



University of Venda

The influence of missionary work on *Vhuhosi*
(Institution of African royal governance and administration)
by

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DECLARATION

I, Mashudu Edward Muthivhi, hereby declare that the proposal for the Master's degree hereby submitted by me, at the University of Venda, has not been submitted previously for examination for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all reference materials contained herein have been duly acknowledged.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

to my sons

Elijah Orifha Mashudu Muthivhi

and

Ezra Oluga Mutshidzi Muthivhi

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Foremost, I am profoundly grateful to the Almighty for His grace and guidance that sustained me throughout the time of research and completion of the study. I am sincerely appreciative to the University of Venda's Research and Publications Committee for their patronage towards my study.

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ABSTRACT

The institution of African traditional royal leadership herein after referred to as *Vhuhosi*, may at times be seen to be falling short in fulfilling its function. Arguably, symptoms such as the misunderstanding of the role and powers of traditional royal leaders, the never-ending land disputes, as well as issues of political transition in South Africa, can be traced back to the introduction of missionary activism. Amid a myriad of challenges, the proposed study seeks to investigate the influence of missionary work on the institution of *Vhuhosi*. The study's focus will specifically be on the efficiency, or lack thereof, of the institution to perform its functions following the historical interface with missionary activism. The study will employ a mixture of research methodologies, amongst them the literary study of archive materials, the empirical investigation of the current state of the institution, and the appraisal of the prevalence of mission activities in the modern-day era all of which fall under the qualitative research design. It is envisaged that the results of the study will benefit current traditional royal and religious leaders, government officials in understanding the historical explanation of current trends and tendencies. Most importantly, the study will equip those involved in improving the situation and changing the course of history. Furthermore, the study will benefit scholarship by providing relevant and constructive research material that could inform and/or shape the calibre of leadership in these institutions.

KEY WORDS: African leadership, colonialism, missionary activism, Vhavenda worldview, *Vhuhosi*.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This research begins with a brief background, as well as the geographical context with which the study is been conducted. It proceeds to give an exposition into the notions of colonialism, Christian missionary activism and *Vhuhosi*, that is the institution of African royal governance and administration. The statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and the way the study unfolds are explained. Perhaps most importantly, it amongst others, appraised archived and current studies that have a bearing on the understanding of missionary activism and *Vhuhosi*.

The colonisation of Africa is one of the direct results of the notorious European exploration, resulting from the race by European countries to secure colonies, which gave rise to what became known as the ‘scramble for Africa’ (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016). The scramble resulted in the formation of boundaries and territories, subject to political authorities, distinct from the colonised countries. These also came to be known as ‘settler colonies’, or ‘administrative dependencies’ (Nanjira 2010: 196).

Arguably, European activism within the African continent was not without a motive. History has shown that the settlers and traders had not come merely to find and establish new homes, but to exploit resources of the colonies for the gains of the colonising countries (Gilroy, Gries,

& Naudé, 2004). Moreover, the European colonial administrators had social, as well as political aspirations. By implication, power or authority was therefore their point of interest. Hence, the administrators sought to govern and preserve conquered territories with the aim to not only protect citizens, but also to achieve the political goals of subjugating *Vhuhosi* to British authority and to advance Western hegemony and values (Appolis, 1996).

Missionary activism and its efforts may, by no means, be separated from its connections with colonial administrators. Accordingly, colonialism opened the way for missionary activism, hence, missionary stations became convenient contact points between administrators of the colonised countries and their handlers. During the seventeenth century, the Moravians who were Pietists, an influential religious reform movement within *Lutheranism* from Germany, embarked on missionary activism; and George Schmidt, a protestant, who came to the Cape on the 9th of July 1737, became the first missionary in South Africa (Gruchy & Gruchy, 2005). The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) is credited for being the first to send missionaries to minister to people in Venda (Ndou, 1993). On the 13th May 1863, Alexander Mckidd, the first missionary to be sent to Venda, proceeded to the Zoutpansberg to preach the Gospel (Matsaung, 2005). However, due to benefits such as money, medical support and as well as educational contributions that missionaries stood to gain from colonisers' and colonial administrators, their focus on the task and impartiality in its execution became compromised. Contact with these icons of the colonial system progressively tampered with the objective

neutrality of the Gospel, and such was the predicament of missionary activism (Kasomo & Naila, 2013).

1.1.2. Background of the problem

Located in the northern part of the South African landscape is the Limpopo Province, which shares its borders with Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The Limpopo province comprises several ethnic groups that may be distinguished by culture and/or language. The major groups, in no order, are Bapedi, Vhavenda, and Vatsonga. The province of Limpopo is also endowed with fascinating geological, archaeological and cultural mythologies that date back many centuries (Cadman, 2007). Currently, the province is divided into five districts, namely, Capricorn, Waterberg, Mopani, Greater Sekhukhune and Vhembe. The Vhembe district is inhabited by Vhavenda and Vatsonga, and contains all the areas that wrought the former Republic of Venda, and some which were part of the former Tsonga homeland of Gazankulu. Historical marvels, as well as world heritage sites such as Thulamela, Mapungubwe—the ancient city of Gold—and the Dzata Ruins, which at some stage was the capital of Venda, under the leadership of Thohoyandou, are found in the district (Fleminger, 2008).

Vhuhosi in the Zoutpansberg, like in many African traditions, comprises what in colonial parlance become commonly known as ‘chiefs’, ‘petty chiefs’, together with their subjects,

referred to as ‘commoners’ (Mugovhani & Mapaya, 2014). A more accurate social classification of Vhavenda would entail *vhakololo* (children of the chiefs and their descendants), and *vhasiwana* (the so-called commoners) (Stayt, 1931). Originally, these were believed to be lineages of the same clan, which in the latter half of the 18th century, crossed the Limpopo River, subjugating those they found residing in the Zoutpansberg already along the way (Earle, Machiridza, Malzbender, Manzungu, & Tiego, 2006).

Missionaries and colonial administrators alike were at times ignorant or averse to recognising Vhavenda nationhood, particularly the authority of ‘*Mahosi*’ (royal leaders). The missionaries deemed them and their leadership system as primitive (Keegan, 1996).

According to Blacking:

The Venda are a patrilineal, virilocal people, many of whom still practiced polygyny and worshipped their families' ancestors. Members of the different patrilans could, and did, live in any of the tribal territories, because the tribe was purely a political and territorial unit, consisting of people who chose to owe allegiance to a particular dynasty. It was quite common to find a ruler attracting round him members of his own patrilan after his accession.

(1962: 15)

From Blacking’s (1962) observation it may be argued that he maintains a particular moral standpoint that suggests that Vhavenda are not only backward, but also inferior, and their culture, religion and philosophy may not be necessarily sensible within the Western context.

Hence, various endeavours were undertaken to swerve matters in favour of the imperialists through the establishment of boundaries that were contrary to the land tenure as envisioned in African traditional royal leadership (Atuahene, 2014). This served to challenge not only the social, but also the religious, political and cultural authority of the royal leadership (Ralushai V. , 1980).

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Vhuhosi has made, and continues, to make an impression on the lives of people within the Vhembe district. Granted, Christian missionary work has, to some extent, shaped this institution, as we know it today. However, the extent of this missionary influence is not clearly explicated. Part of this discrepancy is that historical materials, in the main, emanate from the perspective of authors who are either missionaries themselves, or scholars bred of the same intention as those of the missionary. Clearly, there is dearth, or not enough historical accounts from African perspectives. This situation inevitably perpetuates a worldview that is biased towards the west. Seeing the world only through the Western eye, as it were, may fail to fashion African solutions for Africa-specific problems. Although the canonical perspective provides some semblance of a historical missionary activism, an African perspective could prove to be beneficial to Africa and the world, and to future students and scholars of this historical aspect.

1.3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to probe the extent to which missionary activism shaped and continues to influence *Vhuhosi*, particularly how missionary activism shaped and continues to inform African traditional royal leaders' practices.

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Specific objectives of the study include:

- To determine the current state of the institution of *Vhuhosi* in Thulamela
- To analyse the influence of missionary activism on *Vhuhosi*
- To probe covert and overt motives of missionary activism

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the current state of the institution of *Vhuhosi* in Thulamela?
- Did/does missionary activism have a direct or indirect influence on *Vhuhosi*?
- What were the motives of missionary work in Venda?

1.6. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Vhuhosi as an institution carries the responsibility of protecting not only African cultural values, but also actualising African systems of governance and administration. Although missionary activities have been in the purview of scholarship, this particular instalment hopes to bring into sharper focus the extent to which missionary activism impacted *Vhuhosi*. This deliberate adoption of what may qualify as the Venda perspective approach could help towards fashioning a complete historical account of European encounters with Africa. In this regard, this study is important and relevant.

1.7. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.7.1. Colonialism

Kozlowski (2010) sees colonialism as the ownership of a country by another country, and the owned country being subject to the dominating country's economic agenda, where the colony or the dominated country exercises its powers in accordance to the ambits that the dominating country will allow (Christian, 2014). Colonialism is viewed as a political system of expansion by a sovereign state exceeding its geographical sphere of governance (Bulhan, 2015). Of necessity, the authority sourced from the colonising country is imposed upon remote indigenous populations, in the case of South African, through colonial settlements. Therefore, the settlers continue to maintain political allegiance to their home countries

(Bulhan, 2015). The practice of colonialism compels domination of resources, and the imposition of socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structure chiefly through education (Horvath, 1972).

1.7.2. Missionary activism

Missionary activism is a concept that is not confined to a particular faith, and Jonsson (2006) reveals that it is a movement that purports to avoid direct political involvement, but seeks to focus, as it were, on preaching in order to establish or ‘preserve the cohesion of the community of believers by upholding the moral order that underpins it’ (Jonsson 2006: 37). Missionary activism can also be a Christian faith-based policy guiding individuals who are commissioned to proselytise and propagate a religion in order to achieve a spiritual, social, and sometimes a political goal. This may further entail healthcare, education, economic development and social justice.

1.7.3. Vhavenda worldview

Van Rooy (1978) opines that Vhavenda perceive their world as a logically integrated cosmology that is maintained by African traditional beliefs and practices. This cosmology comprises of forces that influence one another and may also be influenced spiritually. In the context of the proposed study, Vhavenda worldview refers to a fundamental framework that

encompasses a comprehensive system of beliefs that relate to the generally accepted set of mores and attitudes of indigenous living as well as reality.

1.7.4. *Vhuhosi*

According to Düsing (2002:3) *Vhuhosi*, the institution of African traditional royal leadership, ‘represents the pre-colonial prevailing indigenous form of government’ that originally provided various functions for the local community. In other words *Vhuhosi* was an established African system of administration and governance based on African cultural values that served to perform particular functions for the community. Keulder (1995) adds that traditional royal leaders, in this case *Vho-Thovhele*, *Mahosi* and *Magota*, are individuals who subscribe to clearly defined positions within particular areas and according to customs as well as traditions that maintain traditional authority. Therefore, *Vhuhosi* must be understood to refer to an institution of governance and social organization that is based on leadership norms that are derived from African culture, tradition, customs and values.

1.8. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is a summary of literature review pertaining to the current state of the institution of *Vhuhosi*, mission activism; its covert and overt agendas, as well as a reflection on its general effect on some aspects of African royal leadership. Furthermore, the literature will attempt to excavate critical missiological issues that still have profound religious and

political implications and ramifications on the Gospel today. It will take on a broad approach towards theology, religiology and theories of faith and not just as a single theoretical mass of data.

1.8.1. Missionary influence on aspects of *vuhosi*

Within the local political space there are two schools of thought in relation to *Vuhosi*, where on the one hand it is argued that in a democratic dispensation, the institution of African traditional royal leadership is irrelevant (Fanthorpe, 2005); (Maloka, 1996); (Mamdani, 1996), and on the other hand the significance, historical heritage and its bearing on local communities continues to be valued (Becker, 2006); (White & Lindstrom, 1997); (Oomen, 2005).

Before colonialism and its attendant missionary activism, *Vuhosi* was a concept that comprised of varied models of traditional authority, and espoused the African understanding of power, as well as methods in which customary law played and continues to play different roles (Ray, 2003). The notion of leadership in as far as *Vuhosi* is concerned is centralised

and hereditary (Van Warmelo, 1932), it usually flows from the father to the oldest son of the senior wife¹.

History has shown that the institution of *Vhuhosi* has maintained its power even in the face of decentralisation by different leadership systems, even though scholars such as Kuelder (2000) believe the institution has undergone numerous changes, not only pertaining to its procedures and rules of appointment, but also in its roles and functions, and in its jurisdictions and powers. Kuelder (2000) goes on to note that some of the changes were as a result of outside interference, especially during the colonial period. He expresses the view that colonial authorities not only intervened in traditional matters, but through their colonial policies, appointed chiefs where there were none and deposed royal leaders that opposed them (Kuelder C. , 2000). Yet, despite these observations, the reality is that traditional royal leaders still have maintained control over most of the significant rural survival strategies, allocation of land, natural resources, communal labour practices, and in some instances law and order. Nevertheless, the “distaste of the customary authorities in the postcolonial era” is factual and is largely evidenced by the intermediary and facilitatory roles some ‘chiefs’ played during the processes of colonisation (Chinsinga 2006: 255).

¹ In most African traditions Khosi is permitted to marry more than one wife. But *musadzi wa dzekiso*—the wife married primarily for the purpose of giving birth to the next *Khosi*, comes from a selection of predetermined royal families and she should, be the time of marriage be a virgin. She may not necessarily be the first wife.

Research also reveals that Western intervention either through slavery, colonialism, exploitation or missionary activism, has reconfigured the indigenous concepts of leadership, tribal values and methods (Khunou, *A Legal History of Traditional Leadership in South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho*, 2006). In the instance of British colonial rule, it is debated that the aim was not to merely eliminate the traditional royal leadership system, but also to manipulate it in such a way that it favours, and better still, serves the colonisers' agenda (Myers, 2008).

From literature, it is clear that the colonisers sought to subordinate *Vhuhosi* to British rule through various means, such as battle, trade and even missionary work (Uzoigwe, 1978), (Bohannan & Curtin, 1971), (Crowder, 1971), (Sanneh, 1990). Despite good intentions, missionaries became accomplices to atrocities apportioned to the colonial leadership system such as the taking of land that belonged to African communities using European legal systems and the subversion of value of an African to a level of a mere tax-paying worker, all in the name of civilisation (McClendon, 2010).

Clearly, the demise of ancient African civilisations did not necessarily mean that the practice of *Vhuhosi* had come to an end (Khunou, *A Legal History of Traditional Leadership in South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho*, 2006). *Vhuhosi* endured and continued to be mirrored even in Vhavenda world-view. It would, therefore be an oversimplification to hold on to theories that *Mahosi* were mere willing participants to missionary activism and colonialism, when in

fact some such as Ramabulana, Sekhukhuni, Cetywayo, Faku resisted colonial rule in any form (Okon, 2014). Thus, colonialism has not entirely succeeded in uprooting *Vhuhosi*.

1.8.2. Literature on the state of *vhuhosi* in Thulamela

The state of traditional authority is still unresolved. This is partly because scholars seem to skirt around the issue, choosing rather to focus on their areas of specialty. Chanok (2001) and many other scholars from the legal perspective comment on the application of the Roman Dutch Law in an African situation in order to disadvantage African Customary Law. They maintain that the Republic of South Africa, in theory, recognises the African hereditary royal leadership system (Khunou, A Legal History of Traditional Leadership in South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho, 2006). However, practical challenges emanating from having to accommodate the two systems are commonplace since the Roman-Dutch Law is still seen as a ‘colonisation of African time and place’, in order to relegate customary law into an ineffective and inferior system (Chanok 2001:33).

Bekker (1991) maintains that the law serves to subjugate Africans and their *Mahosi* by installing the so-called ‘chiefs’, who unwittingly served as extensions of colonial authorities; who sought to control and to maintain authority over native groups. Bikam & Chakwizira (2014) observe the role of *Mahosi* in administering communal property and traditional affairs as being undermined. Hence, the issue is still the main source of conflict in most parts of the

African continent, whereby the municipality is now the provider of services and the driver of development, instead of the owners of the land.

1.8.3. Missionary activism in Thulamela

Kirkaldy & Kriel (2006) not only disclose that missionaries kept written records of historical occurrences, but reveal that missionary activism amongst Vhavenda adopted the strategy of converting the *khosi* first, in order to evangelise the people. Kirkaldy (2005) however, argues that missionary activism did not make a significant number of converts in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

Tshiguvho (2008) in writing about missionary activism in the Soutpansberg, also notes that Christian missionary activism in the area should not only be credited to Western missionaries alone, as Africans who worked as migrant labourers in Natal and the Cape Colony had a role in the introduction of Christianity.

Historically, the first missionaries to introduce Christianity to Vhavenda were the Dutch Reformed Church at Goedgedacht. The Berlin Mission Society whose work was imbedded in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bradenburg were the second group to do mission work within the area (Kirkaldy, 2005). Under the leadership of Beuster and with the help of Johannes Mutshaeni much was contributed to the Tshivenda Biblical and religious literature (Mathivha R. , 1985). Other missionaries that operated amongst Vhavenda included the

Presbyterian Church, the Anglican Church, the Swiss Mission, the Seven Day Adventist, and the Salvation Army (Munyai, 2007). *Mahosi* were not quick to forsake their traditional religious notions which were politically linked, and it is from the very same traditional *Mahosi* that missionaries required an invitation or permission to preach the Gospel (Kgatla, 2016).

Cultural practices presented by European missionaries seemed to contribute negatively on Africans receiving the Gospel (Punt, 1999). The matter of land was an issue that at times caused hostility amongst the traditional royal leaders and the missionaries, because missionaries were party to fraudulent transactions in relation to the acquisition of land (August, 2006). The native lands were expropriated under the pretext that they were neglected, although in fact and customarily they belonged to *Mahosi* and their people (August, 2006).

1.8.4. Motive(s) of missionary activism

Some scholars debate that the colonial government did not establish the colonies for missionary goals, but rather for the purposes of government, whereas others argue that missionaries were agents of imperialism (Brown, 1991).

Kalu (1980: 183) presents and debates a perspective that shows a conflict of interests between the missionaries and the imperialists, he states the following, which is open to debate:

Missionary ideology was full of paradoxes: while sharing the racist theories of the age, and supporting the official programme to transform the political and economic structure of the colonies, it realised higher values in the biblical conception of the dignity of man... the missionaries colluded with the colonial government when it suited their interests and yet would also at times unleash virulent attacks on certain styles and purpose of government. Missionaries condemned the harsh sanctions of government labour proclamations and criticised merchants for their intemperance, irreligiosity and brutality (Kalu, 1980).

The researcher is of the opinion that as much as the Great commission of Jesus Christ was a strong motivating factor for the missionaries to venture into the continent, it should be borne in mind that Christianity or the concept of monotheism was not a recent phenomenon to African people (Muzorewa, 2014). Modern missionary activism may to some extent be attributed also to conquest and trade, and not just evangelism (Frescura, 2015).

A common feature in missionary activism that casts a dubious cloud on the integrity and motive of mission work, is the condescending sense of self-righteousness that undermined indigenous norms and values (Frescura, 2015). The failure to recognise cultural methods, tenets and social systems, served to distort and impose leadership systems that were not part of the Gospel agenda.

Iwe (1985) has defined this way of thinking as a colonial mentality, a mind-set that views Africans as immature, or incompetent in the managing of their affairs. It also connotes lack of confidence in Africa and the African way of life. Colonial mentality sees the African as

imperfect, wanting in self-confidence, dignity, resourcefulness and creativity, and does not deserve any honour and respect from civilised humanity (Schlotterbeck, 2013).

The fact that missionary work was subject and dependent on the colonial leadership for resources and power leaves a question mark on their integrity to pursue a Gospel without ulterior motives (Kasomo & Naila, 2013). It is important to observe that missionary activism gave leverage to European policies which sought to control traditional communities and modify traditional aims and objectives into serving the purposes of the dominating or colonial authority (Nkomazana & Setume, 2015). Vail (1991) purports that:

In many ways, this official view was an extension of local mission policy which opposed the existence of powerful chiefs who would restrict Christian proselytizing. More importantly, the missions had divided the population of the northern Transvaal among linguistic and geographical lines.

Missionary activism seemed to be more than just a religious undertaking, but tended to overlap into the political sphere and it is here that bias in various forms was manifested (Kasomo & Naila, 2013).

1.9. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.9.1. Methodology

The study followed a qualitative research paradigm which is ethnographic in nature. According to Creswell (2007) qualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand. This approach proved relevant for the provision of in-depth information, and a deeper understanding of the subject of interest. This entailed observation, interviews, case study and analysis of written documents and narrative descriptions of events or processes.

Through such, one was be able to explore different ideas further on in the research process, which would also involve engaging a few participants in order to gain a thorough understanding of their experience, developing patterns and relationships of meaning in this regard.

1.9.2. Research design

According to Kerlinger (1983) research design is: ‘the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance’.

The study is exploratory, descriptive and contextual in nature; it assumes a phenomenological research design to achieve the objectives of the study.

1.9.3. Population

The population of the study consists of *Vhakololo* (royal offspring), *Mahosi* (African royal leaders), and *Vho-Thovhele* (principal African royal leaders). The interviewer included pastors and government administrators.

1.9.4. Sampling

Qualitative research employs non-probability samples in choosing the population for study. A non-probability sample entails units that are purposely selected to reflect particular features of groups within the sampled population (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling (a non-probability sampling technique) will be utilized. Purposive sampling pertains to a sample that represents a location or type in relation to a key criterion (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003).

The participants in this research were not be sampled randomly, but will be selected in such a way that they are able to represent their field area. For instance, participants selected were expected to be acquainted with the institution of *Vhuhosi* and Christian missionary work. An attempt will be made to gain a comprehensive and varied sample by accessing respondents

through different avenues such as the church, royal councils and house of traditional royal leadership.

1.10. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

1.10.1. Data collection

A variety of research instruments were employed in the process of data collection, and these will include interviews, participant observation and document study. 'Interviewing is the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research' (Griffie, 2005). The researcher utilised semi-structured, one-on-one interviews to acquire the participant's perspective. Semi-structured interviews assist in gaining a grasp of a participant's beliefs and perspectives on a subject, and allow respondents the freedom to express their views in their own terms, and it can also provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (Bowling, 1997).

Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviour, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for the study". Through a participant's customs, lifestyle and cultural context, a researcher is able to appreciate and interpret the significance of a respondent's reality. Participant observation is flexible and allows the researcher to gain access to the field (Jorgensen, 1989).

Data that is available from the internet or other available sources such as archives, will be collected and integrated with the data collected from the interviews and observation.

1.10.2. Data analysis

According to Yin (2011) regardless of any particular qualitative orientation being adopted, the analysis of qualitative data usually moves through five phases which entails compiling, disassembling, reassembling (and arraying), interpreting, and concluding.

Data was analysed according to Creswell's (2007: 150-155) data analytic spiral (Cresswell, 2007). This approach comprises an analytic cycle, as opposed to a fixed linear approach. This entails identifying the research problem, reviewing the literature, specifying a research problem, collecting data, analysing and interpreting data and evaluating data and the writing the report.

The key steps employed for data analysis will involve preparing and organising the data, reducing the data and visualising, representing and displaying the data (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2011).

1.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The concept of ethics in this study was deemed as very important and this entailed fully informing participants about the research goals, processes and outcomes. Participants were made familiar with any potential consequences of their participation through informed consent and advised that their participation is voluntary, in a language that is reasonably understandable (Morris, 2006). The participants will also be informed of their rights, including their right to withdraw from the study, as and when they deem fit.

The participation by the respondents in this research brought no harm to them, be it through coercion or harassment (Babbie, 2007).

All reasonable measures was taken to ensure that the researcher will desist from the violation of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavik, 1979). The researcher did not deceive research participants about significant aspects that may affect their willingness to participate (Neuman, 2000).

1.12. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in Vhembe, a region where the majority are *Tshivenda* speaking people, who reside in the Thulamela municipality. In interviewing some of the participants,

language constraints were not easy, in that, meaning was lost when translating concepts that were not so clear, or did not exist in the Tshivenda language.

Due to the sensitivity of *Vhuhosi* within the region, some of the identified individuals were not as forthcoming in participating in the study and this did culminate in negative responses to information sharing.

The differences in cultural approaches make it difficult to generalize and apply findings of one particular culture approach to another. It is also possible that data collection and analysis may prove to be time consuming.

The differences in cultural approaches made it difficult to generalize and apply findings of one particular culture approach to another. It contributed to making data collection and analysis a time consuming exercise.

1.13. CONCLUSION

Chapter one serves not only to present an introduction of the research project but also to give an expounded background and problem statement that enables the reader to delve into the intricacies of the study. The literature review encapsulates the concepts and dynamics of African traditional leadership and governance amidst Western engagements within evolving

political and social transformations of Vhavenda. *Vhuhosi* is an institution that is important to Vhavenda worldview. The study explores colonialism and missionary activism in relation to *vhuhosi* and Vhavenda worldview.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Mouton (2001) literature review is an appraisal of prevailing knowledge and scholarship that may be used to assist a researcher not only to mirror their own study against others who have investigated the same research problem but also learn from them.

Chapter two served to demonstrate the approach that undergirds the study, justify the research questions, display various methodologies selected and show the distinctiveness and relevance of the study in relation to existing knowledge and scholarship. Emphasis has been laid on *vhuhosi* and its encounters with and influence by missionary activism.

Düsing (2002) highlights that be it “informal acceptance or legal recognition and institutional integration”, African traditional leaders are still relevant with regard to governance, administration, jurisdiction, land distribution and party-political mobilization (Düsing 2002: 3).

Vhuhosi amongst Vhavenda procures its legitimacy from Tshivenda tradition, cultural mores and values which have survived to sustain political authority (Kruger, 1999). Before colonialism, power, be it political, social or religious, was subject to tribal systems and leadership structures which also regulated the culture of the people (Khunou, 2009).

Missionary activism that came through colonialism influenced and challenged not only the African religious landscape but African culture.

Vhuhosi is not only an institution that bares ethnically grounded authority but is recognised within the constitution of the Republic of South Africa; and continues to find expression in light of varied social, political and religious influences. Literature on *vhuhosi* and European based missionary activism is reviewed so as to expose disparities in research and understanding to existing bodies of knowledge. In Limpopo, today, the indigenous based traditional political institutions have to varying degrees maintained their authority, despite functional challenges and changing cultural expressions.

2.2. LITERATURE ON VHUHOSI

Vhuhosi has proved to be a resilient form of societal organisation not only throughout Africa but also in northern part of South Africa in the Vhembe district. *Vhuhosi* is an institution which is characterised by patrilineal and ascriptive norms (Matshidze, 2013). *Mahosi* assume the responsibility of being the highest authority within a particular territory. Though they serve as the central figures of power, they do not exercise their various functions independently but through tribal councils (Bekink, 2006). *Vhuhosi* is not limited merely to the political sphere but delves into the spiritual in that *mahosi* also serve as intermediaries with the ancestors, custodians of culture and judicial leaders (Düsing, 2002). The governance

of *vhuhosi* was understood to be that of a leader who was both father and son; father, because of leadership and management of the different aspects of day to day living, and son, because leadership accountability was not only to the tribal council but customary law. Interestingly enough, *vhuhosi* does subscribe to principles of accountability that are almost akin to democratic values. This is chiefly because *mahosi* acquire their mandate, power and authority from customary law (Matshidze, 2013).

Statistics South Africa states that 47,7% of the entire Vhembe district's population lives in Thulamela Local municipality, which is one of the four local municipalities comprising Vhembe District Municipality and is the eastern most local municipality in the district. A majority of the people residing in the municipality speak Tshivenda as their first language at 63,2%, followed by Xitsonga at 32,5%. More than 85% of the people in this municipality live in tribal areas. Limpopo has three kings/queens, 183 senior traditional leaders and 2118 headmen/headwomen

Statistics of traditional leaders per province and level

Provinces	Level of traditional leadership position			
	Kingship/Queenship	Principal Traditional Leaders	Senior Traditional Leaders	Headmen/women
Eastern Cape	4	2	215	1193
Free State	1	1	13	96
Gauteng	0	0	2	14
KwaZulu-Natal	1	0	296	3100
Limpopo	3	0	183	2118
Mpumalanga	2	0	58	522
Northern Cape	0	0	8	25
North West	0	0	54	59
TOTAL	11	3	829	7127
GRAND TOTAL	7970			

Vhuhosi signifies a system whereby members of a family rule according to hereditary right and the chief authoritative figure within this structure is called a king or queen (Matshidze, 2013). Within the African context, the king or queen executed their mandate through councilors that consisted of elders, paramount traditional leaders and headmen. The European colonial mindset in South Africa did not acknowledge African kings but instead chose to see them as paramount chiefs, as the term king was reserved for the kings of their own countries (Bekker, 2008).

According to Nicholson (2006) the Europeans encountered *vhuhosi* with an already concluded standpoint that it was autocratic, and this position was imposed on the indigenous population. Nicholson states that: “The pre-colonial conception of Chieftdom was that this

consisted of a mobile group, with no fixed or permanent territorial boundaries, that followed a particular Chief. The pre-colonial traditional hierarchy consisted of a Chief, a Paramount Chief, King or Chiefs” (2006, p. 184).

The concept of "election" was foreign to traditional leadership. Ranger (1983) puts forth a perspective worth noting; that Europeans invented traditions for *vhuhosi* that served as a mechanism for the manipulation and subjugation of African populations by excluding them from meaningful social, economic and political participation. Hence, political structures were encouraged where they had previously been absent (Ranger, 1983).

2.2.1 Early Vhavenda history

The history of Vhavenda is as intriguing as it is complex, complexities may be attributed partially to the inability of scholars to locate the true sequence of events that point us to Vhavenda as we know them today and also because Vhavenda are a heterogeneous ethnic group that encompasses numerous clans that migrated into the Soutpansburg area at various times (Madiba, 1994). Vhavenda heterogeneous ethnic groups comprise of Vhadau, Vhambedzi, Vhatavhatsindi, Vhalea, Vhania, Vhatwamamba, Vhagoni and Vhaluvhu who were known as Vhagona (Stayt, 1931). Also included are the Karanga-Rozwi clans namely, Vhanyai, Vhalembethu, Vhalovhedzi and Vhasenzi (consisted of Masingo, Vhalaudzi and Vhandalamo), and the Vhalemba who claimed Semetic descent (Stayt, 1931).

Vhavenda history is like a puzzle wherein one finds various regional histories that fall within the larger historical landscape of Vhavenda.

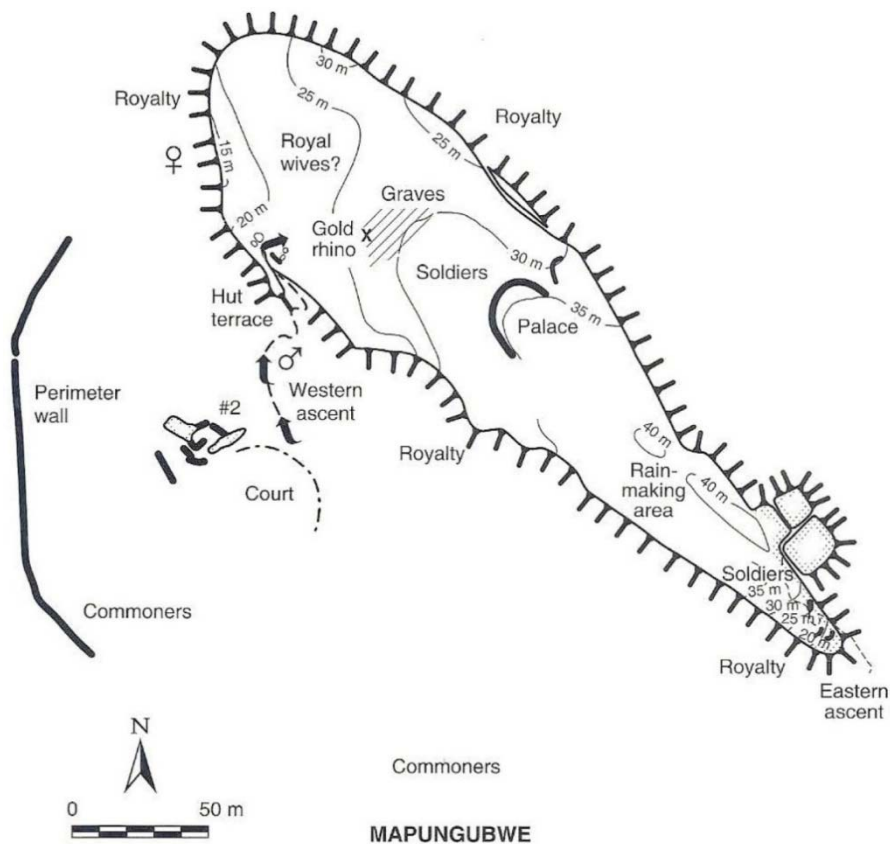
There is general consensus amongst scholars that Vhavenda came from the Northern parts of Africa (Wesseman, 1908), (Beuster, 1879), (Mathivha M. , 1966). Nemudzivhadi (1994) purports that Vhavenda came from Ethiopia during the first century of the Christian era where Mambiri became king and instituted the monarch. His son and successor Tavera (Thovhela), then journeyed down to Kenya. Wesseman (1908) supports the view that Vhavenda emanated from the North but in Congo and not Ethiopia.

Within Vhavenda historical landscape we also find Vhalemba who are part of Vhavenda have not only claimed Semitic descent, but have consistently articulated and practiced Jewish traditions (Tamarkin, 2014). One may be justified to deduce that this being the case, there is definite connection with the North Eastern African Countries such as Ethiopia and Egypt as other scholars have claimed (Ralushai V. , 1977).

History maintains three major themes which in coming to the fore, indicate three significant migrations into the Soutpansburg, this relates firstly to Vhatavhatsindi, secondly to Vhakwinda, who upon arrival found Vhangona and lastly the Singo who became the kingdom that ruled the local population (Stayt, 1931).

2.2.2 Vhavenda Empire (*vuhosi*)

The kingdom of Mapugubwe (meaning ‘hill of the jackal’) was not only a great and sophisticated kingdom in Southern Africa but a noteworthy rootage of the Vhavenda historical landscape (L.Fouché, 1937). Mapugubwe was the pivot of ancient international trade and a cultural melting pot that preceded the Great Zimbabwe kingdom which was followed by the Khami and Rozwi empires; even Dzata. Mapugubwe assumed an essential role in the development of Vhavenda culture and traditions (Bertacchini, 2012). Mapugubwe was subject to an elite royal traditional governance and administration that hinged on sacred leadership, where the king was isolated from the commoners.



(Chirikure, et al., 2014)

The decline of the Mapugubwe Empire ushered in the kingdom of Great Zimbabwe; which like that of Mapugubwe, embodied a distinct Kalanga/ Karanga governance and administration amongst Southern and Central Africa (Ngoro, 2005). From the kingdom of Great Zimbabwe; history reveals the establishment of the Khami Ruins which were the capital city of the kingdom of Butua of the Torwa dynasty. However, through the Rozwi, Khami was invaded and the Rozwi Empire was birthed.

Initially, Rozwi/Lozwi/Vhalowzi was neither a tribal nor ethnical classification but with its' rise as an African royal entity, we learn that leadership was hereditary and the title for king was Mambo (Alpers, 1970). Mambo was not a dictator because of the accountability factor of a council. The mambo was assisted by a Dare (council) of magota (councillors) (Mudenge, 1974). Represented in the Dare were such branches of the Rozwi polity as the priesthood, the military leaders, and provincial governors as well as some of the leading Rozvi imperial houses.

A historical look at Vhavenda ancestry and heritage, informs us that Vhavenda do not only have strong links to but are Shona in origin (Alpers, 1970).

Within the milieu of various oral and written historical accounts about Vhasenzi (Masingo) migration, it is clear that Vhasenzi were not the first people to come to Venda and they were Karangas of the Rozwi. After succession conflicts between the sons of the Rozwi king a group, namely Singo, led by Dyambeu/Dambayika made their way to Venda. The arrival of Vhasenzi (Singo) ushered in a new political dispensation for the region, which consolidated *vhuhosi* under the central authority of Vhasenzi leadership, that being Dambanyika/Dimbanyika (Carnerly, 1994).

The political administration and governance within Venda assumed a structure to that of Great Zimbabwe and Khami Empires of Zimbabwe (Carnerly, 1994). King Dambanyika

established his royal palace at Dzata 1 on Mount Lwandali in Nzhelele. This place was later abandoned after his death and named Tshiendeulu. The Singo relocated south west of Lwandali and established Dzata 2 (Canerly, 1994).

Thohoyandou the name given to Phophi a Singo a regent who became king after death of his nephew, was instrumental in the development of the united empire of Vhavenda (Stayt, 1931). According to Canerly (1994) the political authority and boundaries of the Vhavenda empire stretched as far as Pietersburg. However, when Thohoyandou disappeared, the Vhavenda kingdom was divided into three different ruling houses.

2.2.3 *Vhuhosi* and colonialism

Arguably, colonialism was not an institution that developed purely in itself; and almost imperatively one needs to understand that it was a system that progressed due to military superiority. The concept of conquest encompassed a process of subduing opposition by force and gaining possession. Conquest meant war and the results thereof, be they slavery, ruined communities and destruction (Bulhan, 2015).

It is from such a backdrop that Africa encountered European aggression, invasion and the imposition of colonization and its legacy. The imperial shove into Africa was the dawn of a new dispensation into the African leadership landscape.

Colonialism in essence was an institutionalized practice of domination and even with its introduction into South Africa; the case was the same. Several reasons may be attributed to the introduction of colonialism to South Africa; however, the purpose and pattern of domination remained the same and culminated in the loss of land and power on the part of the indigenous people (Bulhan, 2015). Wolfe (2006) writes that "settler colonialism destroys to replace" and insists that "invasion", in settler colonial contexts, is "a structure, not an event" (Wolfe, 2006).

According to Okoyo (1977), colonialism was a system that legitimized itself through coercion, violence and the propagation of its divide-and-rule strategies whose purpose was to create cavities socially, politically and religiously. He continues to argue that the legacy that was left behind was that of the politics of power and violence; with many African leaders perpetuating this tradition. Colonialism did not seek to develop good governance and administration on the side of the indigenous leadership and population.

According to Okon (2014), "Africa did not negotiate for colonial rule". He goes further to indicate that treaties signed between Africans and Europeans were results of 'visible intimidation and manipulation'. Ake (1985) expounds on the legacy of colonialism, to say that even after the aftermath of colonialism 'many leaders in Africa were insecure when they inherited power, they continued to cling tenaciously to the idea of the ruler's exclusive claim to power'.

European colonial administrations encountered the African leadership scene with preconceived notions of leadership and authority. To them, African administration and governance was considered inferior and not worthy of recognition. Hence, the title of king was reserved for the obscured political system that did not depict true Africa customs and principles.

Europe justified colonialism to a certain degree on an arrogant premise of racial and cultural supremacy, which was buttressed by three theories that Okon (2014) highlights, namely moral and racial superiority, conversionism; which postulated that their perceived heathenism and ignorance can be eradicated by the imposition of European culture, religion and philosophy by force and lastly racial subordination (Okon, 2014). Thus, Europeans in settler colonies were indoctrinated to perceive themselves and each other as automatically superior. In other words it was imperative for the indigenous population to aspire to conform to European and thought.

Nicholson (2006) notes that the European superiority complex culminated to the meaning that, “consequently, the role of the leader in an African context was modified and a social hierarchy developed to clearly reflect European superiority. Africans were subject to the ultimate authority of Europeans whose attitude towards them was paternalistic” (2006, p. 186).

Eze (2010) gives an interesting opinion on tribalisation, which he mentions ‘is not merely constitutive of colonial legacy but evolved through three tiers of historical context- precolonial, colonial and post-colonial (Eze, 2010). Tribalisation was essential during colonial administration as it served as a catalyst of civilizing the African. Through this penetration was made into *vhuhosi*, in that the institution was divided, blended and reconstructed.

Alteration of the institution of *vhuhosi* meant the alteration of the indigenous concept of land tenure. Land was not only political but had social, religious and cultural significance and Du Plessis (2011) gives a perspective of the precolonial land tenure we he says: “African indigenous law in property was more concerned with people's obligations towards one another in respect of property than with the rights of people in property. The relationships between people were more important than an individual's ability to assert his or her interest in property against the world” (2011, p. 48).

According to Tshiguvho (2008) Coenraad du Buys of the Cape Province was the first non-African that settled amongst Vhavenda (Tshiguvho, 2008). The next non-African to arrive was Louis Trichardt who came with other Boer migrants, when he arrived it was during the royal skirmishes between the sons of the king Mpofu. Louis Trichardt was able to secure a settlement through his military assistance to one of the sons; Ramabulana (Wesseman, 1908). However, the relations between the settlers and Vhavenda soured with the introduction of tax

collection by Albasini. The South African Republic systematically endeavoured to impose and spread its influence on the indigenous population, and thereby contribute to the weakening of African royal governance and administration. The South African Republic was even able to win allegiance from some of Vhavenda *mahosi*.

Makhado, who was Ramabulana's son proved a vexation to the ambitions of European hegemony determined on suppressing African royal authority. Makhado rejected, resisted and fought against European attempts of assimilation which were aimed to mollify and eclipse Vhavenda kingdom. Through his leadership Vhavenda military advances were able to defeat settler instigated army efforts (Nemudzivhadi, *The Attempts by Makhado to Revive the Venda Kingdom 1864 -1895, 1998*). Despite Vhavenda resistance, colonial authority and its administration maintained its intentions and continued to methodically dispossess Africans of land and even guns. Colonial powers diminished royal powers, even, through missionary activity that undertook to do away with spiritual rites, traditional dances, initiation ceremonies and participation in communal duties in the royal fields.

2.3. LITERATURE ON MISSIONARY ACTIVISM

Christianity is a Faith instituted on the person and teachings of a Jewish teacher and prophet the world has come to know as Jesus the Christ. Christianity evolved from Judaism during the first century.

According to Coptic (descendants of ancient Egyptians) tradition, the evangelist Mark was the first missionary to usher the Gospel to Africa (Oden, 2011). Eusebius of Caesarea, a bishop and a Christian historian of the early church, reported that Mark evangelized in Alexandria. It is from here he initiated a Patriarchate (office or jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical patriarch), in other words a church centre. Eusebius discloses that Christian centres of learning were founded in Alexandria and Carthage; Alexandria was the place where a Bible school was established and Carthage being the birthplace of great Christian scholars and leaders such as Tertullian and Cyprian.

Christianity was active in Africa two centuries well in advance before its reception to Europe and a further three centuries before Islam rose to the dominance we know today (Nthamburi, 1989). Ancient African Christianity was basically confined to Northern Africa—Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia. Churches in these areas maintained close ties to eastern Christendom and made many important contributions. Christian mission pertains to concerted endeavours that serve to extend the purposes of God to humanity as revealed by the Great Commission issued by Jesus Christ (*Mat 28:18-20*). The Gospels of Matthew and Mark played a substantial role within the understanding that not only caused missionaries to go forth but propagated mission as a central theme of the Church.

The concepts of Christian mission have transformed throughout the ages and have come to mean different things to different people. Kritzing & Meiring (1989) also note this as they

explore the controversy located within different definitions and understanding of mission (Kritzinger & Meiring, 1989). It thus becomes important to understand that Christian mission is distinct from any other activity in that it is centered on the proclamation of the Gospel, in word and in deed.

According to Pachuau (2000) missiology has come to be associated with the study of Christian expansion through the conversion of non-Christians to the Faith. Mission in essence pertains to evangelism amongst those who are not of the Faith, whereas evangelism is deemed to the declaration of the Word of God with the aim to convert people to Christ.

The execution of the Great Commission has not been an isolated concept but one that involved cultural implications, which naturally would have consequences politically as well as socially and economically. Christian mission in itself compels universal witness; i.e. Christian mission is a commissioned catalyst of salvation and witness to divine purpose, which through human agency bares the responsibility to reach out to all peoples of the world. “The various themes of re-conceptualization that emanated in the new period includes mission as *missio Dei*, mission as “Christian presence,” mission as “witness” in and to the six continents, mission as development, mission as liberation, mission in relation to dialogue with people of other faiths and non-faiths, mission as contextualization and inculturation” (Pachuau, 2000).

According to Meiring (2008) *missio Dei* (mission of God) is a principle within Missiology and a foundation for mission since the beginning of the 20th century. He goes on to reveal that it relates to the awareness that God is the key figure in the implementation of mission. “Consequently, mission as God’s mission anticipates that mission cannot be claimed by any one particular church or region” (Pachua, 2000). In other words it is not about the missionaries themselves and the institutions they represent but it taking the Gospel to all nations and all faiths.

2.3.1 Christian mission activism and Africa

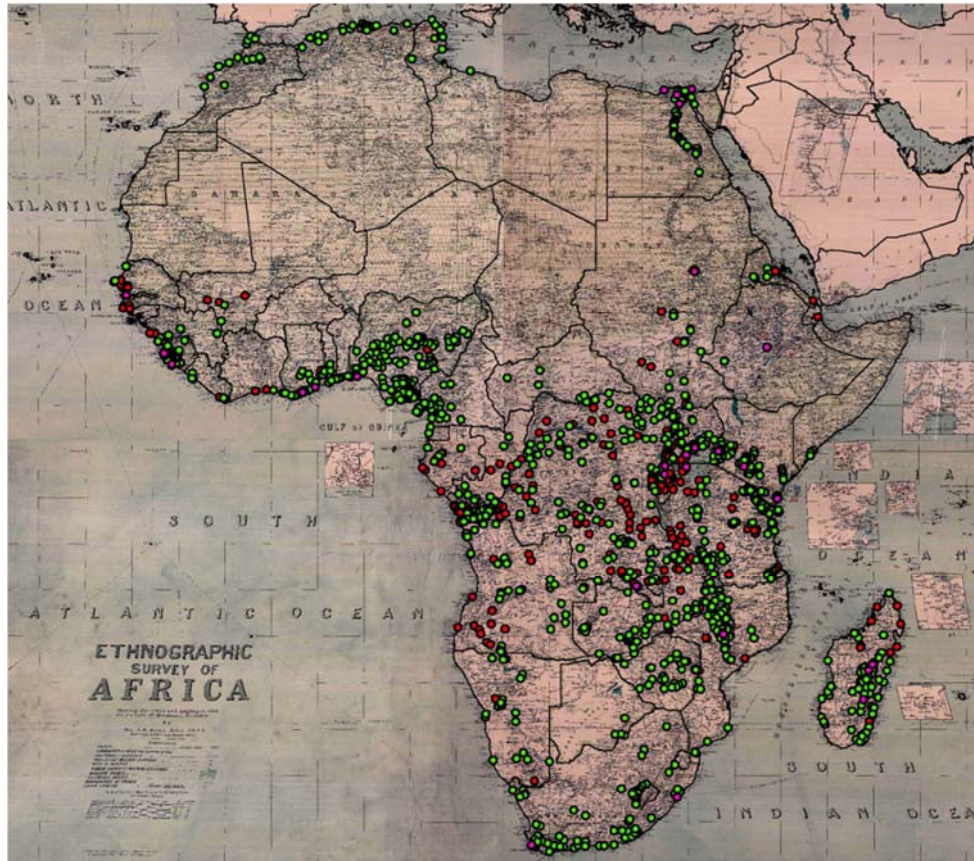


Figure 1: Map displaying the location of Catholic missions (red), Protestant missions (green), and British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) depots (purple) in Africa in 1924 (Roome, 1924).

The map above which is by Roome (1924) serves to display missionary activity within the Africa.

Europeans have prior to colonialism, expressed interest in Africa with their presence but it was after the Berlin Conference of 1884/5, that their united efforts were formalized and structured for the despoiling of Africa. Only after such did missionaries thus had a doorway to embark on their own agenda which piggybacked on the self-proclaimed legitimacy of colonialism.

To scale the theological landscape of Christian mission, we must be cognisant of the contributing factors of missionary activism such as pre-reformation and post-reformation theology and doctrine. Njoku (2007) noted that “the fragmentation of the one church by the reformation events had continued unabated along national lines, along cultural lines, and along linguistic lines” (Njoku, 2007). In other words the Christian missionary activism that arrived into Africa was not from a united Church but pluralistic doctrinal approaches that were not only blinkered but suspicious and perhaps even intolerant of other missionary groups.

Post-reformation, churches leaned towards nationalization, in that they were politicized and closely linked to the state. However, despite their difference and rivalries, Christian missionaries had a common enemy and that was the rise of Islam within the continent.

Christian missionary activism in Africa may be best explicated by taking into account that it occurred through stages; Asafo (1997) identifies four phases of Christian expansion within

the continent. He divulges that 1444/5 was a period of the first stage which was an upshot of Portuguese exploration. It is during this time that the Roman Catholic Church dominated, mainly because they were subject to Portugal's financial and political support. So it would be safe to deduce that when European missionaries came to Africa it was not purely a Biblical exercise; the early European missionaries in Africa were cultural and political agents of their own nations.

The second phase entailed an increase in Protestant missionary activity. By this time missionary strategy involved financing, organising and administration. Christian mission continued to spread and open ways for an expansion of European missions in Africa by the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. The third phase pertained to when the churches that were planted in Africa were developed to the extent of easing European controls. The fourth stage was during a time when colonization was at its peak.

European missionaries in Africa proved a bitter sweet exercise as the positive was blended with negative elements.

Arguably, missionaries were not isolated from the ideologies of colonial dominance and control that distorted and retarded African civilizations; in order to pander their own ambitions. The Europeans had preconceived notions about the structure and pace of African

civilization, to the point that they designated themselves as the legitimate authority to ‘civilize’ the Africans.

“It is appalling to note that two hundred years or so of colonisation were not only destructive in terms of cultural heritage and values for which Africa was famous before colonialism but also precariously retrogressive as the continent was robbed of decades of opportunities- opportunities of self-development, opportunities of self-government and, indeed, opportunities of self-styled technological developmental pace” (Arowolo, 2010).

Missionaries were directly and indirectly accomplices to the distortion of African civilization, as they posed as agents of the so-called “civilizing mission”, which served as a diversion from the noble cause of preaching the Gospel to serving material interests of colonial administrators (Arowolo, 2010).

Njoku (2007) indicates that the material culture of the western civilization translated into an unprecedented cultural pride and triumphalism among the citizens. Colonialism created its own structural legitimacy that served to justify the missionary enterprise amongst the indigenous population. It may be argued as others have that some missionaries did oppose colonial ways of doing things, but we must acknowledge their role of convergence with the

colonial administrators. For instance, for land to be acquired or the erection of schools and hospital; endorsement was required from colonial authorities.

The European missionaries made Africa no longer about Africans but about Europe and her cultures, it became about Protestantism against Catholicism, resources, slave trade, civilization as perceived by Europeans, European national ideology and the rise of secularization in Europe and all at the expense of African positive culture and in the name of ‘civilizing’ Africa (Arowolo, 2010).

An instrument that would prove a great advantage to the Christian mission was the implementation of extra-doctrinal techniques in the form of European education systems. The introduction of schools as a way of evangelization played a great role in transforming the fortunes of Christian activism in Africa. At the same time we must also bear in mind that most of the missionaries were from a rural and poor, social and educational backgrounds with only a few from the middle class (van der Walt, 1992).

It is noteworthy that missionary activism was not due to the sole efforts of the Europeans. The European missionaries would not have been able to communicate the Gospel to the local population without the efforts of Africans who not only served as interpreters but as forerunner missionaries in their own right. Unfortunately, in most cases the African

contribution is not sufficiently acknowledged, whereas they contributed in the conversion of people and indigenous languages into written form (Pugach, 2012). Instead, in most cases we find that the European missionaries took all the credit but as the years progressed we see that an African clergy began to rise and were more relevant to the needs of African culture.

2.3.2 Missionary influence in the Soutpansberg

The initial entry of missionary activism amongst Vhavenda in the Soutpansburg emerged in the form of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) under the leadership of MacKidd. He established a mission station that was called Goedgedacht (Kirkaldy, 2005). He also was the first to found a school within the Soutpansburg area. However, it was not easy for the (DRC) to make an impact due to linguistic challenges. They did however later found Tshilidzini hospital under Dr Nico Smith.

In varying degrees; missionary activism would not have been possible without the approval of *vuhosi*, as they were responsible for land tenure (Saubertzweig-Schmidt, 1986).

The second installment of missionary activism amongst Vhavenda came through the efforts of the Berlin Missionaries under the leadership of Buester, who was regarded as one who made a significant mark amongst the indigenous population (Kgatla, 2016). The pioneering efforts of the (DRC) and the Berlin missionaries paved the ways for others to follow. The Presbyterian Church under MacDonald established a mission station and hospital at Gouldville, the Anglicans stationed themselves at Mukula only to surrender the station to the

Berlin mission, the Gereformeerde Kerk (Reformed Church) mission started at Hamatshisevhe and moved to Siloam; they also built a hospital there, the Apostolic Faith Mission under Rev Booyseen settled at Malimuwa next to Louis Trichardt and the African Methodist was established at Songozwi by Charles Rathogwa Ndou (Munyai, 2007).

As Christianity began to spread and the seeds that were sown by earlier missionaries started to grow, so too did the Westernization of Southern Africa. Christianity made a great contribution to the introduction of Western way of life amongst the Vhavenda and this was due to Western education, colonial administration and commerce. “The preoccupation with this civilizing mission was expressed among different elements in European society. For the European missionaries and colonial officials, given the objectives of civilizing their African subjects, the formation of new identities was essential in this mission” (Korieh & Njoku, 2007).

The advent of missionary activism instituted churches that presented atypical concepts which entailed different styles of music and approaches to worship. Through their missionary initiatives they were able to introduce western medicine, which culminated in the construction of hospitals which in turn ushered in professions such as medical doctors, nurses and teachers. This enabled missionary work to get more rooted in Africa, its sway persisted and affected the cultural and social sphere of Vhavenda.

Political affairs were not a priority for missionaries but became a necessary evil as they encountered *vhuhosi*, missionaries were even at times inclined to relegate *vhuhosi* to an institution that merely served as a custodian of culture and not a legitimate authority that had responsibilities to exercise (Düsing, 2002). History has shown that missionaries were party to the deformation of natural boundaries with disregard of antecedent institutions and cultures. *Vhuhosi* was submerged and manipulated with the aim to dismantle, in order to reinforce foreign governance and administration (Schalk, 2000). Much land was taken from the indigenous population due to such tactics, and at times; violence was used to achieve missionary and colonial interests.

A significant sphere that was also influenced by missionary activism was the economic system that Africans were accustomed to, because westernisation came with capitalism (Manala, 2013). Capitalism occasioned the imposition of tax which meant that Africans, including *vhuhosi*, had to work for the colonialists. An African then had to adapt to the standards that had been set for them, linguistically, they had to conform to foreign languages which were deemed indications of intelligence.

2.3.3 Why Africa? Missionary motive

Particular missionary incongruities towards the indigenous population of Africa have reflected implications of motive and method that underlie not only the effectiveness of missionaries but their intentions. Admittedly, missionary motives were vast and complex, however, it must be noted that European missionaries on the one hand were consciously driven by a strong desire to genuinely serve humanity and bring about material and social changes which would improve its quality of life. On the other hand they were subconsciously possessed by a moral self-righteousness which led them to make hasty and uninformed judgments upon indigenous mores, norms and values they were scarcely equipped to understand.

An interesting motive explained by Strayer (1976) divulges that: “The existence of a deep missionary ambivalence regarding modern Western culture should not be surprising, for part of the missionary motivation was a desire to escape from the rationalism, materialism, and urbanization that were eating away at the kind of society in which the church had earlier played a pivotal role” (Strayer, 1976).

Missionary activism presented a sense of western Christianity that alleged to foster the biblical ideal of love, peace and justice. However, Africans became disenchanted by an ostensible contradiction between what the missionaries preached and their actions. The missionaries at times assumed a posture of duplicity in the political and economic life of the

indigenous African population (Bonk, 2006). Their umbilical bonds to their countries of origin compelled the missionaries to serve the socio-economic interest of those who sent them, even if at times these were contrary to the Gospel (Adamo & Enuwosa, 2004).

Adamo & Enuwosa (2004) indicate that, for the missionaries, the central authority resided with the Board of each mission agency. The self-interest of the church or mission as an institution affected its theological perspectives, “bureaucratic institutions reflected the peculiar interests, prejudices and convictions of the leaders of the organizations” (Adamo & Enuwosa, 2004). There was an inclination for the various institutions to equate the gospel with particular practices and doctrines of the organization. Instead of upholding the true gospel, they opted to push the agenda of their own brands of missionary work.

The institutionalisation of missionary work and its partitioning into diverse brands, ultimately culminated into a self-stimulated end, separate from the primary purpose of the mission of God.

Divergence from the conscious motive of salvation was further galvanized by the adoption of linking Christianity with commerce. Livingstone propagated that Christianity, commerce and civilization were intertwined, and could therefore work to reinforce one another (Manala, 2013). Livingstone’s arguments revolved on the premise that Christianity would be able to restrict slave trade and thereby strive to improve the lives of the indigenous population. In

other words Christianity meant to provide education, morality and acceptable commerce that would enable Africans to trade with Europeans.

2.4. LITERATURE ON VHAVENDA WORLDVIEW

Culture is a concept that encapsulates the attitudes, knowledge, values and manners of a particular society at a particular time and place. Culture comprises of lifestyle traits that contribute to how individuals see the world around them, including how they approach religion or form and learn their belief system.

Dicks (2012, p. 44) defines worldview as: ‘the basic and most complex assumptions that people hold about the constitution of reality, consisting of and being expressed in world interpreting narratives, including symbols and rituals, which provide the foundation which underlies every thought and action, about and toward everything people think and do in life’.

Hiebert (1985) defines worldview as: “basic assumptions about reality which lie behind the beliefs and behavior of a culture”. He proceeds to indicate that every social institution is influenced by three dimensions of culture, namely cognitive, affective and evaluative (Hiebert, 1985).

World-view does not only relate to the way we look at life, the universe and all else, but implies an expression of belief; a belief system held with confidence but not necessarily

substantiated by positive knowledge or proof. The manner in which one perceives their context is determined by their culture. According to Conradie (2014, p. 10) “notions of a worldview tends to place the social construction of reality, that is an understanding of a) the structure of human societies and b) its moral landscape, within a larger frame of reference that incorporates c) scientific insights and that can d) indicate the place of humanity within the cosmos and e) whatever may transcend the cosmos”.

Thabede (2008) enlightens us on the concept of worldview and introduces the Afrocentric paradigm, which he terms as a “social science paradigm premised on the philosophical concepts of traditional Africa. The origins of the African worldview were found in traditional Africa before the emergence of European influences” (Thabede, 2008). He goes further to explain that “although colonisation and the vilification of Africa by Europeans and Arabs modified Africa to some extent, several writers maintain that the philosophical integrity of traditional Africa has survived among continental Africans” (Thabede, 2008).

The missionary enterprise impacted heavily on the religious and cultural landscape of Africa and considerably tinkered with its dominant worldview and value systems. Mission activism entailed new ideas of God, new forms of worship, new and sometimes contrasting worldviews, such as concepts of life after death, as well as new vocabularies to understand this new worldview. In essence this translated to the introduction of new religious practices, calendars, practices, music and the chief instrument of the missionaries, the Bible.

Underneath the issues of worldview and values lay a struggle for power and control of territories between two rival civilizations and powers. Culture, world-view and religion are closely linked; culture as relating to one's value system, laws and practices is interwoven into one's world-view.

The notion of God has always been deep-seated within Vhavenda worldview (Stayt, 1931). Vhavenda belief system was centred on Nwali (also referred to as Raluvhimba and Khuzwane), whom they regarded as the creator of the universe. Ranger, quoting Rennie, confirmed that "the first Tavhatsindi chief in Venda is said in oral tradition to have spoken with Nwali" (1974:14).

The heart of Nwali worship was located at Makonde, and it is understood that the Dzivha and Mbedzi clans contributed to its establishment. The Dzivha and Mbedzi clans were acquainted with the priestly service of Nwali which came with them from Matopo in Zimbabwe. Historically, it has been believed that Nwali revealed himself in places such as, caves or mountains in Venda. Nwali frequented Makonde during the reign of khosi Muthivhi of Vhatavhatsindi. According to Stayt (1931) mount 'Tshavhadinda' (the place of messengers), where the cave that Nwali used to visit is located, was a stronghold of Vhatavhatsindi, under khosi Muthivhi (Stayt, 1931, p. 106).

Vhavenda religious practices were interwoven into their customs and traditional beliefs. They were therefore somewhat negatively inclined to the new Christian religion, because their religion had been passed down from generation to generation.

According to Tshivenda culture, *khosi* is both priest and leader; who serves together with his sister (Makhadzi) as priestess (Matshidze, 2013). Vhavenda also deemed a traditional healer (nanga or maine) as a spiritual mediator between Vhavenda and their ancestors, also included within Vhavenda culture was the seer/ diviner (mungome). A noteworthy feature in Vhavenda culture was the belief in witches and evil spirits, who were deemed the instigators of sicknesses and harm (Munyai, 2007).

When missionaries encountered Vhavenda they had not completely paid attention to Vhavenda worldview and had underrated its staying power (Onyancha, 1989). Even today, though having accepted Christianity, many Africans find it hard to cut links with their worldview.

2.5. CONCLUSION

Chapter two outlined, appraised and elucidated literature on the influence of missionary work on *vhuhosi*. The nature of the study was disclosed and theoretically developed. Works which

were deemed essential for the study were cited and literature was reviewed so as to link the same to the research.

Chapter two deliberated on the institution of African royal traditional administration and governance following the historical interface with missionary activism. An academic undertaking was undergone in order to explore the contrast of Western and African concepts of governance and administration and more importantly, locate how this shaped *vhuhosi* amongst Vhavenda. Data on the extent of this missionary influence from African perspectives is limited and compels further research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In conducting the study the researcher adhered to the concept of qualitative research.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) qualitative research is defined as:

multi method in focus involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives (1994, p. 2).

Qualitative research is effective in the collecting of comprehensive information about on a particular subject within a particular context. In other words qualitative research seeks to provide an interpretation of an intricate experience within a given situation. Thus qualitative

research pursues not only the extraction but depiction of beliefs, norms, conduct and phenomena within a specific social setting.

The advantage of qualitative research is that it is meaningful in nature and also allows a measure of flexibility between the researcher and participant. According to Ely (2001) qualitative research is understood by the characteristics of its method as opposed to a definition. A researcher who adheres to qualitative research design is “concerned with understanding rather than explanation, with naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurement, with the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an outsider as opposed to that of an outsider predominant in the quantitative paradigm” (de Vos, *et al.*, 2005).

The survey of a participant’s worldview and phenomena; through qualitative research leads to a phenomenological study. Such an approach means that the researcher undertakes to explicate the perceptions and experiences of a participant through their own interpretation. In other words the researcher seeks to understand the worldview of a participant who is seeking to understand their own worldview. A phenomenological research design depicts the significance of the lived experiences of a phenomenon or concept for several individuals (P).

Phenomenology as philosophical paradigm signifies a focus not only on peoples experience but on interpretation of their world (Rubin & Babbie, 2009). Such a method aspires to comprehend the significance that people provide to their daily lives (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2011). Hence, this research design was selected so as to expose phenomena through the eyes of those who experienced it directly. All participants were familiar and had encountered the research matter personally at one point or another. This chapter endeavoured to provide descriptions of the participants, the research design, sampling, data collection and ultimately gain a systematic way of solving research problems (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2011).

3.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“African-centered (and its variations as Africa-centered, Afrocentric, Africentric, Afrocentricity, and African-worldview) theory and methodology within the discipline of African studies is understood as the critical analysis of Africana life, history and culture from the perspective of Africana people, with the ultimate goal of changing the life chances of African people” (Carroll, 2012).

The study focuses on an African-centred theory that supported indigenous systems of governance and administration. The purpose was to expose not only the intellectual but cultural, religious and political autonomy of the institution of African traditional leadership.

It reinforced dynamic traditional forms of authority that reflect principles and ideals that are intrinsic to a *Tshivenda* reality.

The study diverges from a Eurocentric interpretation and assumes an Afrocentric perspective that affirms the subjective experience of African leadership. Through an African-centred approach the researcher sought to reveal the covert and at times racist influence of Eurocentric religiosity within the legacy of colonialism and the extent to which, in the context of governance in the modern democratic state, traditional authorities are able to maintain and contribute relevant and effective leadership (Hoskins, 1992).

An African-centered approach allows for autonomous research and scholarship that is not restricted by the superiority delusions and subliminal racist undertones of Eurocentric histories; that sought to undermine and demonize African frames of reference in order to bolster and legitimize Western systems of authority (Reviere, 2001).

3.3. POPULATION AND SETTING

The study was conducted within the Thulamela municipal area and was confined to three mahosi, three pastors and three government officials; who potentially represented the whole region. The study concentrated on the identified participants who were Vhavenda royal leaders, government officials and pastors from churches with missionary backgrounds. The

population comprised male and female leaders, who are residents within the Thulamela municipal area.

The government officials and pastors who were participants in the study were interviewed in their offices and the royal leaders were all interviewed at their royal abodes. The medium of instruction with most of the interviewees was Tshivenda.

3.4. SAMPLING

A general definition of sampling in qualitative research relates to: ‘the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives’ (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015). Sampling is a process that requires a sample to be chosen, where data is extracted in order to understand a particular phenomenon, whilst ensuring that the research population is represented accordingly.

Purposive sampling was opted for the study, because it caters for the selection of specific and relevant participants for the study. Purposive sampling is a technique that deliberately chooses a participant on the basis of the qualities that a participant possesses (Tongco, 2007). It seeks to produce a sample that will answer research questions. Through purposive sampling several participants are requested to serve as guides to a culture, the study identified nine specific participants with appropriate insight into the extent to which missionary activism

shaped and continues to influence *vhuhosi*. The respondents, who were all residents of the Thulamela Municipal area; were comprised of three pastors, three *mahosi* and three government officials. The respondents were interviewed in relation to their understanding of the research problem.

The participants were partly selected because of the contributions that they would be able to make to the study owing to different perspectives from different spheres and experiences with *vhuhosi*. A common feature between the participants was not merely that they were all African but had interactions with *vhuhosi*.

3.5. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Three common research methods in qualitative research are participant observation, focus groups and interviews. For this study, interviews were selected as an ideal data collection technique. Interviews have the ability to extract data beyond a participant's experience (Cresswell, 2007). According to Seidman (1991) "at the root of ...interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1991).

Open-ended and unstructured approaches through to highly structured protocols with preset and standardised questions are able to assist in gaining relevant experiences from participants (Seidman, 1991).

Tshivenda proved to be the apposite medium of instruction for interviewing the participants who were all Vhavenda, even though the interview guide was developed in English. Interview questions during conversations were asked in accordance to a particular order and the respondents were asked the same principal questions, though sometimes in a different sequence.

Interviewees were afforded freedom of expression; in order to create an occasion for detailed information about their experiences. Interviewees were presented with open-ended questions and a semi-structured approach to the interviews also offered a prospect for respondents to explore integral issues (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). A list of preset questions was prepared for the interviewer to follow and guide interviews within reasonable ambits of the topics at hand.

3.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on uncovering the research methodology applied in the study and to further explain how data was collected and analysed. In so doing, the importance of the study was justified and a framework of the research design, sampling method and data collection instrument, was presented.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter four presents the data and research findings from the participants that were part of the research study. Data was attained through one-to-one interviews from nine participants. This chapter is premised on the basis of denoting the collected data through analysis and discussion. The inputs by the participants were Participants' responses were expounded into topics outlined within the data analysis section of the chapter.

The study sought to achieve the following objectives.

- To determine the current state of the institution of *Vhuhosi*
- To analyse the effect of missionary activism on *Vhuhosi*
- To generally probe and explicate covert and overt motives of missionary activism

4.2. DATA ANALYSIS

Following the collection of data, the researcher undertakes to structure the data in order to give significance and thereby transform the same into findings. According to Bilken (1992):

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. (1992, p. 153)

Data analysis entails a concerted effort condensing collected data by extracting significant matter, identifying a model that would enable a constructive communication of the gist of the data. The researcher used McCracken's (1988) process for data analysis which purports that the researcher has utilized at least one theoretical framework to aid the development of the research questions and subsequent data analysis. A synopsis of McCracken's five step analytic process of a semi-structure interview is as follows (McCracken, 1988):

Step one

The **first step** begins with reading and reviewing each interview transcript twice; the first time, for content understanding; the second time, for identification of useful comments noted as observations.

Step two

In the **second stage** of analysis, observations are developed into preliminary descriptive and interpretive categories based on evidence presented in the transcripts, one's literature review, and the theory or conceptual framework used to guide the research. Observations made in the first stage are extended until the "implications and possibilities are more fully played out" (McCracken, 1988, p. 45).

Step three

The **third stage** of the analytic framework consists of thorough examination of these preliminary codes in order to identify connections and develop pattern codes. These observations made in the first two stages are developed in relation to other observations.

Step four

The **fourth stage** of analysis involves a determination of basic themes by examining clusters of comments made by respondents and memos made by the researchers.

Step five

The **final stage** examines themes from all interviews across such groupings, to delineate predominant themes contained in the data. These predominant themes then serve as answers to the research questions, and form the basis for writing up the data.

4.3. DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

The study comprised of nine participants who live within the Thulamela municipal area, and these included three *mahosi*, three pastors and three government officials. All the participants were above the age of fifty years, with the youngest a *khosi*, at age fifty six (56).

4.4. DATA PRESENTATION

The researcher selected and presented data that are not only significant, but representative. Concepts and themes were portrayed in an integrated explanation, which is interpreted in line with the theoretical framework (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Findings identify similarities and differences between participants and adapt the research phenomena within the current social context, whilst detecting and reviewing particular influences.

4.5. INTERVIEWS/OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the researcher depicts the setting and perceptions confronted when engaging the research participants. Thus, revealing the insights of the participants and their approaches to the research topic and objectives of the study. It is also within this section that the willingness of the participants is exposed.

Mahosi who were interviewed were more than welcoming, the first *khosi* to be interviewed was of great assistance with regard to *vhuhosi* protocol necessary for securing an audience with a royal leader. All *mahosi* were interviewed at their royal abodes. *Mahosi* expressed interest in the study and contributed relevant and captivating data.

The initial interviewees were Vhavenda royal leaders, who were followed by the religious leaders from the mainline Christian churches, namely the Lutheran Church, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (formally known as Dutch Reformed Church) and the Roman Catholic Church.

Khosi G.R. Tshikalange of the Tshififi Royal Council was the first royal leader to be interviewed; he was followed by khosi M.A. Ramaru of the Lemana Royal Council and finally thovhele M.P.K. Tshivhase of the Tshivhase Royal Council.

Pastor M.O. Raphalalani was the first religious leader that agreed to be interviewed and our interview was at the Lutheran church premises in Tshakhuma where the first Tshivenda Bible was translated and printed. I then proceeded to interview the second religious leader, who was the only female respondent of the study, Pastor N.M. Magidi, and the interview was conducted in an office at the church premises. The third pastor, Pastor R.G. Netshikulwe, seemed cautious about his answers during our session, even after clarification of all his

concerns. At times he seemed reserved, possibly by the fact that he was being recorded on video. However, as the interview went on, he opened up and responded accordingly.

After finally securing an appointment with him, Mr. H.I. Makhubele was the first government official to be interviewed in his office at the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs. The interview was short yet informative. Mr S.G. Mahada whom retired, was the second government official, whom I interviewed in Mr Makhubele's office. At first he was apprehensive of the interview due to the sensitivity of traditional affairs within the Thulamela municipal area. The last retired government official was Dr J.G. Tshifularo, who was the only academic of all participants. Dr Tshifularo is not only an academic but khosi, who had retired from the Department of Education and is currently at the University of the North West.

The interviews, though transcribed verbatim and translated into English, were conducted in Tshivenda. The research assistant is a Master of Arts in African Studies graduate who is fluent both in English and Tshivenda and has a strong royal background. Their contribution was highly valuable and helped uncover the richness of key Vhavenda royal concepts.

Mahosi, to a reasonable degree, seemed to be precautious of the possible political implications of the interview. Bearing in mind that *vuhosi* is a delicate subject and due to constant royal leadership disputes; the posture of *mahosi* was understandable. In all *mahosi*

interviews, it was very clear that there was a robust sense of cultural esteem for traditional customs and practices.

The pastoral participants on the other hand were extremely interrogative, and insisted on conclusive clarifications of the interview. Nevertheless, after gaining their confidence they were forthcoming and proved notably informative. The researcher could not help but sense apprehension and suspicion during interviews.

The perspectives of the government officials were also interesting and indicated that the topic is indeed a rich one. The participants were able to portray a significant account of the intricacies of *vhuhosi* in relation to the study.

4.6. VALIDATION STAGE

According to Joppe (2000)

“validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull's eye" of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by

asking a series of questions and will often look for the answers in the research of others” (Joppe, 2000).

Validity is integral to qualitative research and is pertains to the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings (Le Comple & Goetz, 1982).

The objective of validation is to determine actual measurement of that which is meant to be measured and the existence thereof, so as to arrive at a concerted analysis without bias. Respondent validation was utilized and this involved acquiring from research participants a response pertaining to initial data, as a mechanism of validating the accuracy of the interpretation of data.

4.7. DISCUSSIONS

The study posed three key questions which comprised of various sub-questions, the questions were presented to three distinct categories of research participants and the questions furnished were conducive for more engagements and discussions. The research participants were selected and divided into the royal, religious and governmental spheres, in order for constructive exploration of the research questions and answers.

4.7.1. What is the current state of the institution of *vhuhosi*?

The opportunity to answer this key question was presented to all the research respondents in all the three different classifications, of which the first to be interviewed were *mahosi* and they elected to respond as follows:

Khosi G.R. Tshikalange was the first *khosi* to be interviewed and gave an enlightening response and said:

Vhuhosi in its entirety, comprising of four levels; king, paramount chief, senior traditional leader and headman; all four including the king are inoperative.

I was invited two months back to a meeting of mahosi, for chiefs only at Thulamela by the mayor and refused to go and indicated that I would not attend and consulted other politicians and told them if they want to attend let us have a meeting first. The reason being that, that vhuhosi does not comply with vhuhosi and does not fulfill the functions of vhuhosi because if I ask a khosi how many disabled people they have, they would not be able to answer me, how many

mifula (marula) trees do they have none would answer, the functions of a khosi are to take care of the disabled and mifula trees as the develop men and women's natural wellbeing, the current mahosi are for money and look only to their salaries at the end of the month and are not near to such.

Khosi M.A. Ramaru expressed a rather detailed perspective through the following statement:

Let me say according to me the structure of vuhosi has been curtailed and ceases to resemble the former, as I was reading in my book there are many occasions where vuhosi disintegrates, firstly when the whites arrived here, they reduced our cattle, goats because they said they were destructive, we do not herd goats around here. If you came across goats on the way, it only means that it is recent and is not like before, they even reduced cattle because it was said that they are causing soil erosion and such did not conform to Tshivenda. A person was deemed wealthy and more so a

khosi, by their herds; that is why I say vuhosi continues to disintegrate.

We lived here when the whites came, especially the missionaries, who told us that since they have brought the church here they do not want to hear any murumba (drums), dzingoma (drums) including traditional customs, must cease. There was no more murundu (initiation schools) because of the white missionaries who had denied us, vhusa, murundu, domba (female initiation school), nanga (traditional flute) even the playing of drums when people were being joyous it was no longer wanted you can hear that we arrive to a point where things of vuhosi are no longer important. Today children no longer go to murundu we can no longer say that you go to murundu, if we are talking of two weeks that is not going to murundu such a person comes back still hurt so you can see that vuhosi is not as powerful as it used to be. Secondly people they no longer bring pfumbavhulwa (tribute) to misanda(junior royal leaders) there is nothing it's no longer there, maybe at Ha-Tshivhase which is afar, the towns people no longer subscribe to such.

Thovhele M.P.K. Tshivhase answered the question by stating that:

The posture of vuhosi differs from that of the past and as for the matter of the missionaries, the missionaries came here; took land from mahosi and initiated their farms, but however helped us with schools so that the children of mahosi, like our fathers, attended school and up to date this left vuhosi as no longer as strong, as that of the time of our forefathers. This is a wrong which I identified, the coming of missionaries ended many things, there used to be farming of dzunde (royal farm) and everything else that was done the Venda way. According to Tshivenda we used to worship the same God but in different ways and when the missionaries came, they showed us a new way to worship, which still left us praying to the same God who created us and this however caused the weight of vuhosi to be less, even than that of old.

Thovhele Tshivhase also relayed a contrast between European concepts of royalty and that of Tshivenda and he said:

Let me put it this way, our culture as Vhavenda did not entirely become fragmented, I will give an example; vuhosi in Africa still exists while vuhosi (royalty) and their kingdoms in the west have collapsed. As for us we served the masses, we used to have madzunde (royal farms) where all the maize was placed at the royal abode and if there were people who had no food they would be given, be it drought or for whatsoever reason. According to our culture a khosi or thovhele is not meant to be wealthy, he must provide for his servants and if they become wealthy he also becomes wealthy, that is why if you look at the west they collapsed because they would build palaces of diamonds and so on; and people revolted because they were suffering. We are left with a culture which as leaders, dictates that we should not be selfish, by helping our people by way of a dzunde, such was done for the sake of stability and to avoid suffering.

Mahosi's perceptions discussion

A survey into the responses provided by *mahosi* above, indicate that *vuhosi* has subsisted despite various political encounters. However, this has affected *vuhosi* and to a reasonable

degree caused it to remain in essence culturally significant, but a shadow of its political authority. It may be deduced that the diverse concepts of *vhuhosi* have withered in the dawn of western encounters be they in the form of colonialism or missionary work. The line between colonialism between the colonialists and missionaries seems to be very thin.

Mahosi maintain that *vhuhosi* was subject to its own functions and values, which currently are a far cry from the original. The spiritual, social and economic dimensions of *vhuhosi* have been influenced. In certain instances the missionaries had not given enough consideration to the customs and values of the indigenous population and its leadership.

In respect to what the spiritual leaders of missionary churches who encountered missionary work amongst Vhavenda had to say, the following was unearthed:

Pastor M.O. Raphalalani mentioned the following:

Vhuhosi currently differs from vhuhosi in the past, vhuhosi in the past used to rule according to royal lineage but the current vhuhosi has been influenced by westernization. Mahosi in Tshakhuma were each allocated a church by the Lutheran church as a way of consolidating political power; as a mechanism to gunner influence in the church. The elders

within the church insisted that mahosi be involved in church, although, in the past mahosi were not fully accustomed with the affairs of the church but when Schwellnus arrived, it was during the time of war, he was welcomed and seen as a protector and that is why he was given a place to stay between the two rivers Muguvhukuvhu and Bunyika west because 'mabunyu' (Zulu) would invade, whilst mahosi would opt to be stationed on higher ground.

Musanda became flaccid, he did not have power as they have now, mahosi did not have power, they would just watch. When the Germans came they showed more good things and they were defeated. They (missionaries) would even burn houses, they could even call the police and you would get into trouble. It was as if Vhuhosi was subject to the priesthood because of their knowledge. Mahosi were subjected to the issue of constant inspections by the police, for alcohol and the shooting of dogs, so they (mahosi) tended to hide from afar. Thus trying to go to them would be very difficult and the Germans would have to send spies, even our khosi used to stay in the mountains

at Mangwele and he only came to stay down here recently in 1971.

Pastor N.M. Magidi said that:

The present vuhosi, in consideration of the current missionaries that arrived after their predecessors, do not regard it (vuhosi) highly but Vho-Nelwamondo Thavha vho-Calvin Ndaedzo because of all the churches we have at Lwamondo, he visits them and we also do likewise; he loves the church in a great way.

The missionaries had to pay homage in order to get land; they were given land at Dzwerani because they had gone to Lwamondo, for land at Ribanda they had also gone to Lwamondo, for land at Lutandani they had also gone to Lwamondo.

Pastor R.G. Netshikulwe responded by stating that:

When I contrast the present day vuhosi and vuhosi of the past 40 years, I see a difference in the concept of vuhosi and spirituality. Their understanding has changed; in the past those whom we had worked with had difficulty in understanding and accepting the missionaries, as they had various perceptions, some feared they may have had ulterior motives, which; by having opened themselves to, they would dominate them.

I remember at one point in a certain village which I will not mention, the musanda of the area having seen the place where we had established a dwelling place in order to work the with people in relation to spiritual matters. He did not want to understand nor receive us, he tried to get us to go to a different area without giving reasons why it would not possible in that area.

However, the understanding of the government of the time was supported by these mahosi but currently, I have observed that

people are more educated and the understanding of many mahosi pertaining to spiritual matters has been affected, where you find some mahosi still believing in their traditional worship, yet indicating that God is greater and that churches should exist in the villages because they are helpful when it comes to social cohesion in families and in the community. Even for mahosi the time to deal with disputes would be shortened and we would also have some of mahosi in different churches.

Pastoral perceptions

An analysis of the pastoral responses indicates that missionaries had different approaches towards *vhuhosi*, it is these approaches that have left various marks, on the various aspects of *vhuhosi*. The missionaries seem to have been strategic in their encounters with *vhuhosi*, in some instances for the good and in some for the bad. Depending on missionary strategy, some missionaries were able to work with *vhuhosi* and maintain cohesion. There is agreement that because of this, *vhuhosi* was affected, some aspects that were affected may be identified as:

- Land
- Traditional worship

- Leadership
- Educational systems

In response to this question the government officials presented interesting answers about *vhuhosi* in light of missionary activism within the region.

Vho H.I. Makhubele answered the question by saying:

Actually, the current status of vhuhosi at the present moment now, I can say: now it is in position, meaning that it is now able to identify its own culture freely by demonstrating it and by also implementing it in various communities. Meanwhile during the times of the missionaries it was very difficult because missionaries relied in studying and subscribing to an education system that was centred on English as a medium of instruction and reliance on their own expression of religion, even prayer.

During that time they were not exercising their own culture freely, they were somehow somehow obliged to follow the steps of the missionaries as a modus operandi of the time, but at the

present moment, we see them busy with their culture, whereby they conduct their traditional ceremonies freely without any hindrances. Even the constitution of the Republic of South Africa also gives them the mandate to exercise their rights freely, according to the constitution; under an act that has been introduced for them to exercise their powers freely, the Limpopo Traditional Leadership Governance Act 6 of 2005.

Vho S.G. Mahada communicated his response by stating:

The question has to possible answers, you may say it (vhuhosi) is strong on the one hand and not strong on the other hand, because currently you will find that all mahosi irrespective of ethnic group are governed by a single law in South Africa which pertains to vhuhosi.

Whereas, in the past, every ethnic group did according to their own norms and customs. Some of the power that mahosi had, has been currently stripped, maybe to cite an example: one can no longer issue a 'trekpas' (banishment letter) if they have committed an offence in the village, this is something that has

decreased. Concerning the cases they would be able to prosecute; there are those which they no longer have authority over, whereas in the past they would be engaged in different legal matters and would see how they go about it.

He went on to also mention that:

There were particular positives that the missionaries had brought, like the accessibility of education to the community, especially through the word of God. With which one may understand that after people had believed in God, the people would not be problematic in understanding certain things, but a particular matter they (missionaries) would delve into was vuhosi, since the land that would be demarcated to them would end up mission houses, where you would find that everybody there including the resident believers; when they would have to be buried, it would be said that they would be buried at a believers demarcated grave site. Meaning that, this was something they brought which was non-existent before within the community because the only other place we knew as sacred for burial was 'tshiendulu'(royal burial site) for

vhuhosi. It was like 'commoners' had their own 'tshiendulu' stemming from the church.

So because in many places, the missionaries penetrated the territory through mahosi, this culminated in some of them delving into vhuhosi, so as to determine according to them, if there was a prince who was associated with the church, whom they would seek to influence as one who should assume the throne, despite the fact that according to Tshivenda vhuhosi is in the hands of the family royal council.

Dr J.G. Tshifularo replied by revealing that:

Vhuhosi is not as strong as it was in the past like we had heard and had observed. There are several things that I have pinpointed as causes, just as we had conversed before we began (the interview); economic power assumed dominance, civilization, technology, politics and other various intricacies prompting it to appear feeble, including issues today, which upon observation have influence; mahosi are finding themselves in conduct which when examined undermine

vhuhosi. More so, as I have observed the behavior of some of our royal leaders, looking at what they do which causes them to be undermined by their subjects, most of which are even more educated and more inquisitive, even asking why is this happening like this or like that?

However, something that I see that is making things worse, is the system of governance which has changed; mahosi have been stripped of the majority of power they had. The law now questions most of the things they used to do and some of the things done by mahosi were not decent when aligned to western laws which question everything; the rights of individuals were violated without question where now people question. So it would mean that a khosi who is not educated and without knowledge of the law would find themselves in trouble when judged according the law and that is diminishing the authority that mahosi had. With some, their current lifestyles are demeaning, however, where culture is still strong everything is thriving because mahosi were the ones who were custodians of various things. When churches started they were permitted by mahosi, even if we look to the Bible, churches

were initiated by mahosi, politics were initiated by mahosi but there are now many who have overtaken this, thus weakening the positions of mahosi until now.

Government officials' perceptions

In light of the responses by the government official of the current dispensation, one is inclined to understand that African traditional leadership and governance is a complex institution. From the government officials, it may be understood that *vhuhosi* has changed, not only through missionary activism only but due to several factors. *Mahosi* have regained and have lost certain powers, in consideration that some of the laws that destabilised their institution are still in place.

Summary of the key concepts of missionary influence on *vhuhosi*

	MAHOSI	VHAFUNDZI	GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
Current state of <i>vhuhosi</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> weaker dispossessed of land functionally challenged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not like before more understanding of the Gospel more educated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> weaker in other areas and stronger in other areas in a better position than in the past
Missionary influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> economic social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> spiritual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> culture legal
Motive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> power land resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gospel education health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> power counselling
Guideline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customary law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitution

4.7.2. Did/does missionary activism have a direct or indirect influence on the institution?

The aim of this question was to extract the insights of the participants on missionary activism and its direct or indirect influence on the institution of *vhuhosi*; or lack thereof. The question would serve to expose the historical implications of missionary activism and any contrasting interpretations amongst the different institutions.

Khosi G.R. Tshikalange responded to the second question by mentioning that:

The priest of the church at the time used to move around with the police, wherever they were there would be police, whenever the pastor was and if defied, you were calling for trouble, which is why all these mahosi allowed for land to be taken.

A khosi, even by name is called 'nemavu' (landowner), meaning the owner of the land, during the time of land legislation which was in 1913. In parliament there were no mahosi or their representatives in 1913, out of a hundred per cent only thirteen percent of land was allocated to black people and eighty seven per cent for whites, that is we live in small areas and they live in huge areas. Eighty seven per cent for whites and thirteen percent of land was allocated to black people.

So a khosi has no say because even when the law was passed in Cape Town they were not there, you had to be part of or have a party in parliament, mahosi were just following, afraid of going to jail.

Speaking specifically about the missionaries he said:

They (missionaries) were said to be people vested with the Word of God, but that was not true, they were serving to prep people about the white government which was on its way. They were opening a way for the government and that is why Paul Kruger was able tax Vhavenda, and war arose between the boers and Mphephu because of the amount taxed; bearing in mind that the one talking about the tax is the same one who was preaching the Word on Sunday about God?.

They knew that if they did not rid us of our spirituality, they would not defeat us, because firstly, they cause you not give you children African names, you have to give them the names of Joseph and Mary from there you turn against your ancestors.

Khosi M.A. Ramaru said:

Let me start appropriately, by saying: their coming was sinister and without goodwill because those who realized it, were quick to admonish it, that is why I am saying that there were those who saw it and were disgusted and were against it. It's like it did not take us anywhere. Firstly, when these missions arrived, they with the book (Bible) in mind but had an agenda to get people to embrace certain ideas. It is as if they were hiding the contents of the book or giving a superficial aspect of this book and not communicating what was inside this book because if they were using what was inside the book, we would not have all this other stuff.

We would have merely had those who chose to believe and those who chose not to. Let me say, they brought the good that they brought but at an expense. I had tried to indicate that those who were not permitted to have herds, were merely not allowed; one cannot stop others from something before they themselves see the evil thereof and you can indicate the they should no longer do such.

As musanda I cannot say to the subjects: you must no longer farm even if it is in your own yard, I would not be influencing them correctly. When they came they reached certain decisions and said: ten cows per family, there should be no more goats, chickens should be injected and what for what was the reason? Why did they not divulge to us what the illness was; this left the community confused about what is happening. Directives were commissioned indicating that a young lady should not be pregnant, if she got pregnant the parents could be banished from the area and that was the punishment. I am talking about the missionaries and not about our indigenous churches, such as the apostolic churches. Even though the apostolic churches had be around for years, they did not have such rules. When the whites came, they said a girl child must go to school and must have passed standard six.

They were secretly working with the government in order to achieve what they wanted even though their schools were mission schools the hope was that at the end of the day the people would submit to the government”.

Thovhele M.P.K. Tshivhase in his answer revealed that:

The missionaries came and showed our people that when you a young lady is initiated into the rites of passage, it is not right; all Tshivenda customs are not permissible and sinful, and this left the authority of vuhosi or their opinion less powerful. The subjects no longer frequented misanda for initiations because female initiation was presented as evil and everything that was done at misanda was criticised in order to have people go to their churches and this caused conflicts between vuhosi and the missionaries.

He also mentioned:

In my view, culture is not static and depends on the dispensation, even during the time of the bible things continued to change even until Jesus came and continued to change. Missionaries helped us to discern the good from the bad and on the other hand they were wrong to take land from others without returning it; let me give you an example Ribanda in the past whilst Venda was still an independent state: it was

deemed as part of South Africa because there were missionaries Tshakhuma. If you came across the boers you would need a passport even until today that place is not under the ownership of khosi.

In relation to the influence of missionary activism he also said that:

Today we can read and write, having a greater understanding of education is key, a leader should go to school.

Discussion

From the abovementioned inputs by *mahosi*, it would be justified to detect a reasonable disappointment at the approach and results of missionary activism. One thing that stands out is that *mahosi* acknowledge the significance of education and its positive influence on Vhavenda. However, it is clear that missionary activism had an unwelcomed influence on the culture, social structure and traditional activities of Vhavenda. The cultural expression of Vhavenda was limited and attempts to disassociate it with *vhuhosi* were made, with the purpose to redirect its loyalty to missionary activism.

It may be inferred that *mahosi* were compelled to submit to the laws of the outsider, both missionaries and the colonial government, which at times seemed to use each other in order to achieve their objectives.

In acknowledgement of the sentiments that pastors of missionary churches who historically played a role in missionary activism amongst *vhuhosi*, they chose to express the following about missionary influence:

Pastor M.O. Raphalalani of the Lutheran church answered with the following:

My view is that: when the Germans arrived, you know when got here; particularly in Tshakhuma, more so the Gieseke family who are grandchildren to Schweltnus the founder of the mission work and after him came, the Gieseke family. These people had a connection with a place called Sasolburg and they had to find people to go work at a company that had just started called SASOL meaning that all these people would have to become submissive in order to be employed.

The SASOL buses used to stay here, they were called TEPA and with buses here, people list their names in order to apply

for employment and your name would be checked against a registered. At times you were told that there is a problem that you ran away from school hence you would be disciplined by having to work three months without pay, after those three months you issued with a special permit for the use of going to work but going to work at the company under the Gieseke group at SASOL that is why there are many people from Tshakhuma at Sasolburg and that is how they left; meaning that such an individual would be venerated and held in high esteem.

He continued to mention that:

Khosi issued no permit and there was nothing he meted out, khosi became a commoner. He did nothing; everything was handled at the mission station. We grew up knowing that the principal authority over musanda was at the mission station, you used to have tree here called 'muserenga' which when musanda had a matter; would sit under the tree and discuss with the priest, expressing his problems and needs, and afterward mount his horse and go to the mountains. Ironically,

the priest never went up the mountain, the royal leader is the one who had to come down. I also mentioned the matter of health; that had a significant influence, the issue of schools and clothing.

Pastor N.M. Magidi of the said:

Yes, they had an influence that said that people should pay homage to their mahosi, the church is the church, God is God and mahosi are mahosi. They would say pay homage to your khosi, we are of the church and when we come for church it is time for church.

Vhamusanda Netshimbupfe vho-Sengani is the one who, when he had come of age had welcomed the boers in his area but did not forsake his ritual practices but the boers would find him about his affairs and would not cease going and after he was done they would commence with church and speak of the God of heaven.

Pastor R.G. Netshikulwe of the Catholic Church said:

Missionary influence in this area in the Venda we are in Thulamela, Vhembe, I witnessed its significance so much so in education and more so in taking care of the less fortunate, so much so in health orphaned and more so poverty stricken children are there other means provided for assistance. In relation to education there are many things and people whom today are principals and on other professions through bursaries from there and in health clinics were brought closer

Pastors' perception

The abovementioned responses from the pastors, when contrasted to those of *mahosi*, tend to present a one sided affair, in that only the good is presented. Partially, I perceive because maybe in their areas of operation they did not encounter major conflicts and partially because the respondents were very careful in their responses, unlike *mahosi*.

Discussion

While there is a difference in perception, by implication there should be a difference in the influences that each observed. The pastoral respondents seem to focus on the community work they did, as opposed to any specific encounter in the political realm.

The government officials had the following to say:

Vho H.I. Makhubele stated that:

Influences yes, there were good influences done by missionaries and the positives are; number one, they introduced schools in our communities, now people are educated because of the missionaries, which is good and they introduced discipline through their religion and uplifted the standard of living of the children of that area who had followed the missionary steps.

He further mentioned that:

Something which I acknowledge as negative was not done intentionally by the missionaries themselves but virtue of human error that accompanied missionary religion, whereby individuals assumed other religions were satanic and that is an area where I detected negative attitudes being exercised.

Vho S.G. Mahada expressed the following:

Wherever the influence reached, it seemed to have had an impact, because in most cases it affected Vhothovhele (senior royal leaders) it did not occur to junior royal leaders, it usually affects Thovhele and you will find that a Thovhele may have thirty, seventy or sixty junior leaders under him, thus if he is influenced then it filters to that territory.

The positives are that they brought light in terms of education and health because the arrival in order to establish their churches caused many to cease believing in their traditional worship, with some being given new names as an indication of their influence. Some even changed their traditional attire in order to put on dresses; it means that they had done a lot.

However where it seems they took a wrong turn, was when they entered into the sphere of vuhosi because spirituality or religion should not have come to be associated with vuhosi, where, they now wanted to influence the incumbent; whereas that is the duty of the Makhadzi and Makhotsimunene (council of elders) they take over a duty that is not theirs.

Dr J.G. Tshifularo disclosed the following:

I am of the Tshivhase clan, if we are to take a look locally at Ha-Mphaphuli clan and Tshivhase clan there is a big difference, at Ha-Mphaphuli they tried by all means for the Bible to be translated. I am sure you know the person who commissioned the Bible to be translated from English to Tshivenda was of Ha-Mphaphuli, whereas at Ha Tshivhase, if you take look; that is where the mission stations were, we have Maungani which is at Tshivhase, we have Khalavha; it is at Tshivhase, we have Vhufuli; it is at Tshivhase, we have Makonde; it is at Tshivhase and another place that had a mission station was Tshakhuma, all the other mission stations including Tshidimbini the majority of them are at Tshivhase.

It means that they allowed these pastors to come and preach to the people. The missionaries did not just go to all these other places; you can notice that they were looking for places with good soil, where it was fertile so that they would be able to stay. Although, they were coming to preach they also had an agenda that had an influence on governance because in hindsight, it helped people to know the Bible and be educated and on the other hand it weakened vuhosi. The missionaries had acquired considerable power to the extent they could influence that if a khosi wanted to say something having been endorsed by the priest, it was then highly regarded.

If you look at all the hospitals in Venda they were established by missionaries they were built on Tshivhase soil, all of them, like Siloam it is at Ha-Tshivhase, Tshilidzini is at Ha-Tshivhase, Vhufuli is at Ha-Tshivhase, Tshidimbini is at Ha-Tshivhase, all the major hospital were built at Ha-Tshivhase. So the influence of priest on mahosi had an impact, although you look at vuhosi of Ha-Tshivhase was strong maybe because Vho-Tshivhase was strong and he also had a great influence, it's just when it came to education, over at Ha-

Mphaphuli it were it emerged earlier and even stronger than Ha-Tshivhase”.

Regarding the positive aspects of missionary activism he said:

On touching on the positives and negatives of missionary influence: on the positives pertaining to something that identified as helpful was that, here at Ha-Tshivhase is where there were Mirundu (initiation schools), they were permissible until some years when people were influenced to take their children to hospital and of course this was enhanced by civilisation but if we are looking at the positive side, we see that development came upon mahosi and many became educated.

The problem was that they were politicizing church in a way that they wanted to control, especially the Dutch Reformed church. They had boer influence when they sought more power and that is why it appeared as if mahosi became rebellious for they were being stripped of power. For instance Vho-Tshivhase who was ultimately arrested and banished, Vho-

Tshikalange is one of the people who suffered under the missionaries in relation to the government and money had a great influence because those who were serving as pastors, I remember one by the name of Fobbe at Georgholtz he had communication with Germany. It is said he used the radios he had.

The influence he had was such that he was able to know how vuhosi operated because they had penetrated to a point of knowing the language and culture and this assisted the boers who were then able to defeat us. In terms of governance, by virtue of those who were working as missionaries instead of just preaching the word of God; another thing they did was to study the culture, behaviour and where the center of power of is located and in so doing give feedback to the others so that they may plan and ultimately like I had mention earlier on, influence; bearing in mind that power is based on wealth, money, economy and they ended up controlling us until today.

Government officials' perceptions

Undeniably, to the government officials, education comes across as a major positive introduced by the European missionaries. However, they do note that African religious expression was negatively affected.

Discussion

Though it was implied that human error may have played a part, it may be understood from the officials that missionaries went beyond the religious by seeking to influence the political affairs of African traditional leadership and governance. In other words their agenda was not entirely pure.

4.7.3. What were the motives of missionary work in Venda?

This question was meant to decipher the real motives of missionary activism within the Venda region.

Khosi G.R. Tshikalange relayed the following:

The primary reason for coming was not to bring the word of God, but to take political authority; the issue of the Bible was

far from them because with political power they knew it would include minerals in the ground and that they would be extracting coal and would be able to export it to their own people.

They had not come to bring peace, they came to rule through the guise of Word of God and Jesus Christ; that is why when we grew up we knew that at the pastors place, tea is drunk with sweet sugar and because you will be drinking their tea, it would mean you must respect them and also look for employment because they caused us not to work. They were depriving our farming because we were not supposed to farm next to the riverbed, for they said the soil would mess-up the water but they knew that the maize would stop hunger and that is why Rev. Chikane during the seventies, when he was being asked why he was involved in the struggle he responded by saying because the church came and bound people and the same church must be used to free people.

Khosi M.A. Ramaru expressed the following:

No, here I disagree, they had not brought the Gospel they had come to lull us, to tame us to suppress us so that we may be subservient and that is why you hear me today saying there are many things that will never happen again, mirundu (initiation schools) are dying, there is no child who goes to mirundu for two weeks, there is no such thing, it can't happen. If vuhosi was still alive like in the past they would at least allow a child to go for a month.

Thovhele M.P.K. Tshivhase divulged that:

With regard to that, it varied, it was subject to the missionaries that came, on whether they were they Swiss, Germans or Anglicans, it depended on them. There were missionaries that were being used by the boer government to hurt other people at Ha-Tshivhase, at Georgholtz we had pastor Fobbe who lived amongst the black people and when the boers saw that and how he was corresponding with misanda, that is when he was banished around 1970 and they sent him back to Germany. There were missionaries such as the Dutch reformed who hurt black people causing the

government to do bad things to them. It depended on how they came and also on their purpose for coming now I perceive that other missionaries helped and others did not.

Discussion

Though the missionaries and their objectives differed, it may be understood that mahosi were not convinced that the sole motive of missionary activism was to preach the Gospel. It seems there were discrepancies between the Gospel ideal and its implementation.

Pastor M.O. Raphalalani expressed himself by revealing that:

I perceive that all these people who came; the Dutch, including Jan van Riebeeck, when they came they had intended to be pioneers, to be discoverers and the ones to give those places names, I sense that was the original objective. Beuster and Schwellnus initially arrived at Ga-Matlala in Botlokwa, then they came in 1872 they reached this side.

I discern their intent was to discover new terrain, as sent by their churches, in this case the Berlin mission. They were

Germans of the Berlin mission; they would locate an area and establish a mission station.

Pastor N.M. Magidi exposed that:

These people according to me, bear in mind these people had no homes you see, it was another way of getting land you see, they have no homes because recently the politicians were saying they should return back to the oceans where they come from they are red ants. The way they used to conduct their affairs it was as if; I remember Ha-Davhana many things were sent by the whites to vha-musanda (royal leader), it is as if they were not just bringing the word of God there was something they wanted but they were not transparent.

Pastor R.G. Netshikulwe revealed that:

When I look at the missionaries whom I encountered, as I had indicated above about their influence in the community, I saw

them as people who were called, we have what is called vocation, a calling to achieve a particular work, so these people were called to various areas some ended up in the priesthood and sisterhood on the side of the females and did so having being sent by their own people many of them came from abroad and their own people had sent them and saw to it how they travel, what they it and we did not see anything that indicated that they had to profit in any way financial and sent it back abroad.

The main thing was that those who were abroad sent assistance that catered for their food and dwellings and transport without being burdened in the work of God. So their passion was focused on the people that they were serving and develop them, to take them from inferiority to a better standard of living, physically, spiritually and so on.

Pastors' perception

Interestingly, the African spiritual leaders who had played a role or observed missionary activism seem to have had challenges with the motives of the missionaries. The

understanding is that missionary work was about the Gospel, however, it may be inferred that there was a possibility that, once in the field the motive may have been altered, conceivably by the colonial government or financial needs.

Vho H.I. Makhubele mentioned that:

To me their main aim and objective when they came to our area of jurisdiction, firstly, it was to educate a black person to understand different languages and to live according to their (missionaries) own style of good health, diet and medication.

He went on to add:

Their motives were good; we may not say a 100 percent but at least 85 percent were good.

He further indicated that:

According to me and an observation I had done, they did not get such big land that one may deem as take all the land of khosi.

Vho S.G. Mahada said the following:

It does not appear as if it was just about preaching the Word of God only, because most of them in the places that they sought to stay, you would find that it would be equated to a farm, it was a large area. This would mean that they already own this land, even today when some of the owners want their farms they have to lodge a claim as an indication that they had ended up owning those places.

Dr J.G. Tshifularo went on to say:

They were not just here for the word of God you can see that they wanted to take over the land and control and the only thing they can do is preach the Gospel and control the food. If you know the story of Nokowza in the Eastern Cape where they (missionaries) said God is bringing new things everything must be utterly killed and done so quickly because a day is coming where new things will come. They took a tape recorder and placed it in the bush and preached those things. The people killed everything believing that when that day came

God will bring new things, beautiful, fresh, new cows and everything wonderful and everything they had had to die.

I mean they knew very well that if these people have nothing they will go hungry and if they go hungry there is no other way but to come and beg. There is nobody who has no money and poor and has power, if you lack, you have no power but have to beg from the one who has. Even if they do have the same power as yours but if you have nothing that individual seems to assume greater power. So it's true the pastors brought the word of God, as we observe they helped many know that we all have come to know, that we live through Christ and that God exists.

We read the Bible and know everything but seemingly there was another agenda that eventually took land from us, it took wealth, it took control and it took vuhosi to a point where people were even told how many cows to have, and small farms. There were madzunde (royal farm) in the past mahosi used to have madzunde where poor would be able to have something to eat and many other things. There was nothing

such as a poor person, if they went to musanda they would find food all those things are no longer. If you check the Bible helped a lot because the bible many learnt to read but behind all these things this were disappearing before our very eyes

Discussion

The missionary motive from a distance is very clear and in essence is to seek the lost and make them disciples of Jesus Christ. However, a closer look at the results and the process towards those results leaves a different picture.

What makes the motives of missionary activism questionable is the association of the missionaries with the colonial government, the issue of land, treatment of the African indigenous population, the disregard of African culture and even an education system that seemed to lean towards a particular stance. A conflict of thought persists and seems to rise and expose itself from the discrepancies of what the motives were said to be, in contrast to what history reveals to have transpired.

Despite all the questionable aspects of missionary activism amongst *Vhavenda*, much good was achieved that left *Vhavenda* in certain instances in a better position. With missionaries came advanced health and education systems, technology and an array of other developments

which had both positive and negative implications. For the most part *mahosi*, pastors and government officials expressed a sense of uneasiness about the quality of why missionaries came to the African continent.

4.7.4. African Traditional Spirituality

Under this theme, it materialised from *mahosi* that Tshivenda traditional royal governance and administration subscribes to a system of worship that has been passed from generation to generation. In other words, Vhavenda had a traditional religion, in that they believed in God and gods, they had an approach to prayer, sacrifice and interpretations of the divine.

Awolalu (1991) defines African traditional religion as follows:

It can be defined as the inborn and aboriginal religion of Africans, embraced by the forefathers of the present generations. It is described as the religion that emerged from the sustaining faith of the forebears of the present generation of Africans passed from generation to generations and still

practiced today by the present generation of Africans
(Awolalu, 1991).

Nyamiti (1984) states the following about African indigenous religion:

The main feature of AIR is the whole of the African worldview, which forms the essential characteristics. One of the best ways of starting authentic dialogue with AIR is to have a sound knowledge of the central themes of the African worldview, together with the people's problems, needs and aspirations (Nyamiti, 1984).

The advent of Christian missionary activism befell an indigenous population that was conscious of God, and arguably had knowledge about God. The missionaries took a dim view of this and relegated the Tshivenda indigenous religion to mere ancestral worship and superstition. Having done so, missionaries branded all that had to do with Vhavenda culture and spirituality as wicked. However, it is apparent that some customs within the traditional Tshivenda did become out dated and irrelevant, hence the need for either modification, adoption and or extinction.

The attitude towards traditional leaders needed appreciation for their dual office as leader and priest of a particular Vhavenda community. In certain instances it seemed that missionaries were in competition with *vhuhosi* and various diverse Tshivenda cultural systems. Mahosi were not easily converted, as this would hamper them from conducting Tshivenda sacrificial rites as priest.

Khosi G.R. Tshikalange gave an account:

When I got arrested in 1965 it stemmed from a confrontation with a missionary by the name Louw having come to Mbilwi, seeking to make prayer at the palace and I refused saying even royal offspring do not enter here with their shoes on and by so doing I had offended him. I kicked him out and he said he during the time of Raluswielo they used to pray there, I refused. What had been done was flawed and I refused, explaining that royal children are not even allowed to wear shoes within the place and you want to come and pray here.

From there came Pieteron the commissioner after I had clashed with Louw, who had told Pieteron that Tshikalange threw me out the palace and I said: I am the one who comes to your church, not

you coming here, we don't want prayer. We just don't want it, prayer is unwelcome at the palace that is why we pay homage, which is our prayer. For after prayer, it instigated an effort to takeover governance; that is why the Bible said do not permit yourselves to be baptized by Paul, because if you are baptized by Paul who is a Roman, the Romans will follow in order to invade the land.

Tshivenda culture is vigorously suffused into Vhavenda spirituality and religious expression. Thus, restraining Vhavenda culture in order to influence with, instill or even impose western ideals for Christianity, eventually such an exercise leans, reverts or mutates into African traditionally inspired religious expressions. As indicated by some of the pastoral respondents, the missionaries tried to introduce Christianity alongside African traditional worship and this culminated in people who would attend church but if need be, they would secretly adhere to their traditional ways of worship. At times missionaries tried to take *mahosi* out of the equation and focus on their subjects, this too was challenging because *mahosi* would fight for spiritual authority over their subjects.

The missionary enterprise would have fared better had it endeavoured to have a thorough understanding of Tshivenda cultural expressions which were and continue to be interweaved within Vhavenda religious expression. Presentation of Tshivenda culture as a transformative

and relevant vessel for the impartation of the Gospel would not have come across in several cases as a threat, which the indigenous population would have had to defend themselves by secretly or subconsciously finding themselves inclined towards their traditional religious roots.

4.7.5. Missionaries as colonial proxies

Arguably, a distinction between the missionaries and the government of the time was almost none existent. The participants within the categories of *mahosi* and government officials in particular, in relaying their responses, referred to ‘whites’ meaning both the missionaries and colonialists, without indicating a strong distinction between the two. One khosi mentioned that there is nowhere it is made evident that they, at least, openly conflicted with one another.

On the other hand, the pastoral participants cited instances where the missionaries and the government worked together and where they did not. However, history has shown that missionaries meddling in the political landscape exposed exactly where their true loyalties lay. Missionaries were not only partisan to the interests of the government but actively colluded with the government in order to influence the culture, economics and politics of the indigenous people. Such undertakings by the missionaries presented contradictions that hindered acceptance of the Gospel.

The missionaries expected Vhavenda to trust them, when one moment they were preaching the Gospel and one moment they were doing the bidding of the government, whereas what they were doing was contrary to the Gospel that they had just preached.

Respondents divulged that the missionaries though having come as visitors had acquired a lot of power. This was mainly because of the support of the government, missionaries would move around with the police and everybody who would defy them would be dealt with harshly, as some of the participants had revealed. Even *mahosi*, had to acknowledge the power which was at the disposal of the missionaries. For *khosi* to be hearkened to, an endorsement by a missionary was needed, missionaries had access to the government that *vhuhosi* did not have. Missionaries had the capacity to discharge spies, issue permits, collect taxes and were almost at liberty to do as they willed because of the support they had, they even divided the community by have others stay at the mission house and not allow them to visit their families. Clearly, it would be naïve to perceive missionary activism as independent of the government and what it sought to achieve. Due to this *vhuhosi* suffered and *mahosi* became helpless as their land and authority was being hijacked by those who claimed they had come to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Missionary activism proved not only to be strategic in the disintegration of the culture of Vhavenda, but functioned to espouse the values and interests that protracted and replicated its hegemonic control. Missionaries evolved into colonial proxies in the name of the Gospel

and reflected themselves superior to *vhuhosi*, leaving *vhuhosi* to fall short of fulfilling their true functions

4.7.6. Racism

An irony that rears its head within the missionary activism discourse amongst Vhavenda and their *mahosi*, is the element of racism. Missionaries challenged several injustices for the sake of the Gospel, but there is seldom a strong voice presented against racism. Missionaries, probably not all; knowingly and unknowingly embraced a degree of racial superiority, that consisted of racial attitudes and approaches. One of the pastors mentioned that the ‘boers’, meaning missionaries, would rather drop something into the hand of a black person rather than have direct contact with a black person.

Logically, the colonial government’s policies furthered a discriminatory agenda founded on prevailing racist views and behaviour. At times, ignorantly; the worldview of those who were meant to be influenced, educated, governed and converted was negated. Thus, missionary influence was marred by racist tendencies which in turn created a superficial Christianity that merely suppressed the cultural identities of Vhavenda. Even to this day most of the churches in this country are drawn along racial lines.

4.8. FURTHER DISCUSSIONS

The questions that were posed to the participants managed not to only unearth profound responses, but they were able to lay a foundation for rich discussions on particular aspects of the missionary era that necessitated discussion.

Under this theme emerged that missionary activism was not the product of the sole endeavours of the European missionaries, it emerged that there was a particular and significant contribution made by Vhavenda missionaries or as some call them; the black Evangelists. Vhavenda missionaries were Christians that helped spread the Gospel in a way and in places that European missionaries would have never had access.

Another discussion that warranted a fair exploration was the aspect of education. Education was a powerful instrument used by missionaries to get the local population to understand that which the missionaries wished to convey. Some *mahosi* had indicated that the missionaries came to prepare a way for colonialism. Arguable, education played a major role in influencing both *vhuhosi* and Vhavenda. Even today, strong inequalities exist stemming from the foundation of the education systems that was laid, whereas on the other hand some best leaders produced in this country are products of missionary schooling.

4.8.1. Role of Vhavenda missionaries

The spreading of the Gospel was by no means through the solitary efforts of the missionaries. It would be erroneous to believe that the missionaries were well acquainted with Tshivenda terminology to the extent of even speaking the indigenous language and communicated the Gospel effectively without the assistance of indigenous people. The arrival of missionaries into the region did not mean that Christianity had not reached Venda nor did it mean that there no converts, considering that there were those who were converted while they were migrant labourers in other parts of the country.

When the missionaries appeared, willing locals who had an inkling of the Gospel ended up as assistants and interpreters of the culture and language. The Vhavenda missionary assistants and interpreters were called black Evangelists, they provided much needed information to the western missionaries about the dynamics of *vuhosi* and Vhavenda. They were the crucial link between two worlds, between two cultures, they took the Gospel where the missionaries would never be able to reach. However, these black Evangelists are rarely ever given credit and seldom mentioned, it is almost inferred that the missionaries were so fluent to translate Bibles into African languages without any assistance from those who had already been acquainted with Christianity before missionaries reached the Soutpansburg. Not only was that the case, but the majority of the black Evangelists spread the Gospel with little, if any,

remuneration that would assist them support their families. One of the pastoral respondents (who was a black evangelist) confirmed that indeed that was the reality.

4.8.2. Education

Of all the determinations offered by Christian missionary activism to reach out to Vhavenda, all the respondents concur that reading and writing not only had a significant, but a positive influence on Vhavenda.

Christianity was coupled with reading and writing. Missionary activism greatly influenced the education systems of the indigenous population and laid a strong foundation for schooling within the region. To the missionary, conversion essentially entailed some form of education and training. Missionary education had positive, as well as negative attributes which developed in different phases in South Africa. It must be noted that missionary education was European-based and did not aim to cater for indigenous mores, norms and values because it deemed them as heathenism. Missionary education was a powerful instrument in the efforts of so called ‘civilizing’ of Africans. It is through this educational system that African children had to even adopt European names and culture.

In spite of the superiority complex already located in the missionary approach, missionary education ultimately reflected the discriminatory policies of the government. The education given to the Africans was not at the same standard as that given to the whites

4.9. CONCLUSION

This section of the study concludes and summarizes the findings of the research. The main questions were addressed and the main themes were outlined. The first question aspired to ascertain the current state of the institution of *Vhuhosi* in Thulamela, in order to determine its relevance amongst Vhavenda from the perspectives of *mahosi*, pastors and government officials.

The responses from the participants revealed that *mahosi* definitely perceive the current state of *vhuhosi* as deficient; the pastoral leaders agree that *vhuhosi* is not at its best currently but is in a better position than during the period of earlier missionaries. The government official on the other hand had mixed responses, in that, certain aspects of *vhuhosi* are better off, whereas others are a shadow of their former selves.

The second question sought to establish whether missionary activism had a direct or indirect influence on the institution of *vhuhosi*. The responses from all the categories of respondents exposed that missionary activism had a significant influence on *vhuhosi*, of which some were

negative and some were positive. The most positive influence on *vhuhosi* was the ability to read and write and the most negative was the deprivation of cultural expression.

The third and last main question served to comprehend the motives of missionary work in Venda. The answer to the question of motive should be, to spread the Gospel, but history has shown otherwise. The respondents revealed in their answers that the motives of missionary activism amongst Vhavenda were not as transparent as one would have liked.

The participants exposed that the spreading of the Gospel was but one of various motives for missionary work in Venda. Some of the motives, other than preaching the Christian message that were uncovered included the disintegration of culture, the acquisition of land, political power, seeking to make a name for themselves and economic advantages. However, irrespective of the questionable motives and racial attitudes at times, missionaries did serve the locals through initiatives, such as, western healthcare systems, a formalised system of education, welfare to the less fortunate.

From this study it may be concluded that missionary activism had an influence on the institution of African royal governance and administration. Though African royal leaders, religious leaders and the government are different from each other, they do have a role to play in affecting future generations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five is the last and final section of the study and functions to conclude the research findings. The objectives of the study were, firstly, to determine the current state of the institution of *Vhuhosi* in Thulamela, secondly to analyse the influence of missionary activism on *vhuhosi* and finally to probe covert and overt motives of missionary activism.

It is evident that the three realms of *vhuhosi*, religious and government have a bearing on each other and play significant roles in the lives of African people in Limpopo. Culture is an integral aspect in the life of the indigenous population, as it reinforces and enriches ones identity.

Vhuhosi is an institution that administers the cultural norms and customs of a particular community, it functions to achieve the political, as well as the spiritual aspirations of that very community. It is thus recommended that *mahosi* must promote values of co-operation in its engagement with religious leaders and government officials. For relevant and constructive transformation to take place, a platform should be put in place where these sphere of governance can ultimately be true African servants of the people.

The missionary enterprise has left a progressive, as well as an undesirable mark on *vhuhosi* and on the government. The negative mark cannot be left unattended it is thus recommended that the Church should also engage dialogue concerning the challenges between *vhuhosi* and the Church. A significant gesture should be conveyed to *vhuhosi* as a symbol of acknowledgement of the significance of African culture and African traditional royal governance and administration. Missionary activism still has a role to play in the lives of the indigenous population, it is also recommended that the Church must endeavour to spread a Gospel that is not tainted with ulterior motives. Pastoral leaders should avoid meddling into political affairs or being partisan to particular political agendas.

The government is in a position to correct the wrongs of the past, not through punishment but transformation. It is thus recommended that government facilitate Afrocentred policies that foster good relations between these stakeholders. The government may also create platforms whereby these stakeholders can interact and be able to formulate solutions to the challenges amongst themselves and in the communities wherein they have leadership responsibilities. In order to avoid friction between *vhuhosi*, religious leaders and government leaders, it would be of great benefit if there was opportunities for consultations by government before certain policies are made.

Some form of coherence between these three spheres of influence would go a long way to further social cohesion and the ideals of Ubuntu. Currently the institution of *vhuhosi* is not

as strong as it used to be, hence there is a need for all parties to be educated about each other's roles. The roles of *vhuhosi* and the roles of the government must be clearly defined and practical steps must be taken to ensure that such happens.

In conclusion, *vhuhosi* as well as the leadership spheres of religion and government continue to shape the political landscape of the region. It may be suggested that inclusive outreach programs and policies be identified and undertaken to refine consolidation and transformation between all these spheres of influence. It would be of great benefit if culture was integrated into the education system, which also subscribes to true historical context of the indigenous people being taught, without much emphasis on European culture and history. Furthermore, the positive aspects of culture should be promoted.

More research is required in order to recognize and develop African approaches to transform and advance African traditional royal governance and administration.

5.6. CONCLUSION

The last chapter of this study served to disclose the primary research matter and offer recommendations. Concepts such as colonialism, missionary activism and vuhosi are integral issues within African history. It is thus essential to comprehend that these concepts continue to have bearing within our social fabric. Understanding the influence of westernization through religion is vital, in order to determine and to solve some of the African specific challenges.

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