions. It was well known as “*Xipele*” in Tsonga. So the “*xipele*” or spelling was responsible for teaching people to read and interpret the Bible, as well as critique various aspects of life. The spelling was related to a familiar situation which facilitated communication. The southern native people were educated in this manner, although this education was considered informal and engendered progress in people’s lives. I concur with Dele Braimoh, speaking about informal education and communication, when she says, “To educate is to transmit something to a person with the assumption that what is transmitted is worthwhile.” (Braimoh 1993:55)

During the colonial period, spelling in informal education was taught via the local languages, such as Tsonga and Zulu (many Mozambican in the south speak Zulu). This type of literacy was not taught by utilising modern forms of communication or modern technology (which we could not afford for the Chopis), but developed in the people an autonomy and a capacity to think.

Braimoh also mentions the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire who criticizes the use of modern communication technology, particularly for educational purposes, viewing it “as tools for domination and domestication of the masses”. She also refers to Freire who proposes transforming “banking education” into “pedagogy of the oppressed” (1993:54). Thus the Chopis need to be brought to this pedagogy, continuing with use of “*xipele*” (meaning spelling).

The main aspect to be retained is that of finding within literacy programmes lessons that can provide further skills for the Chopi people. I do believe that many young and old Chopis, especially those working in graveyards, had dreams of other work, not necessarily that of becoming gravediggers. But because of the lack of literacy their dreams were dissipated.

I consider literacy as part of the whole process of helping and equipping the Chopis to become agents of change. Chopis are not like empty pots that need to learn and be taught everything. They possess their own knowledge. What I believe is that the Chopis need to systematise their knowledge in a very structured and methodological manner that can be advanced for their own benefit to develop their skills. These skills can also, be transmitted to other groups by the Chopi people who are already literate. For example, they are gifted in music, but not all of them can read music. By being educated in a certain area in the arts and so forth, they can transform their own community as professional musicians, without needing anyone from outside their community.

Literacy is crucial for the progress of the Chopis. It is important to provide training to the Chopi gravediggers and street sweepers in order to improve their standards of living and to confront all situations in daily life that require knowledge. Literacy will be crucial in enlightening the Chopis to fight their situation of marginalisation.

In fact, they are skilled and intelligent people; what is still lacking is opportunity. By creating opportunities, the Chopis may develop another vision with which they can confront their current situation. In their work they need to be trained in further skills and abilities and be capacitated to face today's dilemmas such as the challenges of globalisation.

Among other objectives, it may be stressed that being connected with people from different spheres of society will help them broaden their vision and become more helpful to the community and their families, holding a sense of purpose. This is the commitment that could persuade changes on Chopis. "The commitment reflected the experience of the oppressed themselves who are starting to become the agents of their own destiny" (Gutierrez 1971:xxix).

7.5.2 Mission as evangelisation

Bosch argues that: “Basic to my considerations is the conviction that mission and evangelism are not synonyms but are, nevertheless, indissolubly linked together and inextricably interwoven in theology and praxis. I perceive mission to be wider than evangelism”(1991:411). I agree with Bosch that mission and evangelisation are complementary; by engaging in mission we evangelise.

Evangelisation may become a key activity with respect to the transformation of Chopis. Evangelisation would transform Chopi’s ideas and attitudes as well as our own minds and souls. Conversation between society and the Chopi grave diggers, if would be conducted in a form by which the Church would reflect God here on earth, proclaiming the good news of Christ in a practical way, that would push for transformation among Chopis.

“Evangelisation means proclaiming, by word and action, that Christ has set us free, but evangelisation is always an ecclesial task. The Church must be a sign of the kingdom within human history” (Gutierrez 1971:xii).

Through evangelisation, a new social order is to be established by all those who are committed to the bringing of God’s kingdom on earth. The situation of the gravediggers will then change; their living standards will also not be measured according to their social class or stratification but they will be placing themselves in a normal and accepted position in society. Their status will no longer be determined by the kind of activity to which they are linked but will be defined by their position in society as human beings, and then they will be liberated from their social situation, and from the kind of attitudes that do not enable them to progress. They will break from dependency in determining their place in society and will be placed in the position that God set us all to be.

Others may talk about social sin to justify the neglect of the Chopis. Those who reject gravediggers and those who accept them are all invited to take action together in order to correct the “sins” of the past. Some Chopis are blamed for smoking and drinking too

much, even during the hours of work. When they are asked the reason why they abuse alcohol, they refer to that as an attempt to escape from their troubles caused by isolation and stigma. This responsibility is also shared with society, which excludes them. The Church has also done very little, if anything, to approach the problems of the Chopis. The gap between the Chopis and the Church is still large. But our great concern for the Chopis is the development of their community, instead of stagnation. For the Church to succeed in this long process, it is important to involve other powers, such as those in political, economic, social, and religious spheres. All these powers together can transform the Chopis and bring development to the community.

With regards to acceptance, we encountered very difficult issues. What strikes us the most is the climate of a divorce persisting between society and the gravediggers. During funerals not much warm contact is evident between the Chopis (gravediggers, sweepers), society and the church.

The challenge for the transformation of the Chopis is to accept even those who do not accept them and for society to accept the “unacceptable” (Chopis), because according to Nurnberger “acceptance of the unacceptable anticipates the transformation of reality as a whole, (of) which we form a part” (Nurnberger 1990:216). This will be realised through evangelisation and the involvement of all.

7.5.3 Mission as Chopis’ humility

I refer to humility because I consider the Chopis’ work to be humble. Although we may see this as a negative aspect that also humbles the Chopis, it is important also to consider this aspect of their work as being important to mission. It is also necessary to refer to their humility through which they have made a significant contribution to the city.

I would present the Chopis as missionaries in their work, equipped with humility, in the same way that “the Church’s mission has its origin in what God did in Jesus Christ, which will be fully realized at the parousia” (Saayman & Kritzing 1996:82).

I do not refer to this humility as part of their nature but as a prerequisite, which is important for the success of mission in general. Luzbetak speaks of the “humble sense of a personal mission”. I take this aspect into consideration because the Chopis have also accepted their “inferior position” and sometimes do not consider their extraordinary abilities. Like other people in the Bible, the Chopis have been so sceptical in putting their image or personhood first. Instead, the Chopis have considered other people as “superior” to them. Luzbetak refers a humble sense of a personal mission, mentioning certain biblical figures. “Like Moses, Gideon demonstrates, my family is the meanest in Manasseh. And I am the insignificant in my father’s house” (Luzbetak 1991:6).

Some of the Chopi workers justify this humility by stating that they are always following Christ, with total obedience. Although these words cannot reflect the reality of the humility of the Chopis, I would sustain their words as Luzbetak (1991:7) refers to Christ: “His belief in mission, his obedience, and his trust, however were absolute. No situation, not even death, could weaken his confidence in the father and in the ultimate success of his mission”.

Conclusion

- Literacy and adult education form part of a practical mission, carried out objectively in order to transform and liberate. Freire’s methodology could equip people to assume their destiny and face the problems of the present time.
- Mission goes hand in hand with evangelisation. In their mission, the Chopis are evangelising.
- Mission has also do with humility, with which the church and Christians respond to the act of salvation fulfilled by Christ.

I would add that mission displays various manifestations. It can take various directions and it depends on how we care for this mission and its ultimate goal. Mission can take different shapes according to what we envisage through our mission. But in all that, the attitude of the Chopis plays a vital role in the significance and success of their mission. They should create their own patterns in their mission, carrying it with responsibility, passion, commitment and above all humility in a Christ-like manner.

CHAPTER 8

PLANNING TOWARDS RENEWAL

8.1- Focussing on transforming liturgy, community project organizing and empowerment.

Brief Introduction:

During my research I was offering some assistance to the Chopis' activity, mainly at the cemetery and with the street sweepers. When I reached this chapter I was well known by the Chopis, even by name. For instance, when I arrived at the cemetery so as to lead or to attend some funeral service, the gravediggers would come along and greet me, surprising many other people because it is not normal to shake a gravedigger's hand. Something has already shifted for the better (transformation). This thesis has reached its end, having created some changes. So in all this, looking for future actions ahead I would rather give priority to the liturgy as the tool that was identified as the main approach for transformation.

Hence this planning is a result of my direct involvement with the Chopi community, which consists of different strategies and programmes along with my research project. In these I discuss with the Chopis the real meaning of the terms we use in liturgy and worship songs. In this process we search for the real meaning of words within the Chopi context, making the worship more accessible to them. This is done through participation in a translation of the liturgy that was begun during 1994 in Chiziane_(a small Chopi village in the Presbyterian Chopi congregation).

In this Chapter I also refer to a range of activities carried out by different groups like the Christian Council with my own involvement towards organizing and inspiring the creation of community projects related to empowering Chopis, especially women. I also refer to the role of the Church in that process of transformation. I furthermore strengthen the importance of revaluing their indigenous characteristics, within the same transformational approach.

8.2 Liturgy

8.2.1 Advantages of having a Chopi liturgy

As Okure remarks, “Liturgy becomes the true home of the bible and mission” (Okure 2000:114). I will demonstrate in detail how liturgy can contribute to community renewal and transformation.

In the Chopi context, liturgy could play a vital role in the transformation of their community life, because their existence is culturally and spirituality strong. All their rituals and cultural expressions should be reflected in the liturgies used by the churches which accommodate them. If a liturgy is led in a strange language, there is the major risk of communal worship becoming meaningless for Chopis. Translating liturgies into the Chopi idiom may bring new life into their community, in the sense that they start to meet God in their own language. The missionary liturgy in which the gospel was revealed to them did not produce a sufficient spirit of self-liberation.

Hence, for the Chopi community to become Christians who are truly evangelised an appropriation of liturgy is needed, in other words an Africanization of their liturgy and their Chopi Church. For Kritzinger, “It is clear that the Africanization of the liturgy is an important dimension of reevangelising the Black Church, since the development of a spirituality of struggle is essential for the success of the liberation project as a whole.”(Kritzinger 1990:46). Although Kritzinger refers to the struggle of the black Church in South Africa, the same struggle can be applied to the Chopi Church, which is struggling to liberate itself from the domination not only of “whites” but also of “blacks”.

So the emerging Samaritan Church is attempting to use the Chopi language in sermon and liturgy, which offers a good example of renewing faith in liturgy. It is an advantage for them. And for myself it was a great advantage to have learned the Chopi language.

8.2.2-Case study: from the Chiziane community.

Chiziane is a place in the district of Zandamela; it is situated about 300 km from Maputo, on the border between Inhambane and Gaza provinces. In Chiziane there is a congregation of Presbyterian Chopis. That was the branch of the Congregation I was placed in after concluding my seminary studies from February 1993 to 1995.

The congregation, more than three decades after its establishment, was still using the Tsonga language, for interpreting their worship and other religious services including sermons and sacraments. I met some of the Elders and we discussed the question of reintroducing a liturgy in the Chopi language. In the beginning these Elders who were Chopis could not swallow the idea, which seemed strange because they had never thought their language could be used for worship (for holiness). There was in fact a strong resistance. But quite a few had to risk that adventure. When they concluded that their symbolism and idiomatic aspects of their language could be included in worship, they began feeling more positive.

Now they could understand some spiritual terms in their own language. The majority of the words they had pronounced in Tsonga for many years had never gained significance or a meaning that was rooted in their perceptions. This meant for the Chopis a spiritual revolution: more than a revolution, it was a re-discovery of an identity and a renewal of their faith. It also meant the ending of self-denial in terms of culture and identity. The day the liturgy in Chopi was launched (18 October 1993) was immediately declared by the community as the day of the Chopis Liturgy in the Chopi Presbyterian Church of Chiziane.

Some negative aspects are connected to the total lack of any use of their social, cultural and religious symbols for the worship. The reason is clear, the rest of Mozambican society have for a long time linked Chopi symbols and customs to evil and to the devil, as the Catholic Priest did in the beginning of evangelisation. In our planning for action one of the key issues is to reverse the rejection of Chopi symbolism and start to create a liturgy over their cultural elements.

We have attempted to translate a Shangaan Liturgy into Chopi. The experience was rich. Some terms in Chopi are very deep and cannot be compared to the Shangaan meaning of a word or phrase, as used in the liturgy. Using the Shangaan liturgy meant that Chopis became mere receivers of other people's spiritual language. The Chopi word for "prayer" (Ku Paxa) means an act directed to God, and "a dedication to God" through an act of offerings. It means what believers in traditional religion do: kneeling opposite a tree, clapping one's hands with great respect. The Chopis never experienced that full meaning of the word while worshipping in the other tribe's language. So in the liturgy there is the embodiment of some very important cultural and spiritual elements that shape and mould the life of people. All their joys and fears find expression in the liturgy.

8.2.3 Self-consolation act through personal liturgy

Since much of the time of a Chopi is occupied in art (singing or creating something), it is easy to introduce Christian elements to that art-performance. Chopis are very spiritual people. In the midst of hardship they can sing. Invariably they find words of self-consolation. This is how they have overcome all kind of insults and dispraise. In all this they carry a very strong sense of liturgy. Liturgy is patent in all the moments of their personal life. All the time the Chopis may be able to transform their problems into hope. As Cochrain and De Gruchy (1991:81) maintain:

"Each of the faithful is called upon to continue a personal "liturgy" on the secret altar of his or her heart, to realize a living proclamation of the Good News, for the sake of the whole world" (Cochrain & De Gruchy 1991:81).

The Chopis' entire life and activity constitute authentic liturgical elements that convey a strong message to other people. On the back of a lorry, while collecting waste, people hating and mocking them, their determination and patience to carry on a duty that many people would refuse to do are evident. In their songs while working, they assume their position in society and at the same time they reaffirm their courage to execute such a humiliating task before others. In planning we shall be reinforcing these positive attitudes of Chopis in order to overcome stigma, we shall be strengthening the message of servanthood that the Chopis are communicating. In planning, energy will be directed

to inspiring other people to work for transformation and not for humiliation. In planning through the liturgy we are going to promote integration and transformation.

In planning we invest in the Chopis' poetry and singing, and dancing, as it is full of symbolism, in which their hopes, sorrows and joys are fully expressed. A liberating and a transformational liturgy will be devised, one that equips them with more of the resources they need to alter their actual scenario. Among the earlier scholars who studied the Chopis we find Hugh Tracey (Tracey 1946) who was much interested in their music and poetry. Following Tracey, the author of the present thesis thinks of selecting some Chopi people to compose church music professionally or moreover to form a professional church choir, singing more songs in Chopi using traditional Chopi instruments. This planning would bring more recognition to the Chopis and perhaps create a change of attitude towards them. Also taking advantage of the Chopis being a joyful people, they will be invited to perform in Church rituals quite often, in collaboration with different Churches. As regards such planning, contact has been started with a Chopi Association, of Zavala natives, led by a Chopi Catholic Priest. The Association is abbreviated: AMIZAVA (Associacao dos amigos de Zavala in Portuguese).

8.2.4 Inclusion through liturgy: Christ as a Chopi street sweeper and a gravedigger.

Theologically Chopis appear as those who are excluded from "the table of the Lord", a tribe that was for "ever and ever" ignored (as the tribe of faeces). This includes the Church's attitude in general towards a gravedigger.

Our perspective in this approach was to create a space for dialogue amongst tribes and different "classes" of servants in the city, without considering the nature of the work they do engage with. Hence the main preoccupation was to engage in a process of social change, which requires involvement in and commitment to our human and social condition, but also to bring all tribes independently from their actions as agents of society.

In the Chopi liturgy, they will mirror themselves and make liturgy relevant, as they will include themselves in God's daily actions of love. They will see Christ taking part in a

servant mission sweeping and cleaning the streets, or even perceive Christ as a gravedigger.

Working with Chopi gravediggers, through liturgy, we devised some strategies, firstly researching their conditions of work, and secondly their social and psychological situation. The ultimate reason we prioritize is to combat the general attitude of social exclusion through the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth. As Bosch remarks: “There can be no doubt, that Jesus of Nazareth broke with the entire Jewish tradition when he chose his disciples not from among the priestly class, but from fisher folk, tax-collectors, and the like” (Bosch 2004: 467).

I intend to break away from our modes of selecting people to be in our fellowship and communion. The project I, and others, are implementing with the Chopis includes this component. This message also is being sent to the Church, especially the Mozambique Church in general. A spiritual colonization is still a fact, as is the self-deprecation of the Chopis. Hence, in their poverty and exclusion and marginalization it is necessary to become involved in solidarity with Chopis in order to share some “spiritual resources” as well as knowledge: “There is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing of knowledge of the kingdom which is God’s promises to the poor of the earth” (Bosch 2004:408).

8.2.5 -Transformation through liturgy

Liturgy is very crucial in planning towards transformation: “The Liturgy is not to escape from life, but a continued transformation, of life according to the prototype Jesus Christ, through the power of the spirit. The liturgy has to be continued in personal everyday situation”. (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Peterson 1991:81).

We have seen Chopis singing at the back of the garbage truck, expressing their joys and sorrows, but none of us have understood how expressive their “liturgy” is. In the liturgy, all Chopis find a very living story of their passion and relation to the passion of Jesus Christ. Their passion is a daily passion. They carry out their activities in a very hard situation without gloves and masks, with no conditions of service, but in that situation

they still stand firm and demonstrate a strong sense of commitment to their labour. Some Chopis have expressed the need to abandon these posts but they have tried to resist. Applying liturgical elements to the Chopis' daily life, we may discover the riches that are present in the liturgy that can strengthen their life and encourage them to fight for better conditions.

8.3 Revaluating the Chopis' indigenous culture: Using old Chopi songs and poems to incarnate the message

The word "indigenous" conveys a sense of originality, culturally pure. The Chopis are amongst the few groups of tribes who have preserved their culture. They sing their songs with original spirituality. When their culture starts to play a very big role in the gospel, they will start to be engaged in a constructive dialogue, which will lead them to a process of discovering much of their symbolism in the gospel. This will take them from their isolated world and as a result their culture (language and symbolism) shall be reintegrated into a socio-cultural and religious dialogue. Their symbols will empower them in order to have authority, as other languages do in the theological arena.

Then time has come for the Chopis to approach other cultures and people in order to enrich their own culture and establish a dialogue. This is part of planning for the future. Their culture seems strange if it is approached on its own, but could be completed by other cultures if it approaches them: "When it was asked if culture helped or not, we responded that it did, but that it was important to be in solidarity with other groups and people engaged in the same struggle, based not so much in a given culture or words, but in what lies behind the words in a given culture" (Torres 1980:4).

In this case, the Chopis' culture was ignored and even rejected by other people and tribes, while they were hiding their own identity, not expressing their spirituality and culture liturgically or socially. So the situation became very complicated in the past. But because of the process of revolution the country has gone through, many tribes have started to integrate themselves in the process of interacting; for example, intermarriages are happening quite often. But we need to recognise that there is still a long way to go. The Chopis need to rise and affirm their real identity. Through their speaking "which is

not neutral or passive” (Friedman & Combs 1996:29), they need to embody Christ’s message of hope and above all of dignity.

Also in terms of planning we transform those ironic songs they sung to welcome Portuguese Governors and apply these to Christ and the gospel. One example of those songs is that when they received the Portuguese Governor Major Texeira in 1963, according to Rocha:

“We Chopis are happy for the visit of Governor
We affirm that we are truly Portuguese”(Rocha1963:4).

This song could be converted to words like:

“We Chopis are happy for the coming of Christ on earth;
We affirm we are truly Chopi Christians!”

In all the Chopis do, their spirituality comes first. So in planning spirituality is to be privileged. Despite the fact that Chopis won public recognition by the Portugueses, it was empty and abusive, as they were not socially or economically, promoted by Portuguese authority. They were never considered as equal to other native’s cultures, like Rongas and Tsongas. Their cultural values were not used to promote Chopi’s social; always they were used for entertainment and seen as mere folkloric demonstrators. As Torres says: “The dominant culture has made the indigenous cultures into folklore” (Torres1980:43).

Other “liturgies” had suffocated the Chopi liturgy. Now in planning, there is a great need for indigenization, and enculturation, in order to change the situation, in order to transform the “Chopi folklore story” into real stories.

This new Chopi liturgy should contain symbols that identify Chopi work with Jesus’ work. This is supposed to reflect a Jesus who is a gravedigger or a refuse worker like the Chopis, all in the spirit of service: A Jesus who is a real Chopi. In planning, it is worth bearing in mind the “incarnation” of the message within the Chopis’ culture and life.

When speaking of enculturation, inculturation and indigenazation, again we deal with “contextual” as we do theology in African forms. Schreiter writes on African Theology:

“There are two main types of African theology today. The first of this is that of inculturation, namely, the one in which an effort is made to incarnate the Gospel message in the African cultures on the theological level”. (Schreiter1991:3). I am aware of other models Schreiter mentioned, like the adaptation model and the translation model (1991:7/9), but I concentrate on enculturation, since I consider it the most appropriate.

8.4 Christian Council of Mozambique’s actions(CCM)

Here I present and share some practical actions, since I head the ecumenical desk in the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM). The situation cannot change by means of words. It requires some deeds or concrete answers. Churches and individuals, through the Department of Ecumenical Services of Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), regularly hold sessions of recognition and encouragement for the Chopis. This is one of the results of our intervention. Lunch, has been provided by the government to congratulate those sanitation workers. A brief summary of our intervention was submitted to Christian and other organizations in civil society, for example the Ministry for Social Affairs and Women.

While working in the Christian Council Of Mozambique (CCM), I took the opportunity to develop a concrete action towards the process of transformation that we are dealing with among the Chopi community. Two major groups were targeted in this plan. We started to plan visitation to a local area where Chopis are operating every day as gravediggers and street sweepers. We started a long process of creating solid relationships with Chopis not as objects but subjects of transformation; relationships that endure, and create a space of openness and discussion. Since I began this study, the Chopis have progressively started to be more open and eager to see what will come about. For example, the idea now being put into action has to do with the creation of an association of gravediggers, the advantage being the fact that their voice will be heard and will make an impact.

What are we doing with Gravediggers? Who are they? What are the dilemmas they face everyday in their routine? These and other questions are very crucial to what we intend to do. We are dealing with the group of gravediggers previously mentioned, in terms of a project whose aim is psychosocial and human renewal for gravediggers. It is a religious but also a social project.

Our intervention will be made concrete through projects, engaging all Churches interested in collaborating in this mission. I concur with Swart's strong emphasis on the Church's projects: "In my view, no other aspect of the Church development debate of the last four decades or so has dealt more pertinently with the essential problem of the Church's participation in development projects" (Swart 2003:405).

The Chopis' poverty cannot be eliminated through words; it requires Church commitment with concrete action. They are still excluded from the social environment, so they need to be included; this requires action. Since they are in permanent contact with the dead, they are automatically associated with the dead; people avoid and abandon them. These Chopis are connected to the "unholy" (according to some traditional beliefs).

The absence of a social space for the Chopis makes them yet more poor and desperate. Our plan in order to overcome this problem of exclusion was to organize a range of meetings in order to bring society and gravediggers closer, so that they can talk, even though the situation does not offer an immediate solution. The problem is old as urbanization itself. We can not forget that Chopis have been carrying the burden of exclusion over generations, and they still affirm this is the Mission they have in the city for the city.

8.5-Transformation through project organizing

The cemetery of Lhanguene is situated in Maputo and was founded by Swiss Missionaries back in 1945. Initially it was only for Presbyterian Christians, but later became a public cemetery, which it still is.

Up to 2002 there were about 21 219 838 graves. About 30 funerals were held daily at that time. From January 2001 to January 2002 10 226 funerals were held. Because of the increasing number of funerals some bodies are removed before they have been buried for five years. In the “mass grave” where Chopis are working, they face serious problems while burying unclaimed bodies. They have no marks; they are in touch with badly decomposed bodies with a heavy odour.

The Chopis catch some strange diseases, despite their resistance against illness. This is the reason I have introduced a campaign of advocating for Chopis, because there is a risk in having more generations of young Chopis involved in such work.

The mass grave is at the back of the cemetery, some 50 meters from people’s residences (without a wall). About 100 to 120 bodies are deposited in the mass grave every week. Those bodies are collected from hospitals and others removed from the “unclaimed-bodies” department.. In a grave of 5m² and 5m deep the bodies are deposited by phases where hundreds of bodies can be placed. In the last phase the bodies appear very near the surface of the grave and some body parts can be seen and even eaten by dogs. Near the common valley there is a very bad stench. My ministry extends to those working in the section of the “Common Valley”: I went to observe how they deposit the bodies.

In May 2007, I followed the mortuary truck: I stopped and asked the young driver: “How many bodies do you bring in your truck?” “40 unclaimed bodies”, he answered, adding “this work is really hard”.

These young Chopis working in this section are exposed to all nature of diseases and psychological damage. Yet worse are the associations given to them by society. Because of the rejection of society those young Chopis are seen as “Ghosts”. The result is that some of them lose themselves to alcohol.

Linking Chapters 7 to 8, the liturgy will become part of planning for Chopi cemetery workers simply because of the great importance it plays in renewing the Chopis there. The liturgy should mention all the troubles and difficulties they are undergoing, but also refer to the Chopis and “resurrection”. So, while thinking on those troubles, the liturgy

will point to a different future. For instance in the liturgy some of the activities they do will be mentioned as part of their journey with God. The insults, they receive every day will be mentioned alongside the narratives about Jesus's humiliation by the sinners. So liturgy will transform their defeats into victory and their sadness into joy.

This notion has inspired Chopi workers to come up with certain ideas for organizing projects within the cemetery environment. For instance some have suggested not merely to continue giving them shovels, but to form a football team instead, in partnership with the cell phone company "MCel" as well as with the Coca-Cola Company.

In the Church they could exhibit their art works so as to increase the church's income and propagate their knowledge, perhaps giving to it a theological value.

One lady suggested a Coca-Cola sponsorship in order to sell Coke within the cemetery to visitors. Both suggestions are founded on the same intention to eliminate stigma. Yet others have suggested the provision of art instruments for making baskets and other objects to be sold. This shows that the Chopis are shifting slowly from their old mental slavery to a new, more dynamic and global society.

8.5.1 Transformation through community empowerment and development

"Community development is one method of planned change within the broader developmental framework. Development must include state policies and planning, the interaction between major economic and social role players within a society, and so forth" (Van Schalkwyk1996: 49). The issues that concern the Chopis' social development also comprise a mission strategy to liberate these people. One cannot empower or develop them unless they use the power with which God has provided them, that has been manifested in different gifts, in culture and religion:

"People must rely on the gifts they have received from God, in their own experience. They must nurture hope, based on the God of the Bible who has shown might with His / Her arm and has confused the proud in their inmost thoughts; has deposed the mighty from their thrones, and has raised the lonely to

high places, has given good things to the hungry and has sent the rich away empty (Luke 1:51-53)” (Bellagamba 1992:58).

How can the Chopi community be empowered through God’s spirit so that they will witness to God’s presence among communities in the midst of dependency, vulnerability and poverty?

I would propose specific projects like sculpture (making different faces of Jesus, for instance as a Chopi woman or man), baskets, sweepers and musical instruments for worshipping.

"The Church can guide people in developing skills and creative ability. Classes in the art, in crafts, and in hobbies are helpful for this purpose" (Pinson 1973:92). They might organize monthly festivals of Chopi gospel music, or competitions.

It is of great importance to demystify the Chopis’ image of poverty. This conceals the power they carry within them. To combat this poverty, I will first apply Chopi art (music and dances) to strengthen their personhood as African People but also as Mozambicans who deserve dignity in particular. This art will dignify them through deep religious responses: we should use art in our churches in order to fulfil the principal religious function of art: to evoke in us a deep religious response (Spencer 1993:40). So in summary we shall allow renewal and creativity through worship, songs, prayers and liturgy in a sense that should bring about transformation and renewal within Chopi creativity.

8.5.2- Women working at the cemetery: from marginalised and oppressed to empowered:

The Chopi women working at this cemetery have many stories to tell. Will they find space and a moment to speak about them? As Riet wrote:

“When women open their mouths and tell their stories, often these are not heard as truer stories about disturbing situations. On the contrary: the women are labelled as psychologically ‘disturbed’” (Riet 1996:72).

In the specific case of a Chopi woman she is seen and treated as crazy due to her function at the cemetery. As in general and like any other African woman, Chopi women also face serious problems, especially economic ones. Schuler gives an example: “Access to land: In many African Societies, economic rights, especially access to productive resources such as land, are determined by gender. Land ownership is granted to males, with women having only rights of land use via men as daughters or wives”. (Schuler1993:35).

The same occurs in Chopiland where the Chopi women will need to go back home to retire. If their rights are not ensured, such women may continue living in a desperate situation; thus, in the process of empowering the Chopi woman, the provision of basic knowledge to her concerning women’s rights and development of work skills will be crucial.

Some Chopi women came to work at the cemetery searching for “better conditions” of work, like their men, with a great and positive expectancy. But this did not always bring her into a positive situation. The women at the cemetery are always complaining due to their poor conditions of work. As a Chopi woman she does not escape all the terror facing other women in the city. Moreover she also feels abandoned, marginalised and despised. In planning for action, my ministry encourages women to play a more dynamic role. Through Bible study references and debates, I challenge women to become more assertive, as ones who console and guide people in sorrow, who are not mere workers but also mothers of all with their own initiative.

Women appear in the cemetery as mere workers. Her labour is not visible although she is suffering side by side with the men, sometimes carrying her child back, under the sun, without water near at hand, without protection. More than a mere worker, she needs to be empowered and grow towards a position of leadership.

This is a very practical issue, which will need the involvement of all. It also includes gender issues, by which I mean the relationship between man and woman in the Chopi context where they live and work, that is, the way they do interact at work in terms of

sharing their daily life. For some Chopis life has just ended in the hostel, and they cannot look ahead, they only strive to survive. Life in the city has become very hard for them since what they earn is not enough. Some of them have big families and cannot afford to educate their children and feed them all.

So, all Chopis working for the municipal council need to be empowered. This empowerment must be reciprocal in order to produce tremendous spiritual and physical empowerment, which would consist in using a theological tool to be transformed through a correct use of their spirituality. Also, there would be a greater need for social empowerment, which consists in equipping them with a capacity to carry ahead their own life and plans. This suggests the ending of a mental dependency; liberation from all the sorts of enslavement that oppose their emancipation. All this requires education, in order to know how to take initiative and how to run a business on their own. It also implies a vision and imagination, a self-esteem and above all a dose of courage and strength.

8.5.3 Church planning action:

The Church is in the position of playing a vital role in helping Chopis to overcome those troubles, because there are a great number of Chopi people in different congregations especially in the south of the country. These woman and Young Chopis have problems: psychological, social and the like. But more difficult than everything is the marginalization they face. In addition, they have nowhere to express their preoccupations. It is painful in the sense that they are not welcomed by the society they serve with such difficulty. After a funeral service no one will condescend to talk to a gravedigger or to send a greeting.

One of the tasks we are implementing in my approach is to try harder and convince society as a whole about the importance of considering the work of gravediggers as any other profession. In this spirit of transforming the mentality of society, we have held some public meetings and Bible studies, even in the cemetery where they spend most of their time. This situation of social rejection also affects their families and friends. For example if a Christian minister is involved in a gravediggers' ministry, then he is

associated with those workers and he or she probably will face the same rejection among his fellow ministers or be rejected by his community (this is my experience). We have also carried out some public debate around the issue, inviting the media to be present. These activities have started to have an impact on society. Gravediggers can also recognize their importance and value. Here we come to the point when the Cross may signify “Reconciliation” for all of us and we need to “come across” each other as Christians: “In Christianity the cross is the test of everything which deserves to be called Christian” (Moltmann 1991:7).

For so many years Chopis have been putting crosses all over the graves. But if we ask them the real meaning of the cross they may not answer in a significant way, in a way that touches their hearts and expresses their relation to the Cross. Some have tried to specify the meaning of the cross for them as representing the death of Christ, but they may find difficulties in relating this event to their own daily lives. Some Chopis are Christians but some are not practitioners of any kind of religion. But they still face the burden of dealing with bodies every day. For some the cross is their everyday suffering, with very little as a salary, removing bones without gloves daily. The gravediggers were able to give all kind of meanings to the cross, even those who do not profess any religion. But for those who were fairly mature, the cross means for them to be patient: they were able to combine their suffering with the pain of Christ on the Cross. These Chopis would compare their daily activity with the passion of Christ. Carrying the Cross could also signify the heavy activity that no one wants to do.

8.5.4 The intention of action

We intend in the project to provide incentives, creating partnerships with churches and other organizations, even creating diplomas to stimulate their behaviour so as to encourage their positive commitment to the work. In this way we are equipping them with an innovative spirit. Bringing the Church very close, we are opening a possibility for theologians and preachers to apply some of the local theologies from a transformational perspective. This action has already begun as a kind of chaplaincy.

Other actions we have been taking are related to debates and radio messages greeting Chopis, congratulating them and wishing them success in their Mission. While we talk to Chopis we also pay a greater attention to their responses: in this way we share the cross, I mean we “come across each other”. Last but not least: in the churches, and humanitarian organizations, we have started to advocate for Chopi workers in the sense that they must support the work of Chopis, especially in the cemetery as well as on the streets. If the Church teaches people how to deposit waste into public containers, it is contributing to the betterment of the Chopis’ work.

Further actions we have been doing with the Chopis, are related to a lecture led by Rev. Dr. Chamango, the former principal of our united Seminary of Ricatla-Maputo, concerning on how to deal with corpses with respect (that took place at the mortuary in Maputo on 21st May 2005 at 14 P.M.) The lecture was very emotional, and that was a moment to share experiences.

The mobilization of the church is still continuing. The Chopis have been invited for meals in some of our Churches in the city. All this engagement is centred on a changing of attitudes.

Here we are inspired to share all what we have and creating a way of overcoming poverty. In this practice there is no space for egocentrism, tribalism, and caste systems. We all come as Children of God, to sit together and share our lives. The last objective is to eliminate the phenomena of stigmatisation, and build a normal type of relationship among humans. It is also a purpose of this intervention to help the Chopis’ families not to be affected by the same stigma because of the work of their relatives. In theological terms this means to bring about the kingdom of God for us all, including the Chopis: This Kingdom will be translated into terms of prosperity, progress, justice and love, that is, the reconciliation of God’s family, respecting human rights with equal opportunities: “It should be clear that getting the various sectors of society to understand and apply an integrated conception of human rights will create the conditions in which the reconciliation process can take place” (Rutkins, Klemens & Van Schalkwyk 1999:251).

As the cemetery is a place where all people converge, from different contexts and social backgrounds, it needs to be transformed into a place of social harmony, reconciliation and human rights and not a place of exclusion and segregation, and also one where we promote human rights.

Conclusions:

I have tackled aspects worthwhile for transformation. I brought liturgy into a cemetery environment, to be used as an instrument of change for both male and female Chopi cemetery workers. I reflected on community development programmes, projects and the resulting empowerment. I have demonstrated how the Chopis had to carry out their work painfully, since the colonial period, and how they interiorised that within them, while on the other hand society ignored them, leaving them on an inferior level.

After this planning had already begun to be implemented, a new tendency started emerging: an attempt to look at the Chopi work as a common work for the benefit of all. Hence now it becomes an activity not exclusively for the Chopis but for all tribes of society, and no longer a shameful work, but an activity that dignifies all those who are involved in it.

The way society and the church is starting to approach Chopis has constituted a great opportunity to alter the situation of a massive gap between Chopis and society. Hence, first it is very important to approach one another. The Chopis need to see the appreciation of society for their work because that heartens them. Negative relationships between Chopis and society, including the Church, are little by little disappearing and new forms of relationship are emerging through the mission of both the Chopis and society. So, salvation will denote an emergence from all the negative aspects that still enslave Chopi people.

It is encouraging to be able to say that this thesis has borne some visible fruit, by linking academic activity with practical and pastoral work.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUDING REMARKS

9.1 What I have achieved in this dissertation

For me, this study has constituted a journey with a certain group of marginalized Chopis, trying to trace their past, present and future. Many aspects were identified. One of the observations I could make after this long journey in theology and mission is that the history of the Chopis and their current socio political, economic and religious circumstances could have been so different. So many factors have contributed to that negative situation. On the other hand, the Chopis could have used their gifts and strengths to reverse their situation in the city instead of being mere pacifists, even prior to the occurrence of the clearly negative situations of injustice. In this thesis I call the Chopis to wake up and to reconsider their journey in a different manner if they wish to positively transform their situation of life; by this I mean to attain liberation or salvation, if we adopt a theological approach.

9.2 Drawing a conclusion from Castells' words

As regards people who are negatively viewed in society, for instance the Chopis, "their negative placement in society needs to change" (Castells 2000:7). This can be achieved once they realise that their existence demonstrates identification with the crucified Christ, and that this same identification with Christ is the key to their transformation and liberation, as Moltmann explains, "Christian Life is identified as Christian in a double process of identification with the Crucified" (Moltmann 1993:24).

9.3 Social and economic empowerment

Using theology it becomes possible that, the Chopis may find their foundation for development through a social and community engagement in various actions. In such an engagement, the Chopis must not struggle alone; they not only need the whole society with which to engage in order to protect themselves from all manner of injustices, but

also to assist the other inhabitants of the city to improve the environment in which they live. All that must be protected is the human being's dignity and his or her environment:

“Our tradition calls us to protect the life and dignity of the human person and it is increasingly clear that this task cannot be separated from the case of the defence of all creation.” (Heins 2003:35).

9.4 The Church's role:

Linking theology to mission, and exploring their spirituality and gifts that could enrich their worship, should cause the Chopis to become active members of the congregation and not mere spectators. All the activities planned for action must find theological support. The reconciliation process, literacy and education and all actions for transformation should be fulfilled through planning for action and successes, as well as for freedom and liberation from all manner of oppressive forces of evil. Liturgy becomes the strongest tool for transformation.

9.5 Some seeds of transformation:

Hugh Tracey refers to aspects of Chopi music, which he has only found in Java and Bali.(Tracey 1946:iv). Discovering these unique gifts in culture is essential.

The Chopi people possess everything necessary for transformation towards reaffirming their identity. They are equipped with all the tools for progress and are richly gifted. Colonialism committed a major injustice which caused the Chopi people to be mentally enslaved. Now they can free their minds and build a wonderful future for themselves and their children. They can affirm their identity among other people of the world, and present their marvellous art to the world. They can lead the Church well and fit in with God's plan of salvation. With all their spiritual and cultural riches they can become vehicles with which to transport the gospel to other cultures. They can reach high standards in life like any other in the world. So, they should let themselves plan and “go for it”.

Instead of being oriented towards work and the prosperity of others, the Chopi people must now search for God's justice and labour for progress and prosperity for themselves. While previously they were considered "unholy" or "impure people", now the time has arrived for holiness and purity, as God's children, and this is the journey along which we need to travel together towards the transformation and liberation; their identity and future is in their own hands. I close with the words of a Catholic Priest known as Padre Fonseca, a Chopi man originally from Zavala, now heading the Association of Friends from Zavala (AMIZAVA): "No group of people or a tribe was made (more) inferior than others; that group of Chopi people is just a small group of disgraced people"(interviewed by Macamo, 25th/26th August 2006 at Munhuana Parish in Maputo). The author of this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate the Chopis' equality with others and bring to the fore their rich values.

GLOSSARY

Calanga An administrative area in Manhiça district Maputo.

Chopi: A tribe of people in the southern part of Mozambique.

Inharrime: Inharrime means "the farmer": A Chopi circumscription found in 1907

Kampfumo Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), the place of rulers, and also known as "Xilunguine" –the place of the Whites.

Lhanguene: The main Cemetery in Maputo.

Lourenço Marques In the past the town was known as "Delagoa Bay" (so named by the English). D. Joao III declared that the Bay should be called Lourenço Marques, after a Portuguese pilot of the navy of Vasco da Gama.

Manjacaze: The village of Manjacaze was the Headquarters of the "concelho dos Muchopes"; Manjacaze means the "power of blood".

Maputo: The Council of the district of Lourenço Marques with headquarters at Belavista: Also the name of a river flowing into Lourenço Marques Bay.

Mocarrangas: Former name of the Chopis.

Padroado-Sice 15th Century: various Popes constituted the Portuguese authority to convert and civilize people overseas.

Tongas (Tsongas): "People from East", the inhabitants near Lake Shangane, hence the designation Shangaan: A portion of the Chopis speaks the Tsonga Language.

Xipamanine: A popular suburb or black township in Maputo, well known because of the Chopi influence.

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Interviews:

-Marcos Macamo interviewed, **Mr Afonso Maunde**(a Chopi worker), on 15th of March 2005 in Xipamanine-Maputo at 10 AM.

-Marcos Macamo interviewed **Mr. Mocumbi**-a Chopi pastor, on October the 9th 2007 at CCM office.

-Marcos Macamo interviewed the Catholic Father **Padre Fonseca**-a Chopi Catholic Priest at Munhuana Catholic Parish on the 26th of August 2006.

-Mrs Isabel from the Direccao de Salubridade e Cemeterios-Maputo, Provided to Marcos Macamo the Interviews She gathered from Chopi workers (**Mr Carlos Job and Mr Maguaiela**) at the Cemetery of Lhangene in Maputo. Isabel's contact number is (258) 82 47 22 920

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