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PASSING ON TRADITION IN CHRISTIANITY AND IN
AFRICA

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this essay is the fruit of my labour and research. It has not been submitted anywhere to any University or College for academic credit.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of tradition has been one of the most debated topics over the centuries. We see how the world today is divided into different categories of people who follow different ideologies in life. Some people prefer to keep the tradition of their ancestors without deviating from it, so that they may harmonize the style of life in their community. While others do not even want to hear people talking about tradition. They see ancient customs and practices as backward. They live according to the present day trends.

It is true that some people misunderstand the concept of tradition in their life. Some strictly follow their traditions and principles without looking at the signs of times. They do not see how their tradition encounters other cultures. On the other hand, there are other people who take into consideration their tradition and try to adapt it to the signs of times and to the different cultures their tradition has encountered so that they may have good harmony in the society. "Tradition, in the true sense of the word, implies a spontaneous assimilation of the past in understanding the present, without a break in the continuity of a society's life, and without considering the past as outmoded"¹.

Moreover, we cannot build our society without having a retrospective regard to the past. As Yves Congar puts it, "Tradition remains linked to its roots"². Most Theologians have been studying, in a systematic way, how the Christian tradition has been handed over from one generation to another and how the same tradition has encountered other cultures.

¹ Congar, Yves, *Tradition and the life of the Church*, London: Burns & Oates, 1964, p.8.

² *Ibid.*, p.146.

In our work, we will look at the Christian tradition and how it encountered the Bamputu tradition, a tradition within Africa. Congar's view on tradition will help us to understand and get the meaning of the concept of tradition.

In understanding the meaning of tradition in Christianity and in the Bamputu people, we will compare them and sort out the similar and the divergent elements of the two traditions and bring out the pastoral implications for the local people so that Christianity may feel at home.

Our work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the understanding of the concept of tradition. The second chapter analyses the foundations of the Christian tradition and how it was handed on from one generation to the next. The third chapter is on the foundation of the Bamputu tradition and its transmission from one generation to another. The fourth chapter is on the parallelism and dissimilarity of the two traditions. The fifth chapter deals with the pastoral implications of the Bamputu tradition and its holistic approach to inculturation. This will be followed by a general conclusion.

CHAPTER I.

THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF TRADITION

Most people view Tradition in a negative attitude since they misunderstand the meaning of this concept. They think that it is going back blindly to the sources and living in a fundamentalist and conservative manner. Tradition on the other hand helps one to live the present in the light of the past and in view of the future.

In this first chapter, we would like to define the concept of Tradition and show how people can understand it in a better way. We will rely a lot on Congar's view on Tradition³.

1. DEFINING TRADITION

When we look in the Bible⁴, we realize that the concept of Tradition is most clearly seen in the New Testament. We will find it referred to mostly in Jesus' teachings and in the Pauline epistles. The term Tradition comes frequently in the New Testament, Mt15:1-9; Mk7: 1-13, 1Th2:13; 2Th:15; 2Tm.2:2. This expression comes very often in Jesus' discussion with his opponents, the Pharisees. Jesus wanted to reveal to them the truth about the true tradition.

"How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, "Honour your father and your mother", and whoever curses father or mother shall die. Yet you say, ' If a person says to father or mother, any support

³ Cfr.- Congar, Yves, *Tradition and Traditions*, An Historical and Theological essay, London: Burns & Oates, 1966, p. 8.

⁴ Our Biblical quotations are from The African Bible, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, unless otherwise indicated.

you might have had from me is *qorban'*, (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favour of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things. (Mk 7:9-13).

Jesus is not happy with the way the Pharisees present their tradition. It appears to be a human institution, and in it there is no deep understanding of the precepts of God the Father. Jesus instead wants that the Pharisees go deeper and look at the motivations of their actions. He challenges them to be realistic and how things should be seen from God's perspectives rather than from a legal and superficial out look of religion.

Jesus has a different perspective vis-à-vis Jewish tradition which, can be seen in his public life. He brought a new tradition which helped to understand Scriptures, one which is greater than the ancient one, which was misunderstood by the Jews.

In this perspective, with this new understanding of the concept tradition, can we say that human laws have to be rejected or pushed aside? Saint Paul as a theologian of tradition enlightens us further by his teaching in his Epistles. In his letter to the Thessalonians, "Therefore, brothers stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours" (2Th.2:15). Paul, a Jew by birth, knew well the tradition. " He brought new life to it by making it a vehicle of the Gospel which effects our salvation, including in it the activity of the spirit, and in making Jesus Christ both its content and the principle of its origin authority"⁵.

This Pauline recommendation will help us a lot to understand the concept of tradition. Moreover, we are going to rely on Congar's thought to understand well this concept of Tradition.

⁵ Congar, Yves, *Tradition and Traditions*, An Historical and Theological essay, London: Burns & Oates, 1966, p. 9.

2. TRADITION IN A BROAD SENSE

Going back to the origin of the concept of "Tradition", etymologically, the word comes from the Latin, *traditio*, as a noun, the verb is *tradere* which means to transmit, to deliver. " *Tradere, traditio* meant to hand over an object, with the intention, on the one hand, of parting with it, and, on the other, of acquiring it. *Tradere* implied giving over and surrendering something to someone; passing an object from the possession of the donor to receiver"⁶.

It will be interesting to see how the concept of tradition is seen in the history of salvation. The way God himself of out his love delivered his only Son to the humanity for their salvation. This economy of salvation has taken a long process to be realized from the Prophets up to our days. It has been handed over from God to Jesus, from Jesus to the Apostles, from the Apostles to the Magisterium and the Faithful now in the Church. " Thus the economy of salvation begins by a divine transmission or tradition; it is continued in and by the men chosen and sent out by God for that purpose"⁷.

God reveals himself through the word his Son communicates to the faithful through the Apostles. This tradition of the Apostles was transmitted to the Church. In the same perspective, Holstein says in his book, *la Tradition dans l' Eglise*: " "Tradition is at the same time and inseparably the communication of the message of revelation the Apostles received from the Lord Jesus in order to transmit it to us. Christ entrusted his mission to bring the Good News over the world and up to the end of time"⁸.

Paul, in his letter to Timothy, requires of his disciple to keep intact the tradition he has received and how he should transmit it to others. "O Timothy, guard what has been

⁶ Congar, Yves, *The Meaning of Tradition*, New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964, p. 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸ Holstein, H., *La Tradition dans l'Eglise*, Paris: Grasset, p.143.

entrusted to you. Avoid profane babbling and the absurdities of so-called knowledge. By professing it, some people have deviated from the faith" (1Tm 6:20-21). Even Jesus himself knew that after his departure to the Father fierce wolves would come to disturb his sheep. " The apostles had very soon seen the danger of false doctrines and divisions developing"⁹. Therefore the apostles do guard well the tradition received from Christ in the Church. The Church is still keeping this Tradition so that the message of revelation may be spread in the hearts of the faithful. This tradition is the deposit of our faith.

The tradition we are talking about is not exactly that one of the Roman culture in which "usually, when it is a question of handing over a material object, the donor loses possession of it and can no longer enjoy it"¹⁰. Our Church tradition is richer than the one of the Romans. Because it is a question of a spiritual treasure in which God, the one who took the initiative of transmitting the tradition, does not lose what God possesses. He keeps the object, the heritage he transmitted to the world who is the subject of the Tradition. "Firstly, because it is above all a doctrine; what God transmits in his son, what Christ delivers to his apostles, and the apostles to the Churches, is in the first place the Gospel, the divine and saving doctrine which is the object of our faith"¹¹. This doctrine has a great impact on our faith; in it we see how the economy of salvation came to our world.

Congar insists: " The reality which it communicates is primarily a doctrine, but not exclusively so. Indeed if "tradition" is taken in its basic, strict sense, signifying transmission, or delivery, it includes the whole communication, excluding nothing, if then we consider the content of what is offered, tradition comprises equally the holy

⁹ Congar, Yves, *Tradition and Traditions*. An Historical and Theological essay, p. 19.

¹⁰ Congar, Yves, *The Meaning of Tradition*, p. 16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

Scriptures and, besides these, not only doctrines but things: the sacraments, ecclesiastical institutions, the powers of the ministry, customs and liturgical rites, in fact, all the Christian realities themselves”¹².

In this perspective, tradition includes everything, which has been handed over to the Church by our ancestors in the faith, the apostles. Saint Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians says: “ I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions just as I handed them on to you” (1Cor 11:2). In fact, this transmission which has been handed over from one generation to another can be understood in the strict sense. This can be seen outside the Scriptures, since we have faith in the apostles and in what they have witnessed and done in their life and ministry.

3. TRADITION IN THE STRICT SENSE

In viewing the life of the apostles, we recognize that tradition is not only the written works that the apostles have left to the Church since they were not merely following the instructions and teachings of Jesus. The apostles imitated the life itself of their master Jesus Christ. Thus, in Antioch, for the first time the followers of Jesus were called *Christians*. Those who followed his life.

The way of transmission of this tradition is both the Scripture is both the handing over of the doctrine and the life style from Jesus to his apostles and from apostles to the first community. “ Tradition as understood in this paragraph, is the communication of the entire heritage of the apostles, effected in a different way from that of their writing. It was

¹² Congar, Yves, *The Meaning of Tradition*, p. 18.

by means of a concrete experience of life and of the familiar everyday realities of existence”¹³.

In fact the apostolic tradition in the Church is a whole discipline and practices left to the faithful by the apostles. Jesus Christ himself was the model of life for the Christians. He showed a good example to his followers so that in their turn, they may bear witness to his resurrection in all the nations. Congar will say:

“ For tradition to exist-tradition understood as the environment in which we receive it-it must be borne by those who, having it, live by it and pass it on to others, so that they may live by it, in their turn. Tradition, like education, is a live communication whose content is not separable from the act by which one living person hands it on to another”¹⁴.

It is true that all the truth is found in the Scriptures. However, to keep the liturgical and disciplinary practices in the Church, the Fathers of the Church from the beginning kept a certain way of behaving and even a severe life style so that they may follow the example of the apostles. This tradition or way of behaving does not exist in the Scriptures. It is not a new source of scriptures but the complementary source of the truths of Scripture we can find in the Church; such as the introduction of the sign of the cross, in baptism, the ceremony of the renunciation of Satan and his angels¹⁵. All these facts were related to the exercise of Church life so that Christians could keep a certain way of showing their faith. The unwritten tradition is not only from the Apostles 'life, it is also what was seen good “from the patristic period to the end of the Middle Ages. These practices are attributed to the tradition, and if they seemed to be ancient and universal, to oral apostolic tradition”¹⁶.

¹³ Congar, Yves, *Tradition and the Life of the Church*, p. 26.

¹⁴ Congar, Yves, *The Meaning of Tradition*, p. 28.

¹⁵ Congar, Yves, *Tradition and Traditions*, An Historical and Theological essay, p. 52.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

We have mentioned up to now something on tradition or traditions. Moreover, we could not get the deep understanding of the concept without having a look at Congar's view on tradition in a theological perspective.

Congar sees the concept of tradition and traditions in a depth. He makes an important distinction between tradition and traditions. This can be also seen in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation " *Dei Verbum*" of Vatican II.

"This Gospel was to be the source of all saving truth and moral discipline. This was faithfully done: it was done by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what themselves received-whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit: it was done by the apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing". (DV 7-10).

The Holy Spirit played a great role in the life of the apostles in spreading the Good News. By living the Good News, the listeners responded to the call they received through conversion to faith in Jesus Christ. The faith expressed was the sign that the Gospel has produced good fruit.

In Congar's understanding of this concept: Thus ' tradition is no longer only that which the apostles handed on, or rather, it is certainly formally and fundamentally, but it is also the deposit made explicit in texts and, when necessary, even in a new vocabulary. From now on, and ever more so as the Church progresses through history, this can give the name tradition to a procession of witness to this unfolding of the deposit"¹⁷.

¹⁷ Congar, Yves, *Tradition and Traditions*, An Historical and Theological essay, p. 48.

Tradition is seen as the main message of human salvation, the communication of Christian realities which has been handed on from the apostles in the form of scriptures and customs. This tradition has helped a lot in the understanding of Christian faith. Moreover, tradition by itself can be seen as moral standards, all kind of diversity of means through which the Church can express in a concrete way her belief, and her profession of faith. This is more concerned about how to express the cult and a certain way of behaving.

Congar says: "Traditions are decisions which become norms under certain conditions, still to be defined and which are not formally contained in the Scriptures. They can come from Jesus, being respectively divine, apostolic or ecclesiastical"¹⁸. Tradition is the transmission of the entire gospel and the Christian mystery. This is expressed in different forms of worship, sacraments and preaching.

The Concise Theological Dictionary presents it in this way: " Tradition for Catholic Theology, then is the process whereby revealed truth (*Dogma), ultimately derived by oral preaching from the original bearers of Christian revelation (particularly *Jesus Christ and *the Apostles) is transmitted by the Church, with the assistance of Holy Ghost, and thereby developed; (...) Scripture alone remains for all practical purposes the sole material source of the faith drawn upon by the later tradition"¹⁹. What we have to understand more about tradition is the way the cult and a certain discipline come from it and what the next generation has to follow in their daily life. In our Christian tradition, the gospel has been spread since the time of the Apostles. Our Church Fathers tried to explain that deposit of Christian faith left by the Apostles from one generation to another.

¹⁸ Congar Yves, *Tradition and the Life of the Church*, p.118.

¹⁹ Ernst, Cornelius, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965, p. 463.

In their life they used all kinds of means so that the faithful may understand the tradition of the Church. Although we cannot find all these traditions in the Scriptures, we have to keep in our mind that

“The transmission of the reality that is Christianity: this is really the tradition. It is apostolic by origin, then ecclesiastical by its actual transmission... There exist, like wise, numerous traditions which are ecclesiastical by origin, having being laid down by the Church during her historical existence: institutions, rites, customs, discipline. Sometimes these are historical form, or modifications, perhaps, of a reality which is apostolic like Mass on Sunday or of the annual Easter communion is an ecclesiastical modification of the divine or apostolic reality”²⁰. The papacy is seen as divine institution which started with the apostles.

Therefore, we can now define tradition as the different witnesses found in the Scriptures or outside the Scriptures. It is the transmission of the Christian mystery in different aspects presented to the Church. It is well identified in the teachings of Jesus Christ or of the apostles handed over to the Church in which the Magisterium, in apostolic succession teaches and hands over in its turn to the faithful. Blondel points out: “Tradition is the transmission of the experience of the Apostles communicated to the Church in which the Church now is communicating its faith”²¹.

From this understanding of the concept tradition, we can talk about the foundation of the Christian tradition.

²⁰ Congar, Yves, *Tradition and the Life of the Church*, p. 46.

²¹ Holstein, H., *La Tradition dans l'Eglise*, p. 138.

CHAPTER II. CHRISTIAN TRADITION

I. FOUNDATION

In the first chapter of our essay we saw the various meanings of the concept of tradition. We mentioned something lightly about its foundation. In this chapter we shall look specifically at the Christian tradition, its foundations and the ways in which it is transmitted.

1. JESUS

Hugues in his book, "A History of the Church" maintains that the foundation of the Church already happened in the birth of the child when his parents went to Jerusalem for the registration. The idea of Church as community was also there in the way Jesus' s parents journeyed and stayed together. "The goal of their journey was barely reached when, in the outhouse of one of the overcrowded inns of a little hill town, Mary gave birth to her son. The life that there began is the foundation of the Church"²².

In the teaching of the Church, we know that Jesus Christ is the only Son of God the Father who came to reveal the mystery of God the Father. John's Gospel mentions that Jesus is the true revelation of God. "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father". (Jn 14: 9). Whatever Jesus did on earth, it was the will of his Father and his life and his deeds were the revelation of the love of the Father to the humanity.

Jesus came to bring a new understanding of the law, which was misunderstood by the sons of Israel. If we take a look at the Acts of the Apostles, we see how the first Christian community was characterised. They were devoted to the teachings of the apostles and to

²² Hugues, Philip, *A History of the Church*, Vol. 1, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1949, p. 30.

fellowship. They gathered for the breaking of the bread and prayer to show their communion with one another and faith in Jesus Christ. It was the memorial of the Last Supper. Their faith was bound to Jesus Christ who by his death and resurrection redeemed the world. "All lines run back to that precise point, which we might date tentatively to Friday, April 7, A.D. 30, not indeed that the exact calendar date is either certain or important; (...) but it is of some importance that the Church remembers an event which is actual, concrete and in principle dateable like any other historical event"²³. The Church expresses its faith in Jesus Christ through the sacred mysteries, especially in the Eucharist in which the Christians see the real presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The faithful commemorate the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Mass. "A corporate memory handed down from generation to generation becomes what we call a tradition. Our knowledge about the origins of the Church, and about its Founder, rests primarily on a living tradition, which had its beginnings in the actual memories of those who had witnessed the events and personal dealings with the principal actor in them"²⁴. The Apostles were the eyewitnesses to the paschal mystery.

2. THE APOSTLES

The Dictionary of Fundamental Theology defines the concept of Apostle as a delegate, an ambassador, one who carries out a mission as a plenipotentiary on behalf of someone with authority, who in a certain sense becomes present through the delegate²⁵. In this part of our work, we shall focus on the Apostles of Jesus Christ. In all their life they witnessed

²³ Dodd, C.H., *The Founder of Christianity*, London: Collins, 1971, p.14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.15.

²⁵ Cf. Latourelle, Rene, *Apostle*, in: Latourelle, Rene, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, New York: St. Pauls, 1990, p.48.

the presence of Jesus Christ himself. They were commissioned and received the mission to proclaim the Good News. "Jesus chose disciples as students. He is the original and primary Christian teacher. He defines what is taught and how it is to be taught. Jesus himself becomes the central teaching of Christianity"²⁶. The apostles were faithful in the mission given to them by Jesus Christ their master. The Church was built on their foundation and most of them were martyrs for Christ and for the Church which they established.

The apostles kept well the tradition received from Jesus Christ in a such way that the Church may be strong and hand on its beliefs from one generation to another. The apostles are seen like the model of our Christian faith. They witnessed to the risen Christ in their daily life. For that reason, there were churches in their names. "For Luke, the apostles are not only the ambassadors of Christ but, above all, men who take on the functions reserved for the twelve, and mainly the task of acting as qualified witnesses to the life and resurrection of Jesus"²⁷. In this perspective, in the primitive Church, the apostles represented Jesus Christ and bore witness to him. Many people were converted to Christianity because of their model of life.

The tradition of bearing witness to Christ was kept in the life of the Church; it was not given up in the first century but was handed over to any one who had faith in Jesus Christ. "Others to whom the risen Christ appeared were given a similar mission; fore most among these was the apostle Paul. While the apostles had a foundational role that no one in the following generations could have, the mandate that Christ had given them to

²⁶ Chilson, Richard, *Catholic Christianity, A guide to the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, New York: Paulist Press, 1987, p.202.

²⁷ Latourelle, Rene, *Apostle*, in: Latourelle, Rene, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, p. 48.

teach, baptize, forgive sins and pastor the flock, was to be passed on, because such ministry was essential to the life of the Church"²⁸.

3. THE MAGISTERIUM

Etymologically, the word *Magisterium* is a Latin word. It comes from *Magister*, that is "master" in English. It has a connotation of authority in various areas like teaching. The Encyclopaedia of Catholicism points out the *Magisterium*: as the teaching office and authority of the Catholic Church; and it indicates the hierarchy as holding this office. This office is attributed to the Pope and bishops of the Church, those who have succeeded the apostles. They have power to teach and guard the tradition in the Church.

The authority Christ gave to the apostles is the same authority, the *Magisterium*, bishops receive on the day of their Episcopal ordination. They have pastoral care for the faith of the Christian community. In the *Magisterium* office, bishops are seen as the successors of the apostles in their dioceses. They are guardians of the tradition. With the grace of the Holy Spirit, they discern the tradition, and explain it to the faithful. Never are they above the Scripture²⁹. In their responsibility of pastoral teaching, they remain in communion with the entire Church. Most of the questions they raise up, are related to the faith received, which they must transmit. They discern and teach how Christians have to keep the tradition of the Church.

The teaching of the *Magisterium* is considered as authentic, because the bishops have authority and were mandated by Jesus. "Bishops who teach in communion with the

²⁸ Sullivan, Francis, A., *Apostleship of Prayer*, in: McBrien, Richard, P., *The HarperCollins Encyclopaedia of Catholicism*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995, p. 78.

²⁹Cfr. Sullivan, Francis, A., *Magisterium*, in: McBrien, Richard, P., *The HarperCollins Encyclopaedia of Catholicism*, p. 805.

Roman Pontiff are to be revered by all as witnesses of divine and Catholic truth; the faithful for their part, are obliged to submit to their bishops' decision, made in the name of Christ, in matters of faith and morals, (...) even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* in such wise, indeed, that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect" (L.G. no 25).

II. THE HANDING ON OF CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The foundation of Christian tradition will help us to know the subjects active in the transmission of the Christian Tradition and how it is handed on from one generation to another. This has been done in the Church from the time of Jesus, to the time of the apostles and their successors.

I. THE CHURCH

When Peter made his profession of faith in answer to the question of Jesus, " Who do you say I am?, Jesus said, "upon this rock, I will build my Church", (Mt.16:13-18). We understand that Jesus himself built his Church on the rock so that his mission may continue in the world through his followers. The Church of Christ is not built with human power but with divine grace. Christ himself is the head of the Church. According to Vatican II, the Church is the guardian of the deposit of faith and of God's Word, from where the Church draws all the religious and moral principles. (L.G.6.).

The faithful know that Jesus is present in the Church. They are all gathered in his name. All the faithful become one like Christ is one with God the Father. They live their faith as children of God. The Church helps the faithful to respond to the call of God. "By

tradition, the Church transmits the word. It is necessary because we have no primary contact with the historical Jesus-God's revelation. The Church whose experience goes back to Jesus himself shares what it has received and preserved"³⁰.

Jesus himself left his tradition upon the foundation of the apostles and that is also the beginning of the Church. The early Christians lived this tradition in a way that let the word of God, the source of everything produce good fruits. This tradition was expressed in the Church by a set of beliefs, customs, prayers, worship and celebration. These beliefs of the Church had a great impact in the growth of Christian faith in the early Church.

I. 1. THE APOSTLES

We have seen that the foundation of the Church was built upon the Apostles. As the gospel accounts tell us the twelve apostles were among the chosen disciples who stayed with Jesus. He empowered them to continue his mission which has become the mission of the Church. They preached the kingdom of God the all nations. Dodd, C., tell us: "The earliest Christians were Jews. Among Jews of that period it was well understood that a disciple was responsible for remembering and faithfully handing on the teaching of his master"³¹. The gospel was preached faithfully according to the way Jesus Christ had taught them. This was the way the Christian tradition was handed on faithfully.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter did not hesitate and was not afraid to stand before the great assembly to preach the message of salvation. " From the statement of the gospel of John that 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' and that Christ was the 'truth' in person, it

³⁰ Chilson, Richard, *Catholic Christianity, A Guide to the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, p. 200.

³¹ Dodd, C. H., *The Founder of Christianity*, London: Collins, 1971, pp.20-21.

followed that the only reliable source for Christian life lay in the very words and teaching of Christ³².

The apostles kept well this tradition of the Church, since they were the eyewitnesses of Jesus. They were also inspired by the Holy Spirit, who revealed to them, the previous history of salvation as a journey that found its fulfilment in Christ. "To assert the authority of the word of Christ, therefore, was simultaneously to affirm its continuity with the revelation set down in the Old Testament. This continuity was an essential element in authentic apostolic tradition"³³. This continuity of Christian tradition has been kept in the Church from the apostolic age. The apostles passed over the tradition and the mission of Christ to their successors, the *Magisterium*.

I. 2.THE MAGISTERIUM

In the passing on of the Christian tradition, the Magisterium appears as the Church's hierarchy. The bishops with the power received from Christ have the mission to guide the flock of Christ who are the faithful. The canonical authority of the Magisterium is not only to judge and guard faithfully the tradition but to define, explain, and communicate it so that the faithful may understand the Christian tradition. In their turn, they live it in their daily life. They have to make it their tradition. As well: "Tradition is a transmission of faith and Christian life, which in our own lives is transformed into Christian behaviour profession of faith before men and praise of God"³⁴.

³² Pelikan, Jaroslav, *The Christian Tradition, A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 110.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

³⁴ Congar Yves, *Tradition and the life of the Church*, p. 51.

I.3. THE FAITHFUL

The term laity is defined by the Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* : " The term "laity" is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church." (L.G. 31). That is, the faithful who by baptism are incorporated into Christ, are the people of God. They have received a call to carry on the mission of Christ in the world.

The faithful listen to and believe in the teaching of Church and the *Magisterium*, since it is God's revelation. They are symbol of Christ himself in the Church. The Church does not consist of the hierarchic orders alone but of the laity as well. It has to acknowledge the presence and role of the faithful, since they have a specific apostolate in the Church.

The laity are everywhere in the world. For that reason they are able to bring the gospel to the ends of the world. In this sense, they too are the guardians of the tradition. They witness to the risen Christ in their daily life. The simple faithful have a responsibility to transmit the Christian tradition even though most of them may not be instructed in the dogma, since they are raised up with Christian faith in their own families. The Christian tradition came down to us from the very beginning of the Church when worship was taking place in the houses of the faithful.

4. HE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit has a great role in the transmission of the tradition. The Spirit enables the successors of the apostles to continue the mission of Christ in the Church. Without the Holy Spirit, the Church cannot be fully alive at work. "Saint Paul says that the Church is

a great living body, the Holy Spirit living in this body gives it life just as the soul living in my body gives my body life"³⁵.

II. OBJECT OF TRADITION

1. LITURGY AND WORSHIP

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the apostles respected the recommendation of Jesus for them to remain together in Jerusalem in one spirit and in one heart waiting for the Holy Spirit. "This, then, is the spiritual context in which the event of Pentecost, which fulfils that expectation, must be understood: the Spirit descends on the community which is persevering in prayer"³⁶. We see that the apostles were united waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They were gathered in the name of Jesus. Prayer was very important. "The coming of the Spirit thus inaugurates in the community the movement of thanksgiving, "Eucharist", which is the foundation of Christian cult and which unites peoples of all tongues in one proclamation and one act of praise, announcing the wonders wrought by God in Jesus whom he has raised from the dead"³⁷.

- Liturgical Celebration

We have already mentioned in the previous passage that in the apostolic period, the first Christians were gathering for the sharing of the common meal to commemorate the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. "From the apostolic era, and in conformity with the instructions of the New Testament, the *Didache* teaches that Christians are to

³⁵ Quoted in *Catholic Catechism*, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1971, p.92.

³⁶ Wagner, Johannes and Rennings, Heinrich, *Liturgy, The Church Worships*, in: *Concilium*, Vol. 12, New York: Paulist Press, 1966, p.4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5.

assemble for the “breaking of bread and for thanksgivings”³⁸. This raised a great devotion to the sacrament of the Eucharist. They acknowledged the presence of the Lord in this breaking of bread. Their gathering was accompanied with prayers.

In the liturgy, Christians celebrate their redemption. It brings all the faithful into loving communion with Christ in commemorating his death and resurrection. "The liturgy provides a contact with the realities themselves"³⁹.

In the liturgy, the Church transmits the apostolic tradition, Scripture and ecclesial tradition, rites, customs, etc... The faithful listen to the word of God and commemorate the last supper. In the consecration, the priest repeats the same word said by Jesus. This tradition has been transmitted to us from the time of the fathers of the Church.

- Cult of the Saints

Christians believe that the faithful who lived good lives on earth before dying, are now most closely united with Christ in heaven. The cult previously given to martyrs began to be given also to other Christians who were not martyrs but living good Christian life. "After the peace of the Church this respect was extended to other Christians who were felt to have Christ-likeness during their lives, whether as bishops, religious, or while engaged in secular life"⁴⁰. The Saints need to receive a veneration, so that they may intercede for the living. The early Christians had this devotion in order to respect the saints.

³⁸ Wagner, Johannes and Rennings, Heinrich, *Liturgy, The Church Worship*, p.11.

³⁹ Congar, Yves, *Tradition and the Life of the Church*, p. 129.

⁴⁰ Richardson, Alan and Bowden, John, *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, London: SCM Press, 1983, p. 518.

The New Dictionary of Christian Theology says that in the Middle Ages, the cult of saints was very much developed. It was expressed in pilgrimages, devotion to relics and other celebrations in memory of their example of life on earth. These various celebrations were also performed as strong moment of prayer of intercession for various needs. Since now they are enjoying blessedness in the company of God the Father. They can intercede for our many needs and obtain protection from all dangers that threaten our lives. The various forms of cults offered to martyrs and saints were also an effective way of passing on the Christian Tradition.

2. CATECHISM

We cannot deny the importance of catechism in the life of the Church. This started in the primitive community in the context of the initiation of the new members. “The task that faced the early Church was simply that of initiation of the new members, the particular method was not of primary concern”⁴¹. The purpose of this initiation was to welcome the new converts into the Church. Baptism would follow.

“From the 180’s and during all the third century, a more definite catechumenal practice emerged for better formation of converts”⁴². This catechumenal formation was not seen in the sense of an institution. After the Initiation period, the person became a “proselyte of Christ”, that is the one who wants to join the Church is going towards Christ.

Origen developed the concept of catechumenate in reference to the crossing of the Red sea, how God showed his power to Israel (Exodus 14, 9-18). Afterwards, the Church,

⁴¹ Reedy, William, J., *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, London: SCM Press, 1983, p. 518.

⁴¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 519.

⁴¹ Reedy, William, J., *Becoming a Catholic Christian, A Symposium on Christian Initiation*, New York: Saldier, 1977, p.12.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

through the missionaries, took it as its responsibility to educate people for a lengthy period of time which came to be called the catechumenate. The most important period in the catechumenate took place during the Pascal season, the time when the Church remembers the heart of the history of salvation, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Vatican II promulgated the official restoration of the catechumenate in the sacred Constitution on Sacred Liturgy (*Sacram liturgiaam*). “This effort...remains a fundamental need that we shall never completely satisfy. Catechesis will continue to be an integral part of the maternal mission of the Church”⁴³. The catechumenate remains in most areas of the Church the best expression of its catechetical effort.

3. SCRIPTURE

The Scripture is from the same source as Tradition; since it is God’s revelation. “Both therefore in some fashion form one thing(...) “are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other; and towards the same goal”⁴⁴. The Scripture transmits God’s revelation.

In John’s gospel, Jesus himself is revealed as the Word of God. “ You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness to me”(Jn 5:39). Christian tradition is bound to the life of Jesus, which is the integral part of the Scriptures. The apostles preached the crucified Jesus who rose from the dead. The same Christ was foretold by the prophets in the Scripture. This is what the Church is still preaching to the faithful. “If their doctrinal tradition consists in understanding Scripture in the light of Christ and the Church, that is the Christian

⁴³Reedy, William, J., *Becoming a Catholic Christian, A Symposium on Christian Initiation*, p. 13.

⁴⁴ Ciril de Souza and Kalathuveetil, Thomas, *Introducing the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1994, p. 42.

mystery, it must be admitted as being a tradition not merely apostolic in origin, but divine, since, having founded it Jesus communicated it to them by the Scriptures”⁴⁵.

4. ORAL TRADITION

In the beginning of God's revelation in the New Testament, the Church had oral tradition. The tradition tells us that everything was oral. "Thus the Old Testament was the first book which the Church possessed"⁴⁶. It was only in the course of time that the Church with some disciples, especially Paul and the gospel authors, started writing what the apostles had seen with their own eyes and were now preaching. They handed it on to the Church so that people may live it. The Church keeps well the tradition. This is the deposit of Christian faith (1Tm...). Oral tradition did not stop its function once the preaching of the apostles was put into writing. It continues alive in the global life of the Church and it is in fact the living in which the written scripture continues to be interpreted and understood down through the ages. Tradition helps a lot to interpret the Scriptures since it is older than the Scriptures.

⁴⁵ Congar, Yves, *The Meaning of Tradition*, p. 82.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *A New Catechism, The Catholic faith for Adults*, London: Search Press, 1969, p. 206.

III. CONCLUSION

We have seen the greatness of Christian tradition in our two chapters. Tradition occupies a central position in the life of the Church. It is a prime tool of Christian faith. The Apostolic tradition, the Scripture and the Ecclesial tradition and the way Christians behave in general and the ecclesial disciplines in particular were handed on to us by our ancestors in the faith. The Christians should take their precious tradition and heritage seriously to live a fuller Christian life today.

CHAPTER III. BAMPUTU TRADITION

O. INTRODUCTION

Readers of this essay may ask this question: "Who are the Bamputu people? The Bamputu are the smallest tribal group of people in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are about one million of the population. Oral tradition tells us that the Bamputu came from West Africa. Because of the desertification of Sahara desert, they migrated to central Africa in, DRC⁴⁷.

In terms of beliefs and practices the Bamputu people are sedentary, they believe that God gave them the land, so that they may produce crops which can help them to survive and keep their hunger at bay. Thus, there is a god of the land who keeps his spirits in the "kisanga," Savannah. In principle, the Bamputu people practise matrilineal inheritance that goes in connection with the land. For that reason, women play a very significant role in their society⁴⁸.

I. FOUNDATION OF BAMPUTU TRADITION

The Bamputu people believe that *Ta-Nzam* is the founder of their tradition. "That is the names attributed to God in ATR originate from people's experience, model of perception and expression of their world-view and environment. Thus the name of God expresses

⁴⁷ Most of the information in this chapter is the fruit of my interviews with the Elders of Bamputu in their villages where I spent one year in my pastoral work in the Catholic Mission Dwe, Bulungu district, Bandundu Province of DRC. Moreover, I am also from this tribe Bamputu.

⁴⁸ Interview with Mr. Lugie, Chief of Isampap clan and notable of Dwe village, Wednesday, 15th Jan. 1998.

their concrete experience. That is who is God for them in their concrete holistic life"⁴⁹. As you cannot see *Ta-Nzam*, he entrusted his power to the ancestors to set the tradition on earth. Paris says in his book: "The Spirituality of African Peoples", "Similarly, all agree that the community is a sacred phenomenon created by the supreme God"⁵⁰. This came from their experience and struggle of the first days when they reached Bamputu land. This tradition is expressed by their taboos, discipline in life, customs, riddles, proverbs, *mfung'a-nuan*⁵¹. The King and the Elders are the guardians of Bamputu tradition.

1. AGENTS OF TRANSMISSION

A. ELDERS OF BAMPUTU TRIBE

In Bamputu tradition, the Elders are the representatives of each clan in the village. They form a college of notables within the whole of Bamputu territory they occupy. It does not matter which village one comes from. Those who are called 'Elders' of a clan know well the tradition of the Bamputu ancestors. They know the boundaries of their land and that of their neighbours. They know all the taboos, customs, riddles, rites, discipline that are to be passed on to the next generation. In the clan, the Elders perform rituals such as libation to pacify the living dead for the wrong doing of the living. They have contact with the ancestors of the clan by sacrificing a white chicken. This ceremony is performed at the shrine.

⁴⁹ Sarpong, P. K. *Growth or Decay: Dialogue with African Traditional Religion?* in *Department of Sacred Liturgy in: African Christian Studies, Vol. 10*, Nairobi: The Journal of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, 1994, p. 20.

⁵⁰ Paris, Peter, J., *The Spirituality of African peoples, The Search for a common Moral Discourse*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, p.51.

⁵¹ *Traditional songs play with the ivory tusks of the elephant for transmitting Bamputu tradition.*

If there is any problem in the village, *Bantu ya kimbaku*⁵² should always consult them before appearing in court, since the Elders are seen as the "custodian of the Tradition". There is a maxim which says, if a Mumputu Elder dies, it is all the custodians that are set on fire. They have a great role in traditional matters. They teach tradition by means of lessons, proverbs, *mfung'a nuan* and songs, singing with the ivory tusks of the elephants as instruments during the initiation rite. In singing they transmit the tradition⁵³.

B. KINGS

The Bamputu have a centralized system of government with a kingship system. The skin of a leopard and its teeth, the ivory are symbols of authority and power for Bamputu people. The king is the mediator between the living and the dead. In Bamputu tradition, kingship is matrilineal. The Eldest son of a clan is the one to succeed the throne of his Uncle. In case, there is no candidate from that lineage of the king, the eldest sister of the king can succeed the departed king in power.

During the enthronement of the new king, he is invested with the skin of the leopard and its teeth by the Elders of the Bamputu and neighbouring kings. He is given a stick, as a symbol of a good shepherd. During the ceremony, they play "*mfung-a-nwan*", as a symbol of power.

The king plays an important role in the village. He has power to protect the village against the enemies, he is the only one who can invoke the ancestors if there is a disaster in the village, he has to make sure that his people are protected. For that reason, the king

⁵² *Bantu ya Kimbaku*: Wise People in Bamputu tradition.

⁵³ Interview with Mr. Kimpiobi, the Elder of Angil's Clan, Ubol village, 25th June, 1998.

has a great army composed of young people who have undergone initiation in the savannah⁵⁴.

C. THE WISE MEN IN THE VILLAGE

The Wise men are discovered in the village for their wisdom, especially for their wisdom in the way they tackle problems in a good manner. They are considered the judges in the village. The Wise men are elected by the Elders in each clan of a village, so that they may represent the entire village in the council of Bamputu territory. The King has to assent to the proposal of the Elders to have the Wise people.

The Wise men need the help of the Elders in their function, since they know more about the tradition. They have a role to judge, discern and promulgate the tradition with the consent of the King. They punish the people who do not respect the tradition.

D. THE TEACHER OF BAMPUTU TRADITION

According to the structure of Bamputu society, each clan has its members and they are known by the name of their clan. They have to submit to the discipline of an Elder of their clan, since he knows all the traditions. He links the young generation with the tradition of the ancestors.

To transmit the tradition of the ancestors of the clan, the Elder meets his clan members in the evening and teaches them about the ancestors of their clan. They explain all the taboos of the clan, how they migrated and how they had their land. The clan members should memorise their tradition by heart.

⁵⁴ Interview with King of Bamputu people, *Ta-Mfum Martin*, Dwe IV village, 14th August, 1998.

II. OBJECT OF BAMPUTU TRADITION

1. BELIEVING IN BEINGS

The Bamputu believe in a supreme being called "*Ta-Nzam*", that is God the Father, the Almighty. He is the one who created human beings and the land they use for their harvest. The supreme Being, *Ta-Nzam* has his Son who is the god who keeps the earth. He is the owner of the land. He has his servants, the spirits who look after the savannah. They have great power to control the earth, for that reason, the Bamputu should respect and venerate the master of the spirits *Mwan'-a-Nzam'*, the son of god.

The veneration is performed thrice a week, i.e. Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. They perform it in the form of libation. No body is allowed to farm during those days. If one disobeys the taboo, he can be punished by the spirits in the farms. In the village, the Wise men have to punish him severely because he is considered a criminal who wants to bring disaster on the village.

The Bamputu venerate their ancestors who are the founders of their tradition. Every time they are in contact with them, during the celebrations, libation is performed by the Elders of the clans and the king.

2. BELIEVING IN ANCESTORSHIP

The ancestors are the departed members of the families who lived good lives on earth. In Bamputu tradition, even a child can be an ancestor. They live in communion with God and they are the founders of the tradition. The ancestors intercede for the living at any time. The living keep a great communion with the ancestors by giving them a cult of libation before any activity. They are venerated so that they can watch over the welfare of

the community of the living. "In fact, the living dead are the spiritual protectors of the family and the larger community. The relationship between the two is reciprocal"⁵⁵.

In cases of disaster such as drought in the village, the Elders of the clan and the king are those who are supposed to perform the ritual, since they are the representatives of those living on earth. However, if it appears that the case is minor in the family or in a clan, the last born can perform the ritual.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CLAN

In Bamputu tradition, a person is a member of his clan by birth. From childhood he has to learn the tradition of his clan from the Elder of the clan who teaches them every evening through riddles before they retire. These teachings are about the knowledge of the clan on totems, marriage, lands etc...

The members of the clan have to live these traditions, since it is a real way towards their salvation in their daily lives.

The clan members have an obligation to respect and live the teaching of the Elders in the community, since it is their tradition. This will help them to move forward on the path of salvation. Salvation is a dynamic journey which will come to fullness after their death when the living reach the world of ancestors.

The Bamputu believe that God uses the ancestors to communicate the gift of life to the living through the Elders of the clans. "The original ancestor continues to live in his descendants, and is, after God, at the origin of the existence of the present generation. He had transmitted his own force to those of his descendants who in their turn have already

⁵⁵ Paris, Peter, J., *The Spirituality of African Peoples, The Search for a Moral Discourse*, p. 55.

joined the dead, but remain nevertheless responsible for the welfare and sustenance of the life in their clan"⁵⁶.

4. TRADITION IN THE LIFE OF THE BAMPUTU COMMUNITY

4.1. BIRTH CEREMONY

As in most of the Bantu cultures, the moment of birth is a great occasion for the entire family and the clan to celebrate the welcoming of a human life into the clan. As Magesa says in his book *African Religion*: " It is a very significant step not only for validity of marriage contract, but also for its consolidation. Finally, and most important, it is the beginning of the assurance for the parents of their own possibility of living after death, that is of the becoming ancestors themselves"⁵⁷. Clan members are very happy. They express their joy by shouting when the baby is born, playing *lokole*, musical instrument for communicating an important message in the village.

Early in the morning, the Elder of the clan has to go to the shrine and perform some rituals, so that the ancestors of the clan may know that there is a descendant who has been born to life. The ritual is done through libation. The Elder pours palm wine on the soil and chews a piece of "*Dikasu*", a kind of bitter coconut. This is a sign of covenant between the new born and the ancestors. Afterwards, the Elder gives the baby a name from his clan.

⁵⁶ Bujo, B., *African Christian Morality, At the Age of Inculturation*, Nairobi: Pauline's Publications, 1990, p. 75.

⁵⁷ Magesa, Laurenti, *African Religion, The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, New York: Orbis Books, 1997, p. 83.

4.2. INITIATION

Social life is very important in Bamputu tradition. A person can be defined only in relationship with the members of his tribe. Thus for someone to be considered as a man in the society he has to pass through the initiation, the rite of passage. The initiation is a period of bonding with the community by shedding one's blood. "It says that the individual is alive, and that he or she now wishes to be tied to the community and people, among whom he or she has been born as a child. This circumcision of blood is like making a covenant, or solemn agreement, between the individual and his people"⁵⁸.

The Initiation takes place in the forest where nobody from the village can see them. The Initiated go with the Elders singing *mfung-a-nwan*. During the circumcision, the Elders teach the circumcised the Bamputu traditions, wisdom of the ancestors, taboos, totem, discipline, and how an adult should behave in the society. At the end of the ceremony, they are considered adults in Bamputu society. They can take part in all kinds of ceremonies in the village, since they have the knowledge of all Bamputu tradition.

The day, they come back home, there is a big celebration in the village. People welcome them with traditional songs, dancing the *mfung-a-nwan*. They are now considered full members of the tribe and can have responsible roles to play in the community.

4.3. RITUAL

Bamputu people have different rituals with different significances. This depends on the type of a ceremony they perform. The ritual is a way to keep good harmony in the society. It avoids the disasters, calamities in the village.

⁵⁸ Mbiti, John, S., *Introduction to African Religion*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1992, p. 98.

Most of the rituals are performed by the Elders or the last born of the family. They believe that the last born has power to access to the supreme being since he is the priest of the clan. If he is not around, an Elder of the clan can perform the ritual, since he is the head.

The ritual is performed at the shrine of the ancestors of the clan. In performing it, the family has to bring to the shrine the ritual objects such as a calabash for wine, pot, *lokole*, *likasu* and the tail of the leopard. These objects are kept in the house of the clan. Nobody is allowed to touch them before the ritual.

4.4. RITE OF LEAVING THE PARENTS' HOME

Bamputu people believe that one is in danger if he or she leaves his or her parents' home. One is not protected by the spirit of his or her ancestors, since one is away from one's home. "A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence. To be without one of these corporate elements is to be out of whole picture"⁵⁹. In this case there is a ritual performed before leaving one's home. In the evening, the parents and the Eldest of the clan of the one leaving come together. The Elder in the clan of the fellow chews *Dikas* and mixes it with palm wine and smears it on the head of his or her child, then he rubs his forehead on the one who is leaving. This is a sign of parting and transmitting the power from their ancestors.

After this ceremony, the person, for whom the rite is performed comes to the middle and surrounded by other members of the clan who lay their hands on him while the Elder of

⁵⁹ Paris, Peter, J. *The Spirituality of African Peoples, The Search for Common Moral Discourse*, p. 51.

the clan invokes the spirit of the ancestors to protect him on the journey. At the end of the ceremony, the Elder of the clan ties him on the hip with "*Dibuki*", a piece of cloth from the mother of the one concerned. And then, the Elder gives him the soil from the shrine of their ancestors. This soil will be kept under the bed of the person parting away from them. This gesture is a symbol of protection⁶⁰.

4.5. RITE OF PASSAGE FROM LIFE TO DEATH

In Bamputu tradition, there is no death without cause and reason, unless someone is too old. By this death the living declare that it is God's death. God has called the old person to rest in the ancestors' dwelling.

Bamputu believe that death is caused by another force, the devil or witchcraft. The dead goes to join the ancestors' dwelling and he becomes one of the ancestors. This depends on his life on earth. If he was a good man, he will be an ancestor, if one was a bad person, he or she will become a bad spirit who will be disturbing the people in the farms when they want to work.

Every dead person is expected to be buried following proper burial rituals so that he may join the ancestors' dwelling. Each Mumputu should be buried on Bamputu land, at home. They cannot bury a Mumputu in a foreign land, especially in a town. In doing so, they do not allow him or her access to the dwelling of his or her ancestors. Thus, "Negligence at any level can result in devastating consequences not only for the agent but also for his or her family as well as the larger tribal community. Any such negligence, wilful or

⁶⁰ From my interview with Mr. Makayabu, Francis, Elder of Uswang's clan, Mayoko village, 28th October, 1998.

otherwise, upsets the equilibrium in the cosmos, which in turn produces catastrophic results”⁶¹.

In Bamputu tradition, before the burial, the Elder of the clan performs a certain ritual. He asks the members of the family of the departed to jump over the corpse four times, so that the power of the dead may be transmitted to his family.

4.6. CELEBRATION AND WORSHIP

We have mentioned above that Bamputu people have strong belief in God and their ancestors. They want to be in contact with the invisible all the time in order to maintain harmony in their society, they believe that God, the Almighty, *Ta Nzam*, is the creator and protector of everything. He acts through the intercession of the ancestors⁶².

The living are in contact with God through the ancestors as Mbiti says: "African people are very much aware of the existence of the invisible world, which they see as a real part of the universe. They perform acts of worship to keep alive the contact between the visible and invisible worlds, between men and God"⁶³.

A Mumputu cannot live in a secular society without being in relation to the spiritual world. He will feel lost and in danger since he needs to be protected by his ancestors. For that reason, before doing anything, he has to say first a prayer to God through his ancestors so that they can be near him in his work, especially in farming.

⁶¹ Paris, Peter, J., *The Spirituality of African Peoples, The Search for a Common Moral Discourse*, p. 56.

⁶² From my interview with Mubia, chief of Ito village, Bulungu district, 26th September, 1998.

⁶³ Mbiti, John, S., *Introduction to African Religion*, p. 60.

The worship is done everywhere and this is by any member of the clan. However for the sacrifice, the Elders and the King are considered as priests for the entire village; for a clan, the last born can perform the rituals⁶⁴.

In sacrifice, blood plays a great role. It is powerful. The sacrifice of a person or animal is for the salvation of the entire community of Bamputu. Someone can accept to lose his life for the sake of the members of his clan. In the past, the Bamputu Elders sacrificed human life at their shrine if there was a disaster in the village so that they could save the rest of the community⁶⁵.

CONCLUSION

From the brief outline, we have seen that in Bamputu tradition, God occupies and plays an important role in their lives. He is the creator of everything. The ancestors work in communion with him. On the other hand, God and the ancestors are considered as the founders of the Bamputu tradition. The Elders and the king are their representatives on earth.

Bamputu tradition is handed on from one generation to another by the teachings of the Elders of the clan and by the riddles, proverbs and songs, such as *mfung-a-nwan*.

⁶⁴ From my interview with Buyobi, a Wise man of the village Ambura, 27th September, 1998.

⁶⁵ From my interview with Mutiedia, an Elder of untur's clan, Ambura village, 27th September, 1998.

CHAPTER IV. THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND THE BAMPUTU TRADITION

1. COMMON AND PARTICULAR POINTS OF THE TWO TRADITIONS

In the first three chapters, we have analysed and understood the meaning of the concept of tradition and how it is handed on from one generation to another. In this chapter, we shall sort out the common and the divergent points of the Christian tradition and the Bamputu tradition.

1. COMMON POINTS

The Bamputu concept of tradition is similar to the Christian concept of tradition. They have the same connotation. Tradition is understood as the way of handing on beliefs, cultural norms and practices from one generation to another. After our research, we have realized that the two traditions have been transmitted by the Elders of the communities.

In Christianity, God is the source of the history of salvation. He took the initiative to send his Son to redeem the world. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Jesus entrusted the Apostles and their successors with continuing his mission in the Church. Some African theologians, like Benezet Bujo, see Jesus Christ as the proto-ancestor of the Africans. "The God of life who made His Son the proto-ancestor and source of world trans-forming life"⁶⁶. In Bamputu tradition, we saw that the living receive the gift of life from God through the ancestors, the founders of their tradition. Jesus is the first born of all creatures. He is called our ancestor, the mediator between the living and God. "Indeed, by becoming man He becomes our brother in the Father as well

⁶⁶ Cf. Bujo, Benezet, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, Nairobi: Paulines Publication, 1998, p. 93.

as our Mediator and high Priest. Being God-man He also became the archetype of our super nature and Christian conduct"⁶⁷. He is the one who revealed the will of the Father and handed on this tradition to the Church. Jesus showed a good example to all human beings. He is the model for all humanity. Everyone who listens to his words and follows his steps will have eternal life. The same pattern of belief we find it in the common belief of Bamputu traditions. The living have to follow the steps of the ancestors by keeping their teachings and respecting the tradition in order to be saved in the hereafter. "It is important to note, in this connection, that like His Incarnation, Christ's Ancestorship gradually grew and reached its highest maturity after his glorification"⁶⁸. However, in these traditions, we have also dissimilarities.

2. PARTICULAR POINTS OF TWO TRADITIONS

The dissimilarities of the two traditions are seen at the theological level. In Bamputu tradition, the so called *Mwan-a Nzam*, the Son of God lives in the Savannah surrounded by his spirits⁶⁹. The living cannot be in contact with him, only the ancestors through a performed ritual of an Elder or the last born of a clan. However, in Christian tradition, the Son of God, historically lived among the living. He was born from the Virgin Mary. Christians can be in contact with him at anytime. There is no need to perform a ritual in the prayer and do different kind of libations so that your prayer can be accepted.

⁶⁷ NYAMITI, C., *Christ as our Ancestor*. Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, Africa, 1984, p. 35.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶⁹ In Bamputu mythology, God created the first man who is above all the spirits. He is the first ancestor. He is not visible. He is in contact with God and the spirits in Savanah. He is the one who is keeping the key of the gate of the ancestors' dwelling. The living can be in communion with him only through the Elders of all the clans of a village. All the intercessions of the living pass through him before reaching God. He has a great role to play in the dwelling of the ancestors. The living venerate him three days a week. These days are forbidden for farming.

In Bamputu tradition, prayers and sacrifice are more expensive than the Christian prayer and sacrifice. A simple performance of prayer needs libation and blood sacrifice, which one has to spend money, while in Christianity the Church does not request any sacrifice to be in contact with God. There is possibility to pray without using things to God. This depends on the faith and personal relationship of each individual, his disposition.

3. WAY TO DIALOGUE

In the teaching of the Church, Vatican II promotes dialogue with all the religions of the world. "All men form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth, and also because all share in a common destiny, namely God"(N.A, n.1). All the religions have the same goal-God- even if their way of expressing their faith in him differs. Even in the ancient myths, we see that God is seen as the origin of everything.

As Christ came to redeem the human race, salvation is for everyone. Rahner will say: "Jesus Christ is the Redeemer and Saviour par excellence for both the explicit Christians and the Anonymous Christians"⁷⁰. Just because people do not belong to the Church, it does not mean that they are bad people and cannot be saved. Inter-faith dialogue will be a good thing to be in touch with other religions. The common points of our two traditions, Bamputu and Christianity are very important, so that the evangelisation can have success in the course of the inculturation.

The dissimilarities of Bamputu tradition vis-à-vis the Christian tradition should help missionaries to sort out the bad beliefs and bring up what is good for the salvation of

⁷⁰ Rahner, K., In: Wachege, P., *Salvation and Being Saved, An African Socio-Religio-Philosophical Touch*, Nairobi: Signal Press, 1993, p. 69.

Bamputu people. This dialogue should go smoothly in openness and trust at the level of life and faith.

1. ROLE OF THE WORD

In the two traditions, the word plays a great role. In Bamputu tradition, we mentioned that the Elder of the clan has an important place in their community. The ceremony is usually led by him. With the word coming straight from his mouth, it has great effect in the society since it is coming from the ancestors. In the word, the living see the presence of the ancestors. The Elder, as the representative of the living and the ancestors in the clan, has the power to establish a link between them.

During the time of listening to the word of an Elder, there should be a great ceremony, which must be carried out because of his role as the mediator between the living and the dead. The master of the ceremony, one of the wise men, plays a "*lokole*"⁷¹. Then the congregation keeps quiet and two wise men go and stand beside the Elder with their spears. Then the Elder starts talking to his people⁷². This tradition of the word is well kept in Bamputu people. All Bamputu know it very well if they are in any assembly. The Parents teach their children if they are going to the assembly.

To make the liturgy alive, the Bishops in the Democratic Republic of Congo have adapted these aspects of the culture of Bamputu people, which is also found in other Congolese cultures, and have inculturated them into the liturgy of the word in the Eucharistic celebration. We will dwell in detail on this way of inculturation in the next chapter.

⁷¹ A traditional musical instrument, which can be heard for over 100 square kilometres.

⁷² This is my own witness when Mfum a mbil, Lugie was addressing a message of encouragement to his congregation when there was a fight between Bamputu people and Bayansi., 4th February, 1998.

2. WORSHIP

In the two traditions, we see the similarity of worship in some points. In Bamputu tradition, traditional assemblies are convoked for different reasons. It can be for social, political or religious matters. The community has to gather under a leader who is very often the elder of the community. He enters with his cortege. The cortege has to let people know that the leader is coming so that everyone can stand to show a sign of respect. "Worship can be directed to God or to the spirits and the living-dead which are the intermediaries between God and man"⁷³.

In the beginning of the ceremony, the people sing and dance as a sign of welcoming. " In Africa these gestures, which are realised by deploying the body in time and space, are not only expressive of joy, as in festive celebrations, but they also tell how the self is experienced"⁷⁴.

In the Christian tradition, the Roman liturgy has the same perspective. The Church tries to keep this tradition from one generation to another. Just to give one example among many possible examples we have in the Church; wherever, there is celebration of the Eucharist. This has to be presided over by elder of the community who is the bishop, and when he is absent the priest is mandated to preside. In the first part of the Mass, the cortege of the ministers enter in procession and the congregation sing like in Bamputu tradition.

⁷³ Wasswa, Mpagi, "Christian Worship in Africa", in: Namwesa, Leonard ed., *African Christian Studies*, Vol. 10. Nairobi: The Journal of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, 1994, p. 45.

⁷⁴ Uzuku, E., "Inculturation and Liturgy (Eucharist)", in: Shorter, A., *African Christian Theology*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, Marynoll, 1977, p. 102.

5. MASS AS ANCESTRAL RITUAL⁷⁵

In Bamputu tradition, sacrifice is very important. It is a moment in which the ancestors purify and transform the life of the living. In this specific moment, the living enter into contact with the dead. We see the passage from the visible to the invisible. This is the climax moment of communion. During the ritual, sometimes, a domestic animal, a chicken for example, is sacrificed to the ancestors. This sacrifice is accompanied by the libation. Wine is poured on the tomb of the ancestors or at any place regarded as a shrine where the sacrifice is done. This is comparable to the Church. The Altar is not a place of burial but it represents Christ himself in his death and resurrection and the shrine is the "Tabernacle" for our adoration.

The Catholic Church celebrates the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. This is the time of sacrifice. " Being the actualisation of the paschal mystery, the Mass is essentially the sacrifice of the Lord's redemptive and sacerdotal mediation in which the redeemer, as High Priest of the new Law, applies His redemptive fruits to His descendants"⁷⁶.

However, in Christianity, God did not want any sacrifices being continually offered to him. But his Son, Jesus, showed his love for the Father and for us by becoming the ultimate sacrifice offered for our salvation. Being in the condition of God, Jesus Christ sacrificed himself. He became man, taking on the condition of a human being and dying on the cross for our salvation. Jesus is our redeemer. In the Eucharist, Christians receive new strength and Christ transforms their lives. The presence of Jesus is in the Sacrament, including the Church. "Hence the tabernacle can be called the Christian shrine par

⁷⁵ Nyamiti, C., *Christ as our Ancestor*, p. 52.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* . p. 54.

excellence, in which Christ the ancestor and ritual victim is perpetually present for the sake of regular sacred communication with his descendants”⁷⁷. In this way, we can say that there is a link between the celebration of the Eucharist and the ancestral ritual. Both traditions transform the lives of the living for their salvation. These traditions have been transmitted from their foundations to the next generation.

6. COMMON APPROACH OF THE ANCESTRAL CULT AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE SAINTS

The concept of the saints in the Church is similar to the Bamputu conception of ancestorship. The saints are seen as those who have lived a good life on earth and who are now a model for others. Jesus is the first one we must look to as a model for our lives. He was the model for the saints. He is also our ancestor. We share the same divine sonship with him. Through Jesus we can receive grace.

However, the living do not have the same status as the ancestors. The ancestors have a higher supernatural condition. They are sure that they will never lose their state of grace which they have attained in the hereafter in the way that people on earth can lose it by not following the commandments of God. “They are, moreover, absolutely certain about their eternal salvation. Such a condition implies a certain kind of nearness to God enjoyed even by the greatest Saint on earth”⁷⁸. The saints are like the Bamputu ancestors. They intercede for the living and participate in the same mediation of Christ in order to help the living.

⁷⁷Nyamiti, C., *Christ as our Ancestor*, p. 121.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 121.

7. THE CHURCH, COMMUNITY OF INITIATION

In the second chapter of our work, we tried to define the Church according to Vatican II as people of God. “ He has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness”(L.G. no9). Before joining the Church, the people of God, the faithful follow a certain initiation called the catechumenate. This is concluded by receiving Baptism. "Reborn as sons of God, they must profess before men the faith they have received from God through the Church"⁷⁹.

“Incorporated into the Church by baptism, the faithful are appointed by their baptismal character to Christian religious worship” (L.G. no.11). Christians witness the faith received the day of their baptism in the realities of their daily life. They witness the risen Christ. As Kavanah says, "In the same way, for all the development of Christian initiation over the two thousand years its core still centres upon proclamation, conversion and baptism in its paschal fullness, just as the earliest Churches would have done in obedience to the exalted Lord's command, 'Go, teach, baptize and make disciples of all nations'⁸⁰. This tradition is handed on in the teaching of the Church. Vatican II, in *Adgentes* is encouraging the faithful to evangelise the world. “ Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be “the universal sacrament of salvation”, the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder (Mt 16:15) and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the gospel to all men” (A.G.D., n. 1). This is comparable to Bamputu tradition. Before being considered a member of the community,

⁷⁹ Mitchell, L., *Baptized Christians*, in: O'Brien, Thomas, C., *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XVII, Washington: Guild, 1979, p. 34.

⁸⁰ Kavanah, Aidan, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation*, New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978, p. 36.

one should undergo the initiation by the Elders of the community so that one may witness to one's tradition everywhere.

CHAPTER V. PASTORAL IMPLICATION OF BAMPUTU TRADITION

1. MISSIONARY ATTITUDE TO BAMPUTU TRADITION

In this chapter, I would like to elaborate on the evangelisation experience of the first missionaries who encountered the Bamputu people. When the first missionaries reached Dwe district, Bamputu land, their approach was to convert the local people with the Christian message as it was carried out in other parts of Africa.

The Missionaries worked hand in hand with the government, whether that government was hostile to them or not. The Belgian government did not allow missionaries from other European countries to come to their colony, only their own missionaries were encouraged to work with the colonisers. "The co-operation of the Church and state extended also to the strictly religious field. The attacks on polygamy and on the ancestor-cults of Africa were conducted by both secular and religious authorities. In Zaire, the Church and the state were very severe on ancestor-cult"⁸¹. More often than not, indigenous rites, which were an integral part of the life of the Bamputu People, one among the tribes of Zaire, were forbidden by the civil authorities and the missionaries. The ancestral beliefs were seen as idolatry, evil and as such could have nothing to do with, nor take place in, the Church. This was the case so that the Bamputu could not venerate or offer any ritual to their ancestors. The Missionaries thought God had never visited the Kingdom of Congo, thus, their task was to introduce the local people to God. "In many parts of Africa, the newly converted people were gradually convinced that the

⁸¹ Bujo, B. , *African Theology in its Social Context*, Nairobi: St Paul Publications, 1992, p. 44.

traditional religion of their ancestors had to be completely abandoned, for it cannot march with Christianity, and that included their traditional way of worship"⁸².

In the eyes of Bamputu people, Christianity was seen as foreign religion brought by white people. People were forced to adhere to the religion for fear of being victimised by the colonizer. Christianity was not at home. Most people felt disoriented in their beliefs even though they were Christians. There was no connection between Bamputu religion and Christianity. They did not grasp well Christianity. God, the creator of everything Christianity talks about is the same God, *Ta Nzam*. The Bamputu people believe in him as the creator and the Founder of their tradition. However, in Bamputu tradition, God is known with a different terminology. This was not explained to the local people. The cult of ancestors was understood by the missionaries as pagan veneration. This brought a big dilemma as Wasswa argued in his article, "Christian Worship in Africa", "The God that we all know is the one who created the world and all that it contains, including the different nations, tribes, and clans with their cultures. At the end of his work "God saw that it was good". This should make us realise, appreciate and develop those gifts belonging to our communities, (...). To become a Christian does not imply to forget my origin. Thus the good things that exist in our culture have to be incorporated into Christianity"⁸³. In this perspective, the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo raises the issue of how to inculturate Christianity into Congolese culture. This was in line with the exhortation of the message of Pope Paul VI in Kampala, in 1969. "A

⁸² Wasswa, Mpagi, "Christian Worship in Africa", *African Christian Studies*, Vol. 10, 1994, p. 46.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

question which remains very active and raises up a lot of discussions in your Evangelisation is the adaptation of the gospel in the Church, into African culture"⁸⁴.

2. MISSIONARY CHALLENGES

Observing what was going on during the colonial system in the Church and seeing the Church working hand in hand with the Colonizers did not help much the process of Evangelisation in the Bamputu area. The superiority complex of Christianity over Bamputu beliefs brought no success in the Church. The local people were not open to the first Missionaries even though they were forced by the Government to join Christianity. Bamputu people remained close to their culture. The few people who were converted to Christianity, lived split lives. There was a kind of syncretism in their beliefs. In the presence of the Priest, they behaved as Christians and when the Priest was not around, they went back to the old practices like blood sacrifices and offering human beings to *Ta Nzam*, God if there is a calamity in the village⁸⁵.

The Bamputu people were passive towards some of the liturgical rites. They considered God as "*Munzeza*", the God of white people, the colonisers. The missionaries could not do their apostolate without the help of the government. In the areas where the government did not have police stations, it was difficult to gather the Christians, because the people did not fear the missionaries unless they were escorted by the police. People would join the Church only reluctantly. The first missionaries forgot that the Bamputu

⁸⁴Cf. Declaration of Paul VI, in: Ndrudjo, Ndahura, *Presentation de la Liturgie de la Messe, Supplement au Missel Romain pour les Dioceses du Zaire*. Kinshasa: Secretariat General, 1989, p. 7.

⁸⁵ Interview with Buyobi, the Chief of Dwe I village, Decembre, 1998.

people have a different culture. There was no dialogue. Reilly Collins Michael puts it in this way: "Christianity has not been indigenous"⁸⁶.

The first missionaries thought that the Bamputu people did not know God, forgetting that the Bamputu is a tribe within Africa. "The African soul, which is very religious, is constantly in dialogue with things invisible. When touched by the supernatural, or the mysterious, its sensibility allows it to vibrate like the strings of a harp"⁸⁷. Christianity was not at home. It was seen as the foreign religion. The missionaries were seen as the co-workers of the colonisers. Bamputu people feared them, they did not trust them. The few who were converted to Christianity were disturbed. They were suspected by the rest of the community in the villages as being in the service of the colonisers. For that reason, they were not allowed to stay in the villages. They found a new area, called *Makwela*, the Estate of the Christian, in the Catholic Mission⁸⁸.

3. TOWARDS INCULTURATION OF BAMPUTU TRADITION

For having stayed with the Bamputu people, from my own experience and from the studies done about this tradition, we can say that there are some positive elements in the Bamputu tradition. Bamputu people believe in one God, creator of everything on earth. They recognize the presence of their ancestors as the model of their life. This belief is not far from Christianity. Moreover, there are other values which Christianity has to take into consideration like the mourning after the funeral of someone. In Bamputu tradition, this period is seen as a time the living do libations and pray so that the dead may be welcome

⁸⁶ Reilly Collins Michael, *Spirituality for Mission*, New York: Orbis Books, 1978, p. 199.

⁸⁷ Egbulem, Nwaka. Chris, *The Power of Africentric Celebrations, Inspirations from the Zairean Liturgy*, New York: The Crossroad Publication Company, 1996, p. 21.

⁸⁸ Cfr. Hohegger, Herman, *L' Eglise de Mbanza Lute*, Bandundu: Ceeba Publications, 1968, p. 30.

in the dwelling of the ancestors. In Christianity, this rite is not allowed. The Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo, (DRC) sees it as a pagan rite. The local Church in DRC prefers after the burial that Christians return to their ordinary activities. The mourning rite could be taken into consideration because in it the Bamputu people will understand well the requiem Mass.

The evangelisation of this tradition will be a strong means for helping the Bamputu people to welcome Christ fully in the reality of their life. However the Church needs also to challenge the bad practices of the culture so that the evangelisation may have success in their land. The missionaries need a real study of Bamputu culture, so as to sort out the good values and help the process of inculturation. There exist many similarities in the two traditions and beliefs. The Episcopal Conference of DRC has done a lot on the subject of inculturation of the Church, for instance in the sacraments of Eucharist, reconciliation, baptism and order etc...

4. INCULTURATION, HEALING PROCESS OF MATURATION

Encouraged by the exhortation of Pope Paul VI in his message to the Bishops in Kampala, the Episcopal Conference of Zaire in 1974 made Christianity at home. They tried to correct the mistake made by the first missionaries in linking evangelisation to the colonial power. The liturgists studied the local culture and inculturated Christianity. That effort can be seen especially in the Zairean rite. "The text of the liturgical project was published by the Zairean Episcopal Commission on Evangelisation in 1974. By that time, the text had been carefully structured. According to this text, three basic criteria had been followed in the project: fidelity to the gospel values, fidelity to the nature of the liturgy

itself and fidelity to the religious genius and cultural heritage of Zairean people”⁸⁹. Christianity was inculturated into local cultures in the whole country. The Bamputu people got this opportunity with the Christian community to collect all the positive religious values of their cultures and inculturate Christianity into these Bamputu values.

The Episcopal Conference requested all the local ordinaries of the Church in Zaire to enlighten the Christians in their churches on this issue of inculturation. The faithful were aware of it and did their best to embrace Christianity in the realities of their life and culture. Thus the Bamputu people began to accept again some of the values of their tradition and to celebrate them in the Christian rites. Most of their traditional rites became Christian rites, i.e, all the rituals which were performed by the Elder of the clan or the community were performed by the Priest or a *Mbuta- Bakristu*, that is to say the chair person of the Catechists. For example the rites of leaving parents’ home was performed by the catechist. The one who was leaving home used to carry with him the ancestors’ soil for protection. This was replaced by the Christian belief that Jesus is everywhere to protect his followers. What was needed now was only prayers for protection. Very often one was given a rosary to help his/her prayers.

In the aspect of the Word of God, the gospel, Bamputu people do not have any problem in believing that the Word is Jesus himself who reveals the will of the Father. In the Bamputu tradition the word plays a great role in their community. As we mentioned in the previous chapters, the word is the identification of someone like a hero in the society, especially if it is an ancestor. When an Elder is speaking, he is speaking in the name of the ancestors of their community. Similarly when a priest or a catechist in the Church reads the gospel, it is believed as the word of Bamputu Proto-ancestor who is Jesus in

⁸⁹ Egbulem, Nwaka, *The Power of Africentric Celebrations. Inspirations from the Zairean Liturgy* .p. 44.

Africa. This culture has contributed a lot to the inculturation of Christianity in the local Church in DRC. In Christian tradition, the word is Jesus himself, who reveals himself to the Christians in the Gospels that they listen to in their assembly.

The idea of the Church as family, is easily accepted by Bamputu people as they do not have any problem to be members of a community, their tradition gives importance to community belonging and community living. Everybody belongs to a community by passing through the rite of initiation. Hence when a Mumputu is asked to follow catechism before being a member of the Church, he does not have any problem to accept this process of initiation.

However, we cannot say that the Church in the Bamputu has fully succeeded in inculturating itself at all the levels of the Christian doctrine. Still more need to be done. Most Christians in Bamputu tradition are still living in syncretism. In the morning they are in the Church and in the afternoon or during other times of suffering they go back to their ancestors' beliefs instead of having Christ as their redeemer. God sacrificed his only Son for human redemption. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is more than any other human sacrifice. "As Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma"(Eph 5:2). Thus in Christianity, there is no need of other sacrifices in the time of suffering. However, in Bamputu people, even though the Church is implanted, there is a kind of dual allegiance. They still think that Christianity is a foreign religion, which belongs to the Belgians. They still like to sacrifice the animals or chickens on the tombs or the shrines of their ancestors, instead of having faith in Jesus who is our expiation. He was slain for our redemption. They have to believe in Him and bring to him all their problems. In living their lives, Bamputu people tend to go back to

the negative things in their tradition, showing that they have not yet fully understood Christianity.

The Church has a lot more to do in the area of inculturation, even though the Episcopal Conference of Zaire has already launched itself into action in this sphere of inculturation. Pope John Paul II told the bishops of Zaire that the process of the Africanisation of Christianity needs to reach into many aspects of life, especially in areas not yet evangelised; he added that there is need also for a certain language which can touch the hearts of all believers in Zaire, in catechism, theological reflections, and in the liturgy⁹⁰. They would need to open many spiritual groups the way Bishop Matondo founded the group of *Bilenge ya Mwindu*, the enlightened Youth whose spirituality is based on African Christian initiation. Being member of similar spiritual groups, the Bamputu people will understand more Christianity and be happy the way the gospel encounters their daily life and the realities of their culture.

⁹⁰ Cf. Ndrudjo Ndahura, *Presentation de la Liturgie de la Messe, Supplement au Missel Romain pour les Dioceses du Zaire*. p. 8.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In reaching the end of this essay, first of all, I recognise my limitation in dealing with this concept of tradition in the Church and the tradition of the Bambutu people even though I am a Mumputu Christian. I could not elaborate in deep details about the two traditions. However, with the research made and with the help of my moderator, we have reached the conclusion of this work.

In our work, we have gone into the meaning and the understanding of Christian tradition and the Bamputu tradition of the people in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We saw how the two traditions have been founded and how they were handed on from one generation to the next. The encounter of the two traditions, Christianity and the Bamputu tradition should bring about a kind of inculturation, which should help for a better understanding of the gospel in Bamputu land.

Our recommendation will be to request the missionaries to study thoroughly the Bamputu culture so that they may sort out and take into account the seeds of positive values imbedded in the cultural and traditional heritage, and inculturate Christianity into it. In doing so, the Church will gain the ground for a successful evangelisation. The Bamputu, will be happy to find Christ in the realities of their life. The local Church, in the Bamputu land, will find her own experience of Christian life and faith. The local people will be worshipping God in their cultural and spiritual world view, in an African way. This will have great meaning. The Episcopal Conference of Zaire has already started the process of inculturation and remains committed to it. However the field is still vast to work on, especially in the tradition of the Bamputu people. There are many good traditional elements in the Bamputu burial rites, in the rite of welcoming a new born to his clan, in

the rite of leaving parents' home, that can be accepted in Christian rites and liturgy. In this, an ongoing dialogue and encounter between the two traditions Christianity and the Bamputu tradition will be necessary.

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F. INTERVIEWS

Most of the information in this work is the fruit of my interviews with the Elders of Bamputu in their villages where I spent one year in my pastoral work in the Catholic Mission Dwe, Bulungu district, Bandundu Province of DRC. Moreover, I am also from this tribe Bamputu.