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DEPARTMENT OF MISSION STUDIES

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COMBONI WITNESSES AMONG THE POKÖT

*(A case-study of the Presence of the Comboni
Missionaries in Amakuriat, West Poköt)*

Moderator

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A Short Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Degree of Baccalaureate in Theology

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*Gratitude is like a refrain in a song that is repeatedly sung.
When that song is good, gratitude becomes an ever present memory in one's heart.*

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Rev. Fr. Dr. Fritz Stenger, M. Afr., who has been my beacon in this topic. His sincerity, patience, regular fraternal follow-up, and creative criticism have made this essay to come to shape.

My word of thanks goes to the Comboni Missionary Sisters / Fathers / Brothers for the extended support and service they gave me.

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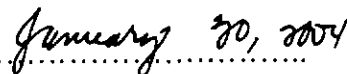
God Bless us all.

Student's Declaration

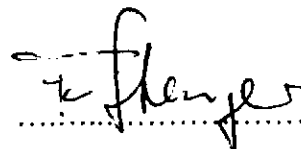
I, the undersigned, declare that this short essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ecclesial Degree of Baccalaureate in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: 

Euclid D. Balosbalos, MCCJ

Date: 

This short essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

Signed: 

Rev. Dr. Fritz Stenger, M. Afr.

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CHAPTER I

A. Introduction

Originally, I did not intend to do a research work on Poköt until my second visit to Amakuriat Parish, Alale Division, located in Western Part of Kenya.

It was December break. I was with a first year scholastic who journeyed back to where I had my first encounter with the poköt community. The journey by public transport to the mission took two days. The journey was long and difficult. However, we managed to arrive safe and sound. A few days into our stay, one of the Comboni fathers asked my companion about his stay. It was his first. His direct response caught directly my attention: “The place is quite beautiful but I have no desire to come back.” He then continued: “The place is very far and the mission is tough!” His answer prompted me to reflect upon the presence of the Comboni missionaries especially in this remote area. I was bothered by a succession of questions:

To whom are they witnessing?

What’s the content of their witness?

What kind of missionary attitude do the Comboni Missionaries need today in Amakuriat mission?

Are their methods of witnessing relevant to the people to whom they serve?

What does it mean to be witness of Christ?

My questions were primarily of importance for the Comboni presence among the Poköt and the way they carry out their missionary effort in Amakuriat today. However, I will also address questions of life and identity.

In chapter II, I will address the identity and the life of the Poköt in Amakuriat on which I based my research. In chapter III, I will present the charism, identity and life of the Comboni missionaries, both the community of the priests and brothers and the community of the Comboni sisters working in that area. I will use descriptive and critical analysis applied to the kind of work in which they are engaged and their witness within the Poköt community. In chapter IV, I will examine the human witnesses in the Gospel of Luke and, how their identity and life witnessed of God's profound love in the person of Jesus Christ. In Chapter V, I will attempt to suggest new theological and missionary insights which I considers useful in the Comboni Mission, in particular the mission in Amakuriat.

1.2 Scope and Limitation

West Poköt covers a large geographical area. My area of study is a small section of West Poköt named Amakuriat Mission. Amakuriat is known only by few Kenyans. It does not even appear on the map of Kenya. Amakuriat belongs to Alale division situated in Northwestern Kenya on the border with Uganda.¹ Aside from its distance from cities and other developing areas, it is rather traditional. The length is about 360 km. and its altitude is approximately 1,600 m. The majority of the people belong to Poköt tribe. The population is around 21,000.² As far as mission is concerned, there are still areas that are not yet known and evangelized, particularly the interior part of Alale.

¹ See map, 8.

² Comboni Missionary Sisters, "Amakuriat" in Historical Notes, 1964-1998, Kenya.

Hence, the author wishes to focus his research work mainly on the Alale division where the Comboni Missionaries are running a parish in Amakuriat with its surrounding out-stations.

1.3 Methodology

The author uses the following methods:

- Oral and written interviews
- Photographs of the people and places of encounter with the permission of those involved.
- Pastoral visitations and especially in Chepchikarar, Kapiemut, Prompur mountains.
- Reseach in the missionary archives regarding in West Poköt zone.

1.4 BRIEF HISTORY: How The Mission In Amakuriat (Alale Division) Started

July 1, 1964³ – This is the year when Amudat (a place under the territory of Uganda) out – station became a Catholic Parish under the Diocese of Gulu. It is one of the parishes which belonged to the Comboni Missionaries in Uganda during that time. Under the care of the first Comboni parish priest, Fr. Cefalo, Kacheliba division and Alale (not yet a division until 1970 – 71) located at the region of Western Kenya (pls. see West Poköt Map, p. 8) were under the administration of the Uganda government until 1970, and became part of Amudat mission-territory as one of its out-stations.⁴

³ Cf. *Annuario Comboniano*, 1979, 96.

⁴ Cf. Cefalo Rafaele, "How the Mission in Amakuriat Started", Interviewed by author, July 5, 2003, Nakwamekwi Parish, Lodwar – Turkana.

1970 – 1971 – The Government of Kenya took full control of administering both Kacheliba division and later Alale. Amakuriat is one of the places located in Alale.⁵

1972 – Tartar,⁶ which now belongs to the Diocese of Kitale, was the first to be established as a parish and, handed over in 1972 to the Comboni Missionaries. One of the first was Fr. Claudio. He was one of the first to step on Kenyan soil. Between 1970-1972, Kacheliba and Alale became out-stations of Tartar parish.⁷

1973 – The Bishop of Eldoret, Rt. Rev. John Njenge, invited the Comboni community through Fr. Cefalo to open a parish in Kacheliba.⁸

June 1, 1973⁹ – Kacheliba was transformed into a parish under Comboni missionaries under the title and protection of the Holy Cross. Since then, Alale which was on the periphery of Tartar Parish, was taken over by Kacheliba until 1983. At that time, the Comboni community with Fr. Guiducci ventured into the interior of Alale for the possibility of opening a mission community and later a parish. Under the administration of Kacheliba parish, a school was first to be built in Alale, and at the same time a mobile

⁵ Cf. Dario Laurencig, "How the Mission in Amakuriat Started", Interviewed by author, July 6, 2003, Nakwamekwi Parish, Lodwar – Turkana.

⁶ Cf. *Annuario Comboniano*, 1979, 53.

⁷ Cf. Claudio Longhi, "How the Mission in Amakuriat Started", Interviewed by author, July 10, 2003, Kacheliba Parish – West Poköt.

⁸ Cf. Cefalo Rafaele, "How the Mission in Amakuriat Started", Interviewed by author, July 5, 2003, Nakwamekwi Parish, Lodwar – Turkana.

⁹ Cf. *Annuario Comboniano*, 1979, 51.

clinic was operating under the Comboni sisters.¹⁰ Boreholes were drilled with the cooperation of Red Cross and a Comboni Brother during a time of a great drought and sickness which lasted approximately 5 years.¹¹

Between 1979 – 1980 – The Comboni community was finally established in a place called Amakuriat. However, due to the intensive military operation to disarm the Poköts in order to end animal raids, the community had to find refuge at Kacheliba community. During this time, there were minimal missionary activities at the Amakuriat mission.

March 1, 1984¹² – Amakuriat became a parish dedicated to the Mother of Peace. Alale center which was located 1 km. before Amakuriat in Alale Division disappeared. Since the primary school had been established near Amakuriat, the Poköt had come to believe that the missionaries would come to stay¹³. Since the military operations were ruthlessly intensified, the Poköt people could find indirect protection at the mission.¹⁴

¹⁰ Cf. Sr. Encarnation Perez, “How the Mission in Amakuriat started”, Interviewed by author, July 9, 2003, Amakuriat Parish – West Poköt; Sr. Amalia, “How the Mission in Amakuriat started”, Amakuriat Parish – West Poköt.

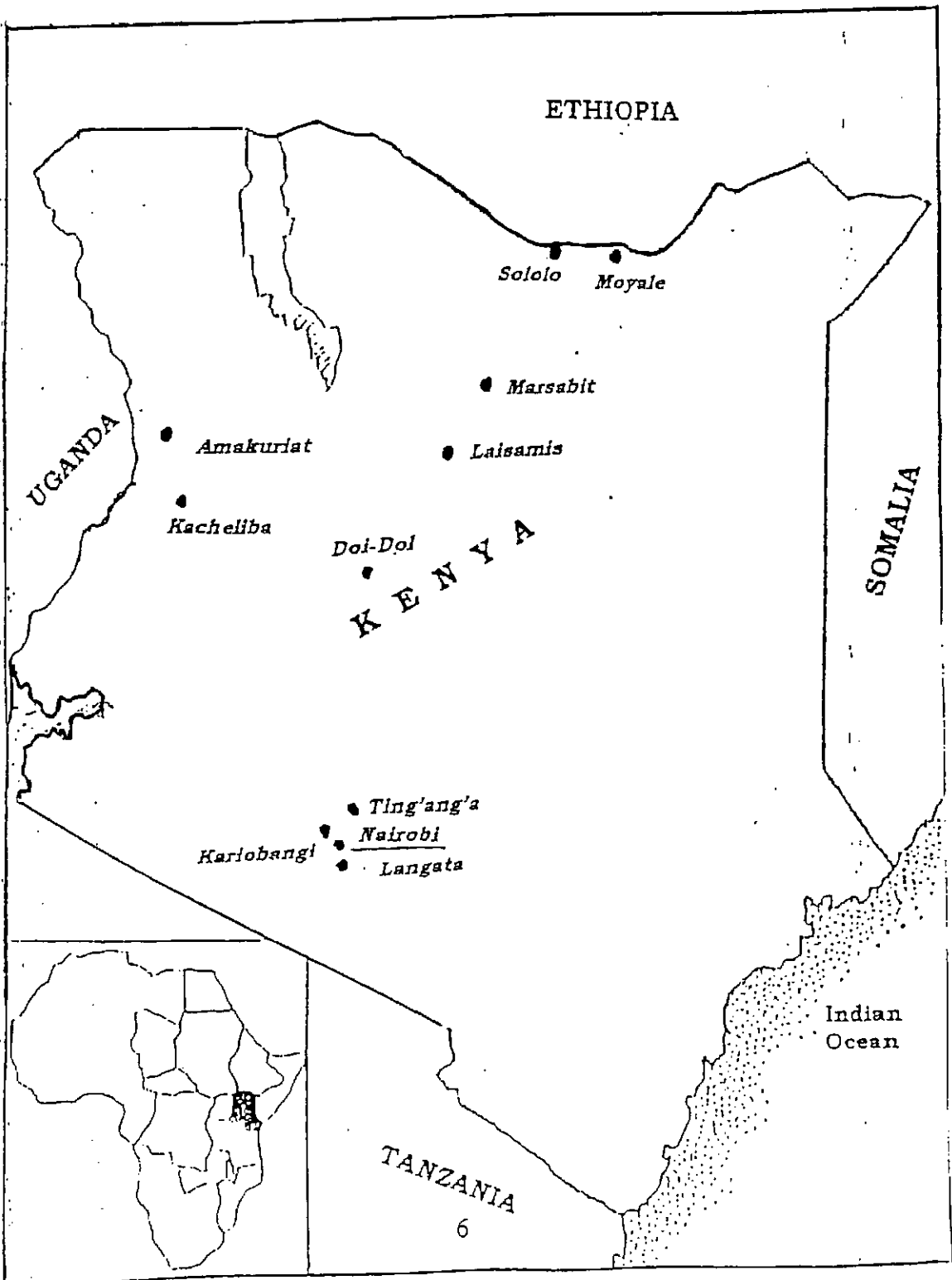
¹¹ Cf. Giancarlo Guiducci, “How the Mission in Amakuriat started”, interviewed by author, July 14, 2003, Kacheliba Parish – West Poköt; Dario Laurencig, “How the Mission in Amakuriat Started”, Interviewed by author, July 6, 2003, Nakwamekwi Parish, Lodwar – Turkana.

¹² Cf. Anuario Comboniano, 1994, 91.

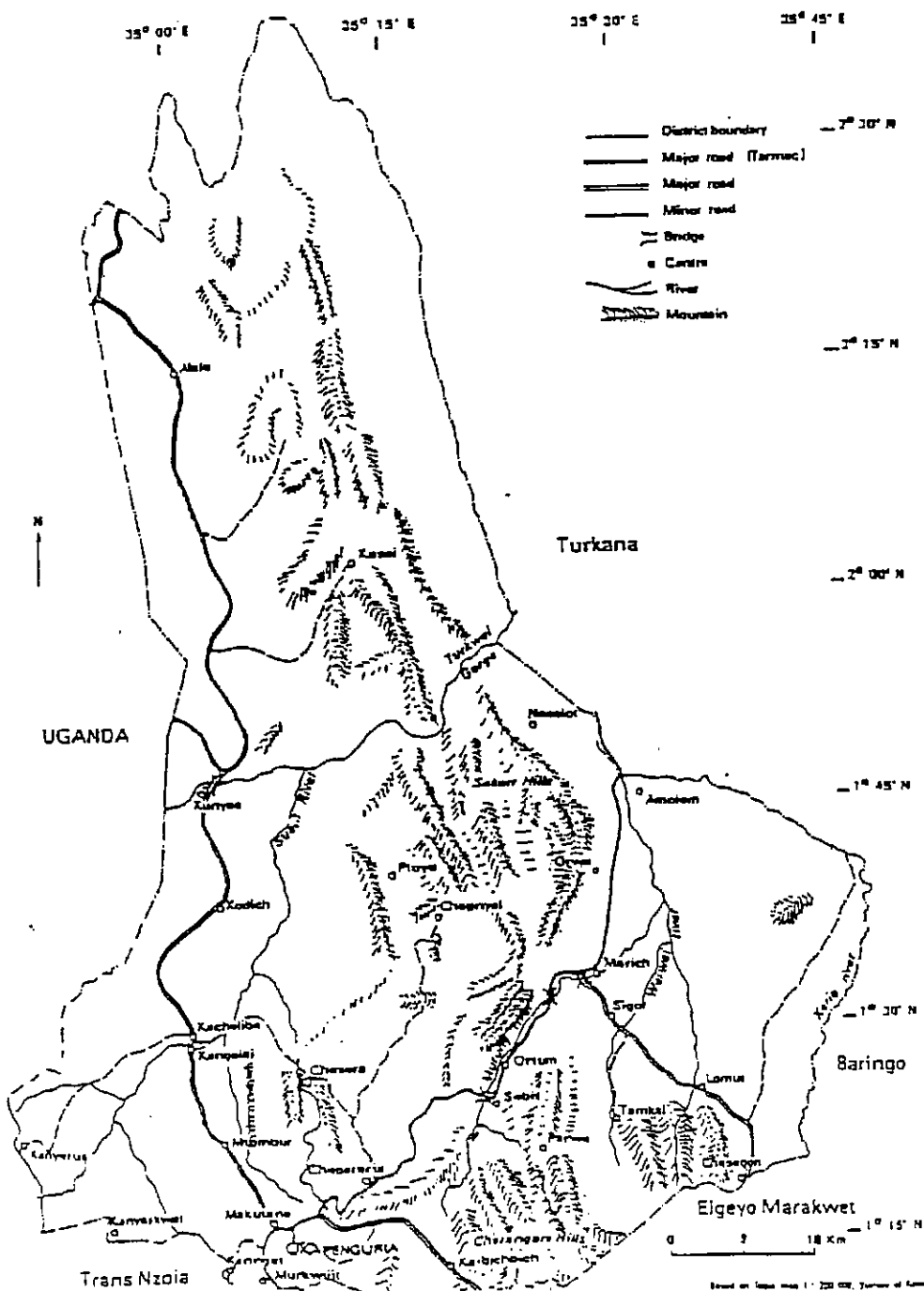
¹³ Cf. Giancarlo Guiducci, “How the Mission in Amakuriat started”, interviewed by author, Kacheliba Parish – West Poköt;

¹⁴ Cf. Dario Laurencig, “How the Mission in Amakuriat Started”, Interviewed by author, Nakwamekwi Parish, Lodwar – Turkana.

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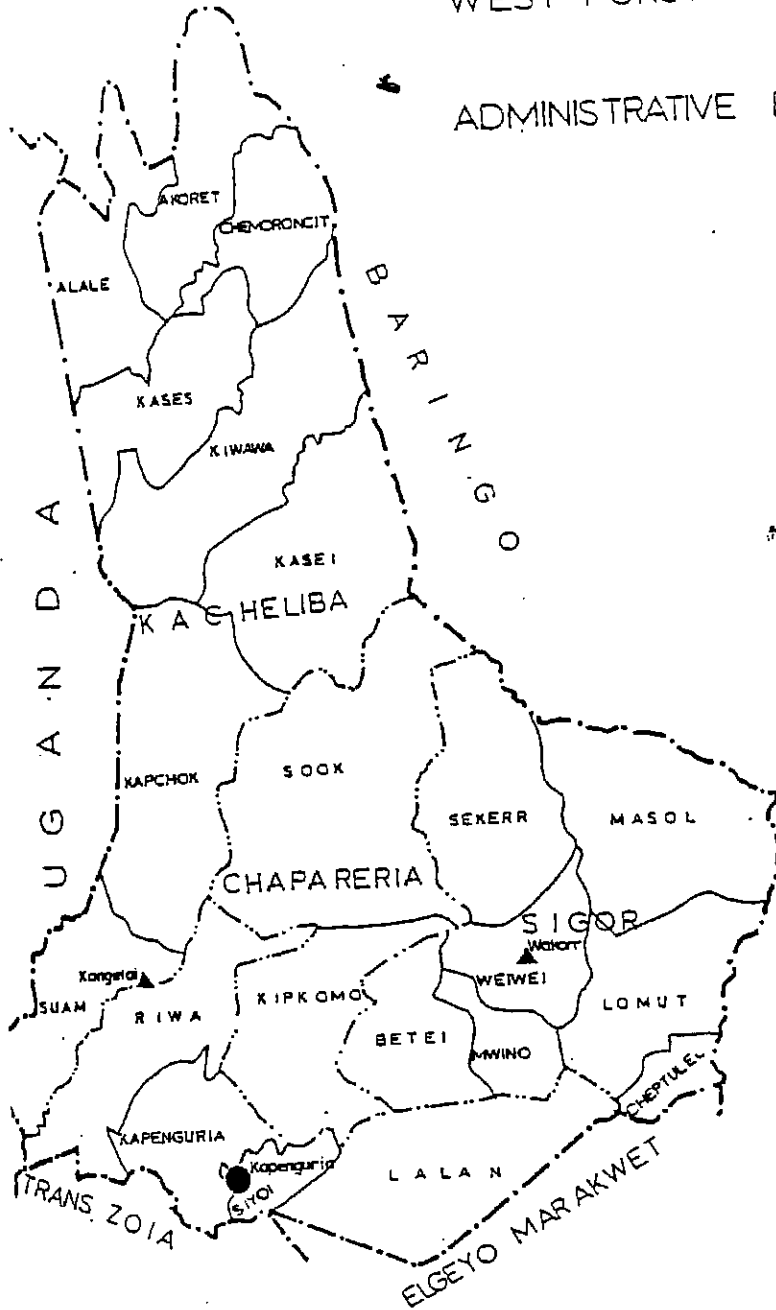


Map. 2: West Pokot District Topography (District Atlas West Pokot, 1985: 7)



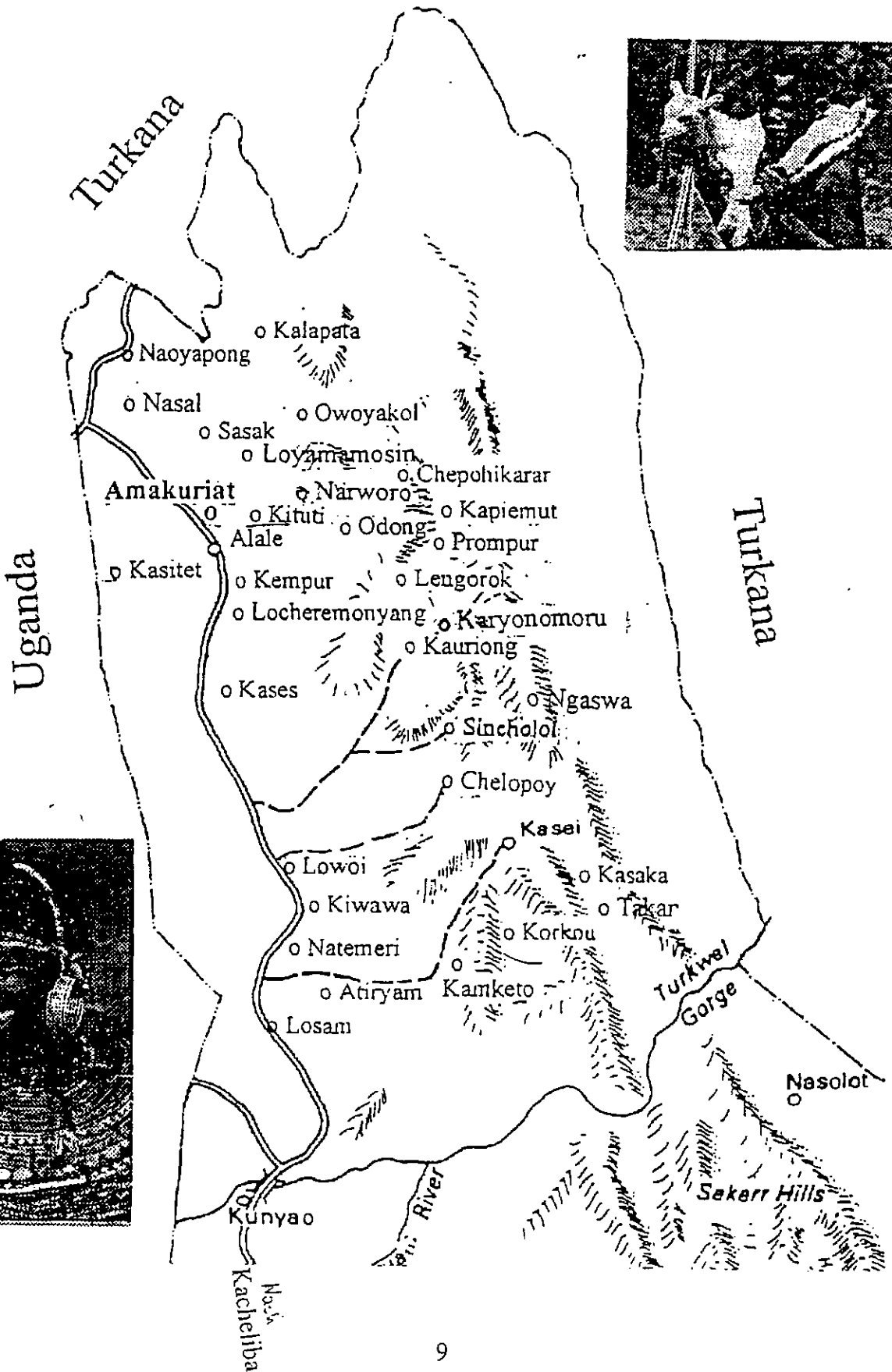
WEST POKOT DISTRICT

ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES



5 10 15 20
KILOMETRES

AMAKURIAT PARISH



CHAPTER II

THE WEST POKÖT PEOPLE IN AMAKURIAT: Identity and Life

2.1 Who are the Poköt people?

The Poköt belong to the cluster of tribes of Nilo-Hamitic origin from which also other groups emerge such as Nandi, Kipsigis, Tugen, Sabaot, Keiyo, and Marakwet. They are referred to by the Massai and former colonialists as the Suk.¹⁵ Besides from their strong attachment to culture, their language is not easy to learn because of its difficult pronunciation.

Poköt people in Amakuriat are generally considered nomadic people.¹⁶ My first impression during my visit and frequent encounters is clearly described by E. Meyerhoff who says that they are: “exceedingly proud, colourful in personality, social behavioral and practices.”¹⁷ They generally stay on the low lands tending herds of cattle, sheep and goats. After the devastating occurrences of natural drought and famine, some Poköt now find themselves scratching the soil which we can call now cultivation. Some of them now live on the slopes of the mountains and hills as cultivators and farmers. Due to the influences of development agencies through the missionaries, some have managed to come to believe in the importance of formal, basic education. At present, there are very

¹⁵ Hubert Hendrix, ed., District Atlas West Poköt, MINISTRY OF PLANNING, ,Kapenguria Development Plan, 1985, 31.

¹⁶ My interest of study considers not only the first evangelization to pastoralists or nomadic people but also include the pre-evangelization to agriculturists who are found on a hilly places in the interior mountains. However, to elaborate further, “there are two groups of *West Poköt* people with the same origin, united in language and traditions although they have developed two different styles of life and social organizations. They are so-called ‘hill Poköt’ who inhabit the uplands of West Poköt (e.g. Chepchekarar, kapiemut missions), and the ‘plain Poköt’, pastoralists, who inhabit the low, dry areas of district.” *R. ARMADA, Mission Among the Pastoralists of West Poköt*, (B.A. Thesis, Tangaza College – Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, 2001), 2.

¹⁷ Elizabeth L. Meyerhoff, *THE THREATENED WAYS OF KENYA’S POKÖT PEOPLE*, National Geographic, Jan. 1982, 120, (Cf. Amakuriat Parish – West Poköt.)

few Poköt who are teachers, catechists, businessmen, and etc. On the other hand, I have witnessed some traditional Poköt who “remained aloof from the pressures of modernization and development”¹⁸ particularly those who are living in the mountains.

2.1.1 As Pastoralists

The majority of the Poköt are pastoralists, that is, “cattle people”. They occupy the lower and drier places in the division of Alale¹⁹.

As pastoralists, they are dependent upon animals, especially cows. When the cows move, they also move. The traditional Poköt rely on the movement of their cows from one place to another depending on the climatic seasons of the year. During my first visit in 2002 to Amakuriat Parish and its surrounding out-stations, I witnessed drought in the whole area of West Poköt and especially in the interior of Alale District. Some people remained but most migrated towards the eastern part of Uganda searching for green pasture for their cows, so that their families and their animals too could survive. They disappeared for quite a long time-between 4 to 6 months. According to Fr. Romero Morales,²⁰ the pastoralists including their families go as far as Uganda searching for food first for the animals and then, for the families. The major reasons for moving are severe drought, water shortage, and the search for food.

As mention above, cows play a very important role in the lives of the Poköt community as pastoralists. There is a special relationship between the pastoralists and

¹⁸ E. L. Meyerhoff, *THE THREATENED WAYS OF KENYA 'S POKÖT PEOPLE*, 1982, 120.

¹⁹ Alale was not yet a division until recently between 1980-1985. See esp. Ministry of Planning and National Development, *Administrative Map*, p. 8.

²⁰ Fr. Romero Morales Jose Angel Santos, mcccj, is presently the parish priest of Amakuriat. According to him, he went to visit on foot the poköt including the Christians temporarily seeking refuge for their animals almost near to the boundary of Uganda. Cf. Fr. Romero, “Movement of patoralists”, interviewed by author, no tape recording, oral and written interview, July 12, 2003, Amakuriat parish - West Poköt.

their cows in such a way that cows determine their life. Having many cows, one is regarded as being blessed by God. On the other hand, without cows one is regarded as poor in the society. Cows are needed for many ways; cows are used for milking, for bridal dowry, for initiation rites called *Sapana*²¹, and for sacrificial offering when great catastrophies arises such as famine or drought, and especially during raiding from Karimojong of Uganda or neighboring Turkana.

Tending cattle is strictly a traditional occupation for the men. Women and children are left with the works of the house. They fetch water daily, look for food, and take care of the children.

A.2 As Cultivators / Farmers

To obtain sufficient food for living, a quarter of Poköt turns to cultivation.²² Mostly, they are found in higher places such as mountains and hills, while others closer to riverbeds.

From June 21-24, 2003, we started our journey with Fr. Romeo and with a certain catechist named Puse. We moved up to the interior mountains for a celebration of the first

²¹ Sapana ceremony replaces the rites of circumcision which culminates young people towards a more mature way of tribal life. In addition, due to the succeeding raids from both sides between Karimojong and, Turkana and Poköts, the Sapana ceremony had to replace the actual circumcision rite of initiation.

²² Between 1979-81, a great famine struck the area of Karimojong, and spread towards the western part of Uganda affecting especially the poköt community. The poköt traditional principle stand that an individual without a cow is notably poor in the society. However, due to the succeeding experience of famine, thousands of cows however, were taken by Karimojong from Poköt forcing the most of poköts to scratch the soil which in the beginning was not appreciated due the the above principle. It was only when they experience a good production of harvest that they soon began to appreciate this another form of life. Bro. Dario Laurencig, "another way of life of Poköt", interviewed done by author, July 6, 2003, Nakwamekwi Parish, Lodwar -Turkana, and Fr. Giancarlo Guiducci, interviewed done by author, July 14, 2003, Kacheliba parish – West Poköt.

catechumens at three newly established out-stations.²³ We spent four days and three nights and lost our way in the middle of the forest and in huge corn plantations. It was a very difficult journey but the growing corn and sorghum, and the other vegetation caught my attention.

We arrived at the first out-station until we moved to all three. Our last destination was planned so that we could be collected by a car to go back to the parish. Along the way to the interior forest, I witnessed traditional Poköt working in the nearby farms. Due to the blessing of heavy rains in those mountainous areas, the plantations of corn were healthy indeed. The catechist assigned in one of the out-stations, noted that he gives catechism lessons to children, and also cultivates in a small garden.²⁴

In spite of the fact that cultivation in the upper areas produces enormous harvest the appreciation of cultivation among the Poköt is indeed gradual due to their cultural attachment to pastoralist life. In addition, there are still many traditional Poköt living in the distant, upper mountainous areas. They are considered aloof to the other Poköt communities. Yet their lives remain unchallenged.

2.1.3 The Present Situation

The coming of missionaries in that area is gradually implied changes in the lives of the Poköt community. However, this does not mean that Poköt mentality has changed too. I can describe in this section only how other forms of life impact Poköt lives in the present context.

²³ Three out-stations are called Chepchikarar, Kapiemut, and Prompur. Cf. Amakuriat parish map, p. 9.

²⁴ Benedict Akopetum, "Way of life of the people up in the mountain", interviewed by the author, oral and written interview, June 23, 2003. Alale Division, West Poköt – He is a catechist in one of the out-stations of Amakuriat Parish called Chepchekarar.

My first contact was with the school teachers who are themselves Poköt. Some of them were raised by the missionaries still present there. Poköt teachers are deployed by the Ministry of Education in their areas of origin for various reasons. One reason is because of language, another reason is the cultural ties with their family. Unfortunately, I witnessed disturbing behaviors by many of the teachers. Among the teachers, I witnessed alcoholism, absentism, and a general absence of good teaching practice. Thus most of the students are not challenged to understand the importance of formal education. Secondly, there are the catechists. Some of them are formally trained in the Diocese of Kitale. Others are young men who either left school because of financial constraints or were forced to marry by their parents. As noted above, catechists are well accepted by both children and women but have little influence among adult males especially the warriors and the elders. The main reason is that the adult males are strongly bound to their cultural way of living such as the cattle raising which is seen as part of their life. Such cultural mentality should be in a way respected and not taken for granted. In addition to that, we can see that resistance to change is complex especially upon tackling their way of living with relationship to cattle. That is why raiding of cows is an ever present event that causes conflict to both sides especially Poköt and Parimojong.

Many catechists are not married in the Church though wed according to customary rites. Their status gives minimal witness to Poköt couples who are encouraged to receive the sacrament of matrimony in the Church.

These present problems should not lead one too quickly to preconceived conclusions. In fact, "an agricultural or nomadic culture changes more slowly and less

abruptly than does the modern world of technology.”²⁵ The Poköt in this area continue to demonstrate resistance to change even by those who are sponsored by the mission. They already possess a well developed sense of what it means to be fully human. The challenge of the mission is to help them integrate this understanding with what it means to be fully Christian.

2.2 Important witnessing of Poköt

2.2.1 Religious Aspect

In the Poköt’s remarkably structured society, religion plays a very important role. The Poköt believe in God in a deeper and broader sense than the ordinary person such that it dominates every activity of their everyday lives.

The religious aspect of one’s life is not understood unless it is first experienced. What is important is not to know God in his entirety but to celebrate life where God is already experienced and lived. The Poköt present a unique understanding of their experience as “TOROROT”²⁶ which is expressed in their various rituals and ceremonies.

Once we were coming back home to Amakuriat parish. On the way between Kempur and Alale (See Amakuriat Parish Map, p.9) a certain ceremonial activity drew our attention. Young men were singing while jumping, and surrounded by young and old women joyously dancing, and children playfully observing the occasion. Eager to know more, I asked information from the missionaries at home. It was a celebration of

²⁵ Consolata Fathers, “POKOT”, Nairobi, Text Book Centre, 10.

²⁶ God is called ‘*Tororot*’ in Poköt Language. “*Tororot*” is linked primarily to the experience of bountiful blessings by God in their lives. In my own word, their image of God (*tororot*) is called “A God of Blessings.” For instance, Peace depends upon the blessing of God (*Tororot*) and God’s greatest blessing is cattle. R. FILIPE, *The Bible Teaching on the Attitude Towards One’s Enemies and the Pokot Culture*, (B.A. Thesis, Tangaza College – Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, 2002), 40.

thanksgiving for the blessing of the rain. This celebration was also a continuous prayer in hope of gathering a good harvest. On another occasion, I witnessed a number of baptisms happened in one of the out-stations in the low lands. I came away with the impression of their closeness to God as experienced and lived.

I can say that their religious experience is closely linked with traditional ways of a true and genuine African heritage. Their religious experience is intimately tied to their cultural understanding.

2.2.2 Initiation: Forming Communal Life – Experience

In African tradition, life in the community is the extension of the life in the family. Initiation is what forms the Poköt into a community.

Initiation links individual members from one generation to the next. In the Poköt community, the circumcision ceremony is not only relevant to a group of young male group but also to young females. Through this rite, the Poköt experience how the community conquers individualism. Initiation is an important determining factor in the creation of community life.

The same thing can be said of my witness of the female rite of circumcision. Due to my frequent visit to Amakuriat Mission in Alale Division, and my keen interest in the local people at parish out-stations, I come to understand by the narrations of others the meaning of initiation. Initiation links birth and death. In addition, initiation connects the ancestors with God, and they with the individual and the whole community.

In general, initiation creates a chain of life that truly makes the individual Poköt exist for the other. Community life is begotten from this ceremony.

In the next part, I would like to describe the role of the elders as witness and bearers of ancestral values and traditions.

2.2.3 The Witnessing of the Elders

The elders in the Poköt community play an important and imperative role in the society. In general, they influence the whole of the socio-cultural activities of the community. Without them, the community cannot stand and continue to exist.

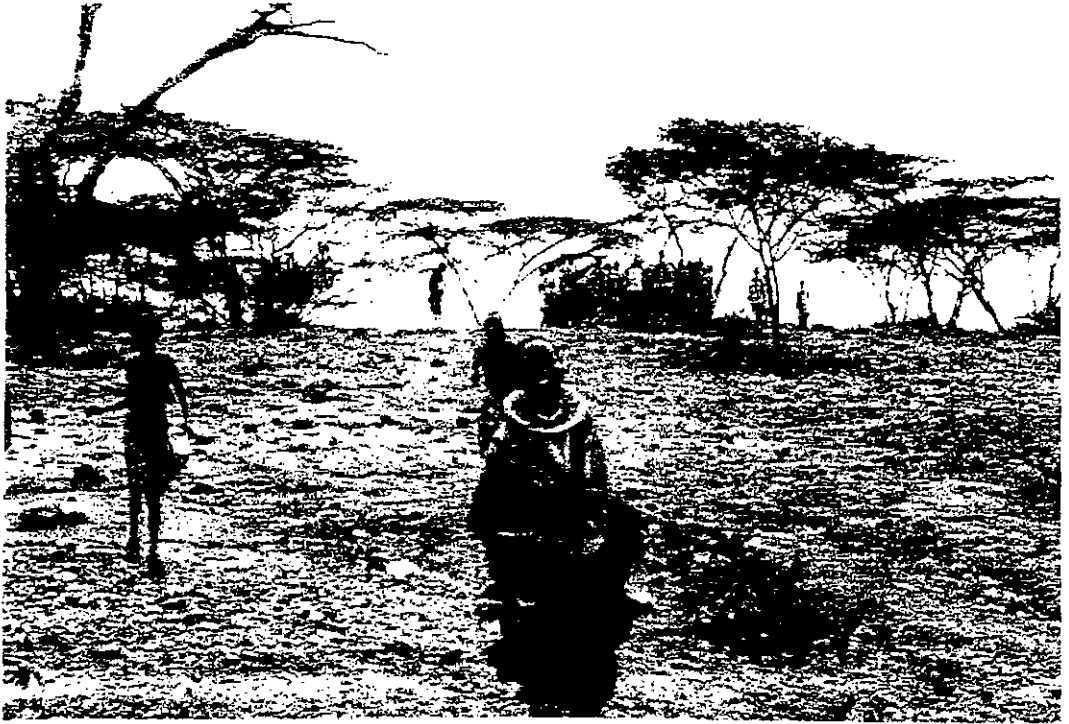
The elders are considered the pillars of the community. They control all aspects of community life and determine its future. They influenced decision-making. They decide when to conduct the ceremony for various initiation rites such as “*sapana*” for men and circumcision for women. They call, gather, and transmit the respected values of their ancestors to the initiates. During the ceremony, the listening initiates are taught to use power, behave with authority in the community, and how to bring up the family. They are instructed in the careful choosing of the ancestors’ name in naming their future children.²⁷ The elders pray out loud to the ancestors, recited for the initiates. When an elder prays and calls the names of the ancestors, everyone is captured in prayer. In that moment, they believe that they become one with life: life that generates continuity and gives profound expression and meaning to their present life.²⁸

²⁷ MacAmbrose Tityon Alungia, “How the elders are witnessing their ancestors”, interviewed by the author, June 14, 2003, Amakuriat Parish – West Poköt. (MacAmbrose is presently working for the mission as patron of the boys in Alale Primary School), and Lotunale Pius, “How the elders witnessing their ancestors”, interviewed by the author, June 14, 2003, Amakuriat parish – West Poköt. (Pius is a newly trained catechist of the mission)

²⁸ Cf. MacAmbrose Tityon Alungia, “How the elders witnessing their ancestors”.

The dynamic witnessing by the elders continues to bear fruit in the cultural preservation of values and beliefs, the education in moral behavior, the creation of family, and the strong emphasis upon the solidarity and unity of the community.

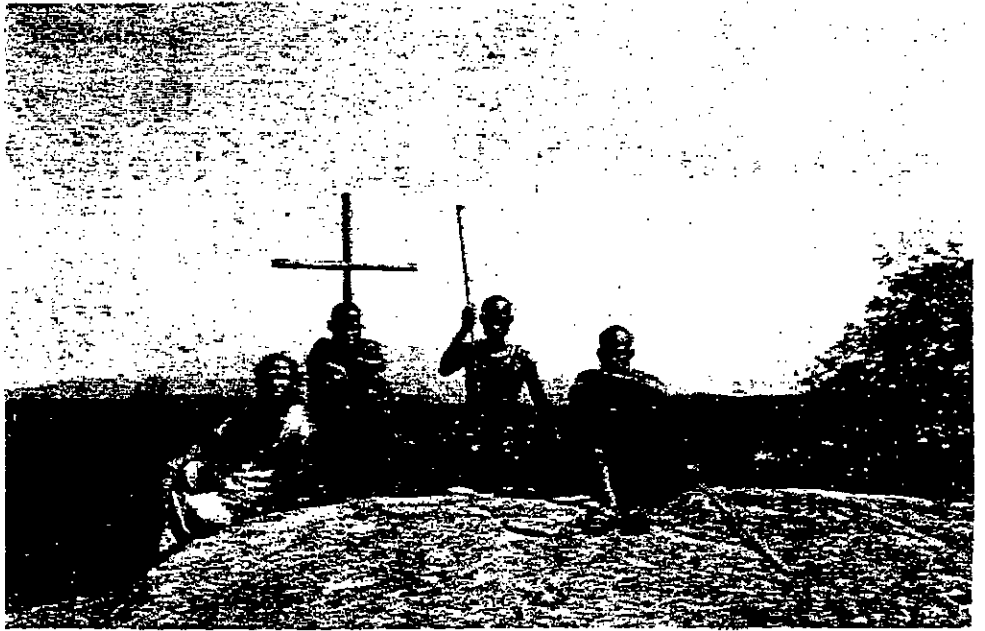
2.3 Photos



A Poköt community celebrates “thanksgiving” after heavy out-pouring of rain.



First baptized Christian Poköt in Chepchikarar, located up in the interior mountain.



The author together with three young Poköt warriors.



A three – day visit to out-stations located up in the interior hills of Alale.

CHAPTER III

Comboni Missionaries in Amakuriat: Charism and Life

3.1 Charism of the Founder: Identity of the Institutes

Daniel Comboni²⁹ is an Italian founder of two institutes whose official names are: **Missionarii Comboniani Cordis Jesu**, abbreviated **MCCJ**, and **Comboni Missionary Sisters**, abbreviated **CM**.

The founder's missionary life can be best summarized in these following points: his total dedication to the missions concerning Africa with his readiness to any difficulties, his unconditional trust in the Heart of Jesus, the living out of his call in the Mystery of the Cross, his desire for Africans to save Africa, his universal outlook towards the evangelization of Africa, and his unselfish love for the Church.

These two Institutes, **MCCJ** and **CM**, derived their charism from the "founder's witness of life" that is directed towards serving *the poor and most abandoned*³⁰, with special concern to Africa. He continues to inspire the two institutes which Comboni conceived as the *little Cenacle of Apostles for Africa*.

²⁹ Daniel Comboni is born at Limone sul Garda (Italy) on 15th March 1831. The missionary ideal seized him in the Institute of Don Mazza in Verona where, in 1849, he consecrates his life to Africa. He is ordained priest in 1854, and leaves for Africa three years later. Confident that Africans will become the leading agents of their own evangelization, he launches a project designed to "SAVE AFRICA THROUGH AFRICA." (Palm of 1864). Faithful to his motto: "AFRICA OR DEATH!" despite all difficulties, he pushes ahead with his plan by founding the Institute of the Comboni Missionaries in 1867 and, in 1872, that of the Comboni Missionary Sisters. He is consecrated a Bishop of Central Africa in 1887 with a prophetic voice, proclaiming to the whole Church...that the hour has come for the peoples of Africa. He spends all his energies for the people of Africa in many fields. Such as in his tireless struggle for the abolition of slavery. He dies in Karthoum (Sudan) in the late hours of 10th October 1881, worn out by his toils and his crosses. In recent times other fruits of the Comboni charism have appeared in the form of the Comboni Secular Missionaries (1969) and of Comboni Lay Missionaries (1993). On 17th March 1996 he was beatified by Pope John Paul II, and in 5th October 2003, he was canonized by the same Pope at St. Peter's, (Cf. Postulatio MCCJ – ROME).

³⁰ The main object of Daniel Comboni's Charism.

“Comboni’s intention was that, the two institutes have the purpose to ³¹form, by means of a robust, solid and regular education, truly apostolic men and virtuous missionaries (*women*)³² who consecrated themselves entirely to the Mission of Central Africa.”

Therefore, the charism of the founder which is reflected in the lives of the Comboni missionaries first gives them their true identity as carrying out the genuine missionary enterprises even in the most difficult area of evangelization such as Amakuriat. This is so because they believe that “even persecution, by scattering the apostles, helped to spread the Word and to establish the Church in ever more distant regions.”³³ Second, the charism continues to enliven the lives of the two institutes who are the heralds of voiceless poor and most abandoned especially the people in the interior place of West Poköt around Amakuriat parish.

3.1.1 As Comboni Missionary Priests and Brother

The original composition of the founder’s institute is made up of priests and brothers. This reality reflects the institute’s ecclesial character ever more completely and its missionary activity more fruitfully.³⁴

The community of Comboni Priests and a brother in the Amakuriat Mission, shares in the above charism of the founder which truly manifests the plurality of services to the Poköt community to whom they are sent. In spite of the variety of missionary

³¹ Daniel-Report to cardinal Barnabo, Rome (March 2nd 1872) in Arch. Com x (1972) 1-2, 8, (Cf. Comboni Sisters, *Rule of Life*, 10.)

³² Itylis- mine

³³ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *On Evangelization In The Modern World*, 29.

³⁴ Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, MCCJ, *Rule of Life*, 11.

works, its aim is rooted in one understanding: they are sent to witness to the love of God by making Christ known to the Poköt community. They are committed to give witness to Christ to the poor and most abandoned. In their service they cannot leave behind their own limitations and vulnerabilities which impedes their life-giving witness among the Pokots.

It was my joy to watch my community and all the people of the community during my pastoral exposure to that area on at least three occasions.

First of all, I attended the Poköt manner of Christian initiation (Baptism) in various out-stations by going with a missionary on the day of the celebration. A majority of the baptized Christians and the catechumens were young girls. During my first visit to the out-stations, I saw only one young boy being initiated into the Christian faith. That seemed strange. I wondered what might be the result if the Comboni missionaries confronted this lack of participation by the Poköt men directly.

Secondly, I noted two ways in which the Word of God was proclaimed. During the celebration of the Eucharist, and during catechetical pastoral instruction the Word of God is extremely emphasized. No priests could ever speak the local language and so first the proclamation of the Word was done in English for children in school, Kiswahili during the celebration of the Eucharist, and a translation was often given by a catechist in poköt language. Moses, the catechist, says: "I also struggled to translate the English homily of the Father in charge of the day for the poköt congregation to understand well."³⁵ There are two Comboni Priests there who are very old and therefore there are fewer

³⁵ Moses Lokadokol, catechist, "witnessing of the Comboni Missionaries", interviewed by the author, June 16, 2003, Kases out-station, Amakuriat Parish – West Poköt. (cf. Francis Lopeyok, catechist, "witnessing of the Comboni Missionaries", interviewed by the author, June 16, 2003, Amakuriat Parish – West Poköt).

demands placed upon them. For instance, the problem of pastoral visitations to people living up in hilly places is not carried out profoundly.³⁶ Yet, they continue to give genuine service to the mission by exercising their ministry through the sacraments. At the same time they perform technical works for the building up of the mission. Likewise, there is a Comboni brother who administers the mission and the boarding schools that are under the care of the Comboni mission.

As noted, the community of the priests and brother basically trying to live the ideal vision of Comboni. We are called to be a cenacle of apostles for Africa working together for the common good of the people in that area.³⁷

3.1.2 As Comboni Missionary Sisters

Comboni was convinced that: “Two priests and six sisters in a mission...will do more good than a mission with twelve priests and no sisters...the priest will achieve little without the sisters.”³⁸

Long before the establishment of a parish in Amakuriat, the Comboni Missionary Sisters had already been going to the interior of Alale (see mission profile, p.3) where Amakuriat is located, offering a free mobile clinic for the sick Poköt. There were difficulties in the attempt to establish a mission since the government launched a stringent security effort surrounding the Poköt district due to numerous raidings by the

³⁶ Simon Lobur, “Witnessing of the Comboni Missionaries”, interviewed by the author, June 17, Naoyapong out-station, Amakuriat Parish – West Poköt.

³⁷ Cf. “This Institute thus becomes a little Cenacle of Apostles for Africa, a point of light that sends out to the heart of Africa as many rays as are the zealous and upright missionaries...” Aldo Gilli (Cf. Daniel Comboni, the Man and his Message, 2nd Edition, Italiana – Bogna, 1980,104.)

³⁸ *The Holiness of Comboni: Community on Mission “...a Little Cenacle of Apostles for Africa...”* (W2648) no. 47, in Daniel Comboni, Witness of Holiness and Master of Mission, (Cf. Letter of the three General Councils of the Comboni Institutes on the occasion of the canonization of the Founder Daniel Comboni)

Poköt to neighboring areas. The Comboni sisters found refuge in Kacheliba parish just about three hours outside of Amakuriat. They continued to work until the area returned to normal. Afterwards, they were allowed to open a mission.³⁹

Because of the urgency of the mission in that place, today the Comboni sisters courageously witness to Christ among the poorest of the poor. Like the community of fathers and brothers, the composition gives genuine witnesses to the importance of inter-cultural community life with five sisters coming from various countries and continents. They witness to the mission of Christ through their life, prayer, activities, formation and service of authority while being animated by the spirituality proper to their institute and in service of its mission.⁴⁰

3.2 Comboni Missionary Witnessing

As mentioned above, the Comboni Missionaries are witnesses of Jesus Christ, the One who sends them through the founder's exemplary life.

Inspired by faith and a passion for the mission, the community in Amakuriat courageously witnesses to Christ in various missionary and pastoral ways to which they are genuinely committed. First, they express themselves through their consecrated vows, second, through inter-communal sharing between the two existing Comboni communities, third, through their various missionary and strategically modified approach to mission.

³⁹ March 1, 1984 – Amakuriat in Alale district became a parish dedicated to “Our Lady of Mother of Peace.”

⁴⁰ Comboni Missionary Sisters, *CMS Rule of Life*, no. 10, 22.

3.2.1 Religious / Consecrated Life

Religious life makes sense only when, the person is consecrated freely and wholly to Christ. The purpose of this consecration is geared toward the mission which is its reason for existence. John Paul II's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* says: "indeed, by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, consecrated life itself is a mission, as was the whole of Jesus' life."⁴¹

The Comboni Missionaries in Amakuriat acknowledge their missionary consecration through the profession of the evangelical counsels: chastity, poverty and obedience. Vows spring from the gratuitous love of God who transforms, and strengthens us in the Holy Spirit. God sends the missionary to proclaim his name to all nations with respect to their freedom and acceptance of God's will.⁴² By being chaste, poor and obedient like Christ, they make manifest to the world the presence of Jesus while at the same time they are directed to experience the kingdom of God in the present circumstances though the Kingdom is not fully realized.⁴³

Their missionary and religious vocation to mission is rooted and deepened through their constant encounter with Christ. Christ who is poor, obedient and chaste becomes in them a living witness of the presence of the Kingdom of God. This maturity is the result of having left everything, carrying their cross, and being with Christ at all the times and with his people whom they evangelize.⁴⁴

Eventually, there is the risk of over-emphasizing religious life without seeing it in the context of mission. "The Holiness of Comboni as *witnessing to the*

⁴¹ Cf. Consecrated Life: Manifestation of god's Love in the world in *Vita Consecrata*, Pope John Paul II's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 130.

⁴² MCCJ, *Rule of Life*, 20.

⁴³ Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 3.

⁴⁴ MCCJ, *Rule of Life*, 21.

*mission*⁴⁵ continues to call the Church and all of Comboni Missionaries to their true identity as consecrated men and women for the mission.”⁴⁶ In this sense, they are consecrated for the Poköt in Amakuriat.

3.2.2 Community life Witnessing

For Daniel Comboni, community life is the best way to witness to the mission of the Kingdom of God to humanity. The Comboni community is founded and set aside for this reason. We are not merely an ordinary community. It is a missionary community set aside to evangelize as a community and therefore, by their missionary activity, according to Fr. Agostoni, “...to develop the ‘community of believers’ among people.”⁴⁷

In the first community, there are three Comboni fathers (two Italians, one Mexican) and one brother (German) in Amakuriat Mission. In the second community, there are five Comboni sisters (two Spanish, two Italians, one Eritrian) in the same mission area.

Both Comboni communities present themselves as a unique mosaic of unity and diversity among the closed-cultured Poköt. They came from various continents and nationalities and journeyed towards the interior of West Poköt. Second, they are sent as a community whose life-long orientation is for the service of the poor and most abandoned which is the situation of Poköt in this surrounding area of Amakuriat parish. According to Sr. Amelia, the international nature of the community is an important witness because

⁴⁵ Italics mine

⁴⁶ From the Letter of the Three General Councils of the Comboni Institutes on the occasion of the Canonization of the Founder Daniel Comboni (Cf. *Daniel Comboni: Witness of Holiness and Master of Mission*), 2003, 6.

⁴⁷ Cf. Missionary Community in Francesco Pierli’s book, *BE MY WITNESSES, Spirituality for Mission*, Paulines Publications Africa, New People, 1996, 98.

the Poköt people believe that their community is better than others. It becomes impossible to build bridges of friendship with the neighboring tribes. Their lack of acceptance leads to raiding which often results in the loss of lives.⁴⁸ Second, living together is essential to witness. “The presence of different members is enriching, rendering evangelization more complete and effective.”⁴⁹ Living together goes far beyond just staying together. It is an active involvement both on the level of planning and activity. Living together is participating in day to day decisions with a deep love for God and for the community, passion for the mission, and respect for one another’s opinion. Sr. Encarnacion states that “living together gives strength to one’s work even when it seems to be a failure. They are there to strengthen one’s faith in God.”⁵⁰ Finally, praying together is the most important aspect of the witness of community life. Jesus reminds the early Church of his promise of God’s active presence: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there God is.” Daniel Comboni stresses also the importance of praying together as essential for a fruitful apostolate. Greater fruitfulness in mission is the consequence of praying together even when the process of achieving it involves suffering and trials.

The founder, Daniel Comboni, insists on the fact that mission without community cannot bear fruit. That is why the institute in general was conceived first as a cenacle of apostles. It reminds them of the words of Comboni, who says: “no one must be left alone

⁴⁸Cf. Sr. Amelia Chielmetti, CMS, “Why Community is important?”, interviewed by the author, July 9, 2003, Convent house, Amakuriat Parish –West Poköt. (f. Sr. Amelia is one of the pioneer Comboni Sisters who stepped on the soil of West Poköt. At present she is actively involved in Women’s development programme in Amakuriat)

⁴⁹ MCCJ, *Rule of Life*, 35.

⁵⁰ Cf. Sr. Encarnacion Perez, CMS, “Why Community is important?”, interviewed by the author, July 9, 2003, Convent house, Amakuriat Parish –West poköt. (Cf. Sr. Encarnacion came to West Poköt since 1985 as a Comboni missionary and as a nurse by profession)

in a mission, or the quality of witness will suffer, devotion will wane and the moral integrity of the missionary will be in danger.”⁵¹

3.2.2 Missionary Activities

The Comboni Missionaries in Amakuriat articulates the mission plan of Comboni through various methodologies in Amakuriat mission:

Dispensary / Mobile Clinic: This was established long before the opening of the mission. The aim of this is to witness Christ’ merciful love which leads to the forgiveness and healing of the patient. Until today, the Comboni community of sisters is responsible for the running of dispensary and the mobile clinic. There is an assigned sister whose medical profession is of great help in this kind of ministry. She is assisted by a nurse, laboratory technician, and a health aide. The dispensary was first established after recognizing the immense need for treating sick people affected by famine, drought, and injuries sustained as a consequence of raiding. In addition, maternity and other related medical assistance was introduced. Treatment was given freely at the beginning. Later, the sisters tried to help the people understand the cost of medicine and so asked them to pay their share. The mobile clinic was created in order to reach those who were living in remote areas. Unfortunately, there are still difficulties in reaching those who in the interior mountains because of the distance.

Education: Formal Education is indispensable in this area though many Poköt don’t see the need of it. The mission emphasizes the importance of education in order to help the Poköt understand the meaning of being fully human. They also stress in their

⁵¹From the Letter of the Three General Councils of the Comboni Institutes on the occasion of the Canonization of the Founder Daniel Comboni (Cf. *Daniel Comboni: Witness of Holiness and Master of Mission*), 2003, 25.

teaching of the Pastoral Program instruction such as catechism. Considering the poor economic situation of the people, the mission is engaged in sponsoring schools which provides boarding facilities, and spiritual counseling when needed. There is also an individual sponsorship program.

The Comboni Brother is in-charge of administering sponsored schools, but there is one Comboni Sister who runs the nursery school in Amakuriat. As noted, various problems continue to challenge the mission. For instance, some teachers raised by the mission exhibit an attitude that discourages the young students. Some teachers are drunk during school time, and others are taking long breaks while students wait in patience inside their classrooms.

Maendeleo: The mission also runs a development program for women. The intention is to inform them of their rights, help them develop themselves as future leaders at the service of the community. They are trained in sewing, beads making, hygiene, and other activities. Maendeleo operates both in the center of Amakuriat parish and at few out-stations.

Priestly Ministerial Activities: The Comboni Fathers are actively engaged in administering the sacraments. This is of basic and fundamental importance given the fact that the mission's purpose is to make Christ ever present in the lives of the developing Poköt community. Because of old age, two Comboni priests are in charge of celebrating the sacraments in the out-stations situated in the lowlands. On the other hand, the present parish priest goes out from the parish in order to visit small Christian communities in far away places particularly in the interior of the surrounding Alale district.

Other Pastoral Agents / Catechists: The task of evangelization is quite vast and other pastoral agents such as catechists are readily recognized as important collaborators in the work of evangelization. At the moment, there are unfortunately only three trained catechists while the rests are supported by themselves. They assist the work of evangelization in areas where the people wish the presence of the missionaries and want to be Christians.

CHAPTER IV

The Human Witnesses in the Gospel of Luke

4.1 The Reason for choosing Luke

In this chapter, I would like to discuss the understanding of human witnesses as a community as presented by the author Luke. The reason is that, only in the Gospel of Luke we find Jesus choosing his twelve disciples and at the same time naming them his apostles: a pre-figure of what is to come after resurrection.

Therefore, my attempt would help to highlight the importance of community witnessing and to lay the foundation of the missionary work of the Comboni missionaries present in Amakuriat.

4.2 Understanding Human Witnesses

Evangelization is effective if the Gospel is carried out by authentic witnesses of Jesus and of God's Kingdom. Authentic witnesses are those who truly identify themselves in Jesus' style of life who is "the Witness" of his Father's love and mercy.

People hope to see in faith a promising words and realizing actions of a genuine witness as unifying entity: what Jesus does and what he is, is all one and the same pointing to the Kingdom of God who is present but not yet fully realized. Simply, the witnesses are called to identify fully themselves with the work of evangelization and mission with genuine understanding and acceptance, sharing of life and faith with the people what ever is ordered to novelty and goodness.

Hence, along this theme, I would like to focus my study on the disciples of Jesus, whom he has chosen to be his apostles, as a witnessing community.

4.1.1 The Meaning of Witness

The word “witness” comes from Greek word “martyrs” meaning one who remembers and describes event. The Greek verb “marterein” means “to be a witness” and “martyria” means “bearing witness.”

4.1.2 The Identity of the Twelve

A witness is not only one who knows the facts of Jesus’ history, but also one who abides in the person of Jesus.⁵² This would mean that a witness points out to the deeper reality of Jesus’ identity and mission. The twelve disciples are given new identity as apostles right after Jesus spending a night of prayer (Cf. Luke 6:12-13) in order to prepare them ahead in anticipation for the sending out after resurrection event.

The identity of the twelve is very important as Luke presents them in his perspective of the urgency of proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom of God by Jesus. This identity is in connection to the mission of Jesus, its content of carrying out his mission. “The mission is to be universal, ‘beginning at Jerusalem’ and moving out to all nations” (Luke 24:47)⁵³. Their identity as it is linked with the mission of Christ

⁵² K.G. Bromiley, Friedrich, G., ed., *Witness*, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 1, Devon: Paternoster Ltd., 1985, 564-565.

⁵³ D. Senior, C. Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, London: SCM Ltd., 1983, 258.

makes them a witnesses to everything that Jesus does and says: “Luke’s programmatic mission designates the apostles as ‘witnesses of this things’” (Luke 24:48).⁵⁴

The mission of Christ is their indelible identity confirms in the coming of Pentecost which sum up the whole of his mission: “That is what I was sent to do.” (Luke 4:43).

4.2 The Witnessing of the Twelve

“The twelve apostles have a unique role in Luke-Acts because they form the living link between the history of Jesus and the history of the community.”⁵⁵ Witnessing cannot be otherwise than continuity of what is being received from Jesus.

The life of the twelve is characterized by their unfailing response which creates an assurance to participate in all activities of Jesus so that through them the people may undergo a genuine experience of salvation. “Behind it lies the reality for the believers, that Jesus really is alive and that those whom his Spirit touches undergo an experience of salvation that is just an immediate real for them as it was for those who saw him, heard him and felt his touch...”⁵⁶

The witness of the twelve begins first, from the formation of the new community whom Jesus has chosen; second, the demand of proclamation of the Kingdom: preaching of repentance and forgiveness; and third, courageous act of martyrdom towards the end.

Hence for the twelve, it is not only to carry their crosses and follow Jesus closely (Cf. Luke 14:26ff) but to be truly witness “of all these things.” (Luke 24:48)

⁵⁴ Idem, 259.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 259.

⁵⁶ B. Byrne, S.J., *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Lukes' Gospel*, Collegeville-Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000, 8.

I would like to elaborate further this study in the next section.

4.2.1 Community Formation as witnessing

The choosing of the twelve by Jesus does not mean an isolation from a wider group of disciples but as Brendan Byrne says, “The twelve are not simply static ‘pillars’ or foundations. Jesus names them ‘apostle’ (Luke 6:13) because they are to be the spearhead of the Church mission...”⁵⁷ This gives rise to the formation of the community that Jesus formed around himself as a living sign of new Israel: the community of the twelve.

Jesus chose them in order to be where he is. That means to be entirely with him, and to see what he does; for what he is and what he does is the same entity only what he does is fully realized on the cross and understood at the resurrection event by his disciples. This intimacy with him creates not only new community but a start of a realized community of witnessing. “This underlines the solemnity of the choice and makes it an extension of the mission he himself has received from God.”⁵⁸

We can see then that the formation of life brings about the beginning of witnessing to what Jesus, their master, was doing. For it is by associating in his saving work that they can eventually participate in his proclamation of the Kingdom.

4.2.2 Preaching as Witnessing

Luke presents to us the twelve as a formal body of witnesses to the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness of sin which constitute the Kingdom at hand (Luke 24:47).

⁵⁷ *Idem*, 63.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

In Luke, we see Jesus with the twelve as a living parable of the Kingdom, needed to give credibility to the reunion of the dispersed people. Jesus is being surrounded by his disciples whom he has summoned to himself and whom he has sent out to preach and with power to heal (Luke 6:13, 9:1-6). They bear witness to Jesus' wondrous and strong deeds (Luke 4:31-44).

With the power of the Spirit, the twelve continue to proclaim, to act as delegates of God, to be bearers of salvation for all the people (Cf. Luke 3:1). Moreover, the experience of resurrection-event intensifies the preaching of the Good News not only to those whom they preach but also the renewal of the witnessing community such as; strength, encouragement, and deepening of one's faith. For Luke, "this fact is very important in the opening of Acts, for the Church after Jesus will begin with all the disciples together and making a common witness" (Act. 2:14).⁵⁹

4.2.3 The Cross as Witnessing

In Luke we see the Cross as the great witnessing of Jesus that his disciples came to understand only after the resurrection event. However, this dimension of cross is present from the beginning of Jesus' mission.

Part of the discourses of Jesus with his twelve apostles is his experience of rejection (Luke 4:24-30), opposition (Luke 5:21-24). But Jesus endures all these social, cultural, political and religious tensions. This indicates for the twelve that witnessing to Jesus involves endless trials and persecutions.

⁵⁹ F. B. Craddock, *Luke Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for teaching and Preaching*, USA: John Knox Press, 1990, 287.

Jesus anticipates what is going to happen to him in his public ministry. He warns his disciples repeatedly of his coming persecution, trials, suffering, and liberating death which would end up on Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).⁶⁰

⁶⁰ B. E. Reid, *Choosing the Better Part? Women in the Gospel of Luke*, Collegeville-Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1996, 47.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

What has come out from this research is summarized in the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, *The Evangelization of the Men of our Time*. It says, "Above all, the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness...their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good."⁶¹

Witness is very important in all aspects of life, particularly in carrying out the mission of the Church in Amakuriat Parish. However, we saw that there are essential factors which seem to be neglected the Comboni missionaries in doing mission among the Poköt community.

First of all, we saw the problem of language. Language is a medium for genuine ongoing witness and solidarity. It is a vital factor that allows one to enter into the understanding and acceptance of the community. Consequently, this language of the Poköt was taken for granted. Most of the Comboni missionaries in Amakuriat lack the knowledge of the language of the Poköt. This made their missionary effort of evangelizing them rather difficult. We can sense few reasons as to why Comboni missionaries have failed as far as the language is concerned:

- 1) The missionaries were not given ample time learning the local language and eventually were assigned to do urgent missionary work.

⁶¹ Pope Paul VI, "The Evangelization of the Men of our Time", Apostolic Exhortation, 28.

- 2) The apostolic activities were given strong emphasis, forgetting that the object of evangelization and mission is “the people”.
- 3) We noticed that translations from one language to the other can cause misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the message, especially when most of them have not gone to formal education.
- 4) Knowing that the language of the Poköt is difficult to learn, then this could have been taken as the priority by the Comboni missionaries.
- 5) As far as the long tribal strife, brought about by consistent raiding of cows from both sides is concerned, the presence of the Comboni missionaries was not visibly felt. Again, the insufficient knowledge of language becomes a barrier in making the Poköt community understand the importance of unity and reconciliation.

Hence we saw that the priority to study the language was not particularly considered as relevant since the activities of the mission are seemingly enough for the local people to understand and receive the Gospel of Christ. A Filipino Proverb says: “how can a stranger convince me to believe in him, in his doings, if he is not under my roof?”

Second, we also experienced that the Comboni missionaries recognize their personal vulnerability as they confront and react to some given factors in their missionary activities:

- 1) The geographical location demands youthful strength to really come to term with far and difficult situations. Celebrating the sacraments or giving catechetical instructions is not the only missionary tasks but also of staying with the people and sharing life with them.

- 2) The unpredictable climatic conditions can make communication between different missions impossible. Some out-stations of Amakuriat parish are empty of Poköt because the long dry season had forced the Poköt to move and to find pasture, in neighboring vicinities.

Third, there is no authentic growth of witnessing going on unless the people themselves become the focus of all the missionary and apostolic activities. I have the impression that the Comboni missionaries working in Amakuriat are more inclined to do work by themselves rather than allowing the people to participate in the work. I am convinced that Comboni missionaries ought to make permanent effort to establish relationship and to understand the Poköt culture and world view.

5.2 Recommendations

A) Formal study of language

Evangelization is the work of God and therefore must be treated with readiness to carry out the true work of God. Language is indispensable tool in this area. By doing so, readiness to learn their language should be a must. Knowing the language of the people is a great step to witnessing and solidarity. This could also be a source of joy, of communicating in depth of witnessing Christ, of inculturation of faith experience, and of executing the preaching of the Gospel.

B) Comboni Missionary visits

I would like to recommend frequent visitation as part of the plan to various out-stations most especially in the interior plains and hills of Amakuriat. Knowing that the

Poköt culture is a closed culture in this area and tribal strife is everywhere felt, frequent visit of the Comboni missionaries can stimulate inter-cultural sharing and appreciation of cultures.

C) Missionary personnel

Attention to personal health and age of the missionary should be dealt with, considering the difficult area they are posted in. Amakuriat is a difficult mission. The road is rough and tough. Daniel Comboni was convinced that we need “Holy and capable” missionaries in these difficult missions. We need missionaries who can coup up with the demands of these situations.

D) Acquiring intimate knowledge of people’s culture

I would suggest avoiding building churches in areas where Christ is not yet known unless a deep contact with the people and their culture is well established. The initiatives in building the church should come from the people. However, the Comboni missionaries should focus themselves in building up friendship and solidarity.

E) The Cross: the ultimate witness

The Comboni missionaries should never lose hope and courage to see the mission in Amakuriat in slow progress. The Cross of Jesus is the inspiration to this difficult and challenging mission. All the struggles, crises of the Comboni missionaries should find refuge on the Cross of Christ as Daniel Comboni insisted and lived. He says, “To suffer

for Christ and to win souls for him is the greatest source of strength for the heart of a true missionary".⁶²

⁶² A. Gili, "Daniel Comboni: the Man and his Message, no. 67", Bologna: Italy, 77.

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