

TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

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AN AFRICAN EXODUS:

Special Reference to the Exodus of the Baoulé of Ivory Coast

Moderator

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An Essay submitted in partial fulfilment
Of the requirements for the Baccalaureate in Theology

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To all the 'Baoulé' people,
All the Africans who have sacrificed their lives
For the sake of their cultures,
And also to my family, friends and our SMA family,
To whom this work is dedicated.

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There is a proverb which says that “One person cannot make a road in a forest”¹

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¹ Baoulé proverb

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION


I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: 

Name of Student: **Kouassi Aoussou Yao Paulin, SMA.**

Date: 15/02/05

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

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PREFACE

Today, in a special way I remember my childhood like it was yesterday. I remember the nice smell of the sand when it rained, when we went to farm all day and came back very tired, and the special moment when we met in the night around the fire with our grandfather and some elders. I still remember the voice of my grandfather and the sound of the drums. Those days were the joyful moments of my life. In the remote village, very far away, a village that the world may ignore, there, I was born in the silence of the night on the leaves of banana. I was washed with cold water mixed with some plants. The first thing that touched my tongue was palm wine and then the voice of my grandfather followed to welcome me in the world. Full of mysteries where tomorrow is not known. Afraid, yes I was afraid, but my grandfather assured me his protection and guidance.

My grandfather was well known in the entire region by his courage and also by his qualities as a great warrior. It is in the hand of such a great man that I was instructed. He was asked by the elders to be our teacher since he was the pillar of our tradition. Every night we gathered around him and listened to him attentively. I admired him a lot, you can see and feel our 'heritage' flowing from his soul and blood. He was a great man whose intelligence was well known, 'his head shines like fire'². The method used by that great teacher was the narration of myths. All aspects of our life and about life were taught through myths. The entire heritage of our tradition was written in the soul and blood of

² Expression to say that he was very intelligent.

my Grandfather. That it is why, we used to say, that if an old man died, it's like an entire library that has been destroyed.

Since my childhood, I have been 'nourished by myths'. They formed me and through it I have learned about my tribe, my clan, and my ancestors and also to know the why and the teaching of the rules and morals of my community. Myths have forged my guiding principles and moral life. One who is not initiated into it, is not classified among 'humans' and has no right to sit among the elders. It is to say that, 'a child who has done sixty villages is wiser than an old man who is sixty years old and has never travelled'.

Later on, in secondary school and at university, I came across Greek mythology, which has some similarities with ours, and it really fascinated me. Joining seminary was an opportunity for me to use that experience and background in sharing the Word of God, since myths can be found in the Bible too. And are well appreciated. Now it is an occasion for me to look closer at the myths and see in which way they can contribute to our effort of inculturating the Good News brought by our saviour Jesus Christ. Personally, I think that Christianity should be presented to other peoples and cultures in the way that is most meaningful for them. For that reason, the study of one of the myths of my people would be very helpful in presenting the Gospel since myths are a genuine part of our culture.

It is an occasion also, to pay homage to my grandfather and through him to all the great Africans, who did their best to protect and to pass our traditions from generation to generation.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

**CHAPTER I:
MYTHS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE TRANSMISSION OF THE
CULTURE**

"The revelation of your words sheds light, gives understanding to the simple."
Ps 119:130

There is no doubt about the fact that religion and culture cannot be separated. Religion is a particular system of faith in a Supreme Being (God); which expresses itself through the way of life of a particular group of people (culture).

Christ is the “Word made flesh” (Lk 1:29) and the one sent by God the Father to save humankind. It was through his incarnation that he entered all cultures. That is why Christ and the Christian message should meet all cultures and find expression in them. Christianity should be the religion that ‘embodies’ all cultures through the incarnation of Jesus and the inculturation of his message in the different cultures of the world. This is because, Christ and Christianity have a special relationship with all cultures that has been better understood and appreciated with time and progress in theological debates.

Christianity should be expressed and lived in different cultures in a way that reflects the traditions of the people such that through the traditional beliefs and values, they witness to their Christian faith in a more enriching, enhancing and authentic way. Since Christianity cannot be fully experienced by someone in a way that is totally outside of his or her culture, it is only right that the Christian faith be lived by the people in a way that reflect their culture, giving them meaning, self-esteem and profound appreciation for their faith.

It is obvious that most Africans live two different kinds of life that arise from either Christian or traditional values. There is therefore an urgent need for inculturation to avoid what the Society of African Missions fathers say about the people from Benin ‘Christian during the day and voodoo in the night’. This includes “the ultimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration into Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures” (EA

44). Through this, Christian faith shall be made part of life in traditional African culture and shall have more hearing from the people.

The African people know that their practices were considered unclean and cannot rhyme with the Christian way of life. The Church is therefore forced to clean away these notions by encouraging the love of culture despite the high rate of western civilization. It is only in this way that the Church can be in a position to recognize the good values in the culture. Just as “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn1,14), so too the Good News must take root in the life situation of the hearers of the Word, including the ‘Baoulé’ people of Ivory Coast.

The ‘Baoulé’ form one of the biggest tribes in Ivory Coast. They inhabit the central region of the country. The ‘Baoulé’ belongs to the ‘Akan’ group, which according to the tradition, came from Gold Coast, modern day Ghana. While fleeing with Abla Pokou because of war with the ‘Ashanti’s, they arrived at a river and because the river was overflowing, they could not cross. After consultation with the traditional priest, the spirit of the river asked for a human sacrifice. Abla Pokou offered her only child to save the tribe. Thus saying ‘ba-ou-li’ ‘the child is dead’. This is the origin of our tribe, the ‘Baoulé’ people.

We will make reference to the ‘Baoulé’ people in this case study through this myth of ‘the crossing of the river Comoé’ as a way of its inculturation. This basically is the essence of the essay.

1 Introduction

In the past, negative things have been said about Africa and Africans. They were not classified among civilised people, and one of the reasons is that they were illiterate. Writing is very important for the conservation and the transmission of cultures. And since Africans were not able to write, the conclusion is obvious, they were not able to conserve and transmit their cultures. With time, their cultures would be taken by the wind and would disappear forever, but, time has proved the contrary.

I am proud of my people who were able to conserve and transmit our culture from generation to generation. Surely, not by its written history but rather by one of the 'magic factor' which is myth. It is magic because it is written in the soul of the people. Through that transmission I have an identity, the 'Baoulé identity' written in my blood and soul. From generation to generation everything 'has been passed through the power of myth. This chapter will 'plunge' you into the universe of myths and if you make yourself available to it, it will reveal itself to you. By doing so, it will help us to change our way of thinking and looking at reality. Accepting to be 'absorbed' by myths, we will appreciate its significance for our present time of evangelisation.

1.2 What is a Myth?

Among the different definitions of myth I came across, one which says:

"A myth is a story which is believed to be true and has its origin in the distant past history of the people and their culture. Man made them himself, in non-literate cultures, to answer the questions that have troubled his mind since the time of

origin”.¹ From this definition it is easy to see, that a myth is not history in a strict sense, although it originated in the ‘far distant past’ and in a particular culture. To put it clearly, we can say that, African mythologies contain a good deal of what we would call ‘history’. Indeed,

“In African oral tradition ‘myth and ‘history’ generally overlap and shape into one another. Myth blends into history as cosmic archetypal meaning. It is important to see how African myth history as a whole gives meaning to the world: How the sacred and true events of the past serve to represent and explain the world as it ultimately is, and how these same events may serve as ritual archetypes for the renewal of the natural and human order”.²

Something that is even more important is that myths are ‘created by man’ as a fruit of his reflection on himself and his ‘religious experience’. In this way, a myth does not reflect unplanned attitudes towards reality, but rather it begins with a perception of the reality as a whole and in its light constructs an integral system for understanding all its parts.

1.2.1 Role of Myths in the Transmission of the Culture

All people in the world have their own myths and folklore explaining facts of nature. These are aetiological tasks in most communities, set out primarily to explain the root of society’s tradition, beliefs, customs and natural phenomena. It can be seen that they are in a special way related to religion. They proclaim and invoke attitudes towards facts and realities; they organize the way people perceive facts, understand themselves and the world. Whether people take them into consideration or not, they are shaping their way of looking at things, they are influential. “The fundamental structures of understanding those myths provide, even though in part

¹ A. O. ONWUBIKO, , *African Thought: Religion and Culture*, 39.

² B. C. RAY, *African Religion*, 24.

dictated by matter and instinct, and are essentially arbitrary because they describe not just the 'real' world of fact, but our perception and experience of the world".³ Myths provide understanding of personal identity. Myths answer the most basic questions: Who am I? How do I fit into the world, into society and into nature? How should I live? Myths have the power to generate attitudes towards reality and to win the acceptance for these attitudes.

Myths, in most African societies, transmit a message; they are 'vehicles of transmission'. Most Africans have been 'nourished by myths'. They make them and through them they have learned about their tribes, their clan, and their ancestors and to know the why and the teaching of the rules and morals of their different communities. Even today, myths are and continue to be used as a 'vehicle of transmission'. Some students in our community use them during their days of sharing the Word of God, to teach, to reflect or to explain the Word of God. Not to compare with Holy Spirit, but, we can say that like the Holy Spirit, myths are 'teachers'. Their role of transmitting culture is known and appreciated by those who are initiated.

1.2.2 Role of Myths in the Traditional African Religions

A myth is a genuine element of the Traditional African Religions. Although it is very important, there are no sacred scriptures for African Religions. It is said, "that religion in African societies is written not on paper but in people's hearts, mind, rituals, religious persons and myths".⁴ This statement shows that the position of myths is very complex and it is connected with the whole life of a person. African

³ C. B. SPOUL, *Primal Myths*, 1-2.

⁴ J. S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 24.

myths are full of symbols and images drawn from natural and supernatural worlds. They are living chronicles in the minds of the Africans. Myths, in particular, portray the wishes and fears of the African as he strives to understand the unknown by remoulding it to fit his frame of reference.

As culture transmitting agents, myths are designed to act as socializing agents, educational illustrations and entertainment. As a socializing agent, the myth is used to nourish and promote the continuation of ancestral traditions in the daily life of the community. It imprints in the minds of the members of the community the basis and extent of the social relations and interactions as well as the norms regarding them.⁵

As an educational illustration the myth embodies stories that are meant to teach the norms, morals, conventions, customs and manners of society. As entertainment, the myth is a part of the traditional drama, art and skill.

1.3 The Myth of the 'Baoulé'

Long time ago, a very long time, one peaceful tribe was living by the bank of a calm lagoon. The young men of the tribe were many, great and brave. Its women were beautiful and cheerful. And their queen, Queen Abla Pokou, was the most beautiful among the beautiful women.

For a long time, a very long time, peace reigned over them, together with the slaves themselves, the sons of the captives of the revolution⁶, and they were all happy under their happy masters.

One day, the enemies became so plentiful like soldier ants. As a result the people had to abandon their straw-huts, their plantations, the fish-filled lagoon, and to leave the nets, everything was abandoned so as to flee.

⁵ R. FINNEGAN, *Oral Literature in Africa*, 25.

⁶ The children of those who plot or are against the King.

They left for the forest. They left their wrappers to the thorns, as well as their skin. It was inevitable but they flee continuously, without resting, without truce, spurred on by the ferocious enemy. And their queen, Abla Pokou, was marching behind them, carrying her child at her back.

While they were passing, the hyena was sneering, the elephant and the wild boar, the chimpanzee was groaning and the bewildered lion deviated from its path. Finally, the brushwood appeared and then savannah and the palm tree. And again at once the horde began to sing its song of exile:

Mi houn Ano, mi houn Ano blâ ô: (My husband Ano, my husband Ano, come)

Ebolo nigué, mo ba gnan min: (The spirits of the bush are carrying me away)

Harassed, enfeebled, shrunked, they arrived in the evening at the side of a river 'Comoé' whose current dashes against large rocks. And the river was bellowing, the waves were climbing up to the tree peaks and falling down; and the fugitives were frozen from cold. Dismayed, they looked at one another and said: It is not water, which was making them to live lately, water our close and deep friend? Maybe there could be an evil spirit stirred it against u, they said? And the conquerors became very close.

And for the first time, the traditional priest spoke: 'The water has become evil, he said, and it will only be appeased when we offer it what is dearest to us'.

And the song began again:

Ebe nin flê nin bâ: (Someone calls his son)

Ebe nin flê nin nan: (Someone calls his mother)

Ebe nin flê nin dja: (Someone calls his father)

Yapens'sè ni dja wali: (The beautiful daughters will get married).

And every one gave out his golden and ivory bracelets. As well as all they could have saved. But the traditional priest pushes them away with his leg and pointed his finger on the young prince; the six month old baby and the only child of the queen 'Behold, he said, what we have the most precious'.

And for the mother, afraid, it was her child being carried on her breast. But the mother was also the queen and at the right hand side of the abyss, she raised the smiling child above her head and threw him into the troubled river. Then the hippopotamus, huge hippopotamus came up and they lined behind one another, formed a bridge, and over this miraculous bridge the fleeing people crossed while they sang:

Ebe nin flé nin bâ: (Someone calls his son)

Ebe nin flé nin nan: (Someone calls his mother)

Ebe nin flé nin dja: (Someone calls his father)

Yapens'sè ni dja wali: (The beautiful daughters will get married).

And the queen Abla Pokou crossed last of all and found her subjects prostrated on the bank.⁷ But the queen was also a mother and she could only say: 'Baouli' which means: the child is dead.⁸

And this was how the Abla Pokou and her people kept the name 'Baoulé', the actual tribe in central Ivory Coast.

1.3.1 Abla Pokou, the Founder of the 'Baoulé Kingdom'

The period of Queen Abla Pokou and the 'Baoulé' kingdom took place in the massive movement of the populations surrounding the lake 'Volta' and the lake

⁷ It is a sign of recognition and great respect at that time.

⁸ B.B. DADIE, *Légende Baoulé*, 35-39, (My translation).

'Bandama' in XVII and XVIII century. This massive movement essentially set in motion the Akan population.

The kingdom of 'Denkyra', founded around 1620, imposed his supremacy on his neighbours for eighty years, but a kind of autonomy was given to them. This attitude permitted a staggering ascension of the 'Ashanty' with two genius men: Osei Tutu and the diviner Okomfo Anokye. It is in this 'Ashanty' kingdom that Abla Pokou was born at the beginning of XVIII century. She was the sister of Opoku Ware and niece to Osei Tutu on the mother's side. Osei Tutu was the one who gave the basis of the powerful 'Ashanty' confederation by his conquest and by the institution of the gold throne, the symbol of unity of the 'Ashanti'. He died in an ambush in the campaign against the 'Akim'. His death was followed by a severe period of trouble due to the conflict surrounding the succession. Abla Pokou was one of the survivors of these violent events and came to know for a short period the bitterness of exile. She occupied the function of Queen Mother. It is this capacity which allowed her to play an important role in the conflict of succession.

The one who was later to be queen was the daughter of Adou Gyamfi and of Nyankou Kosiamoa. As soon as she came out of the womb of her mother, she already had all the potentialities of which an Akan woman can rejoice about. Despite all, at forty years, Abla Pokou had not yet known the joy of motherhood and the people saw her as a barren woman and as a curse. For the Akan people, 'those who have not assured offspring must die even in the memory of people'. But the unexpected was produced, Abla Pokou, called the 'barren' became pregnant in the union with Assoué Tano. She gave birth to a son whom they gave the name

Kouakou and the diviners predicted that he will be the founder of empires and will be an undeniable chief.⁹

1.3.2 *The Sacrifice*

“In many various ways, African peoples respond to their spiritual world of which they are sharply aware. Sacrifices and offerings constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African people”.¹⁰

The fugitives, fleeing with Abla Pokou came to the river in the evening and because the river was full, they could not cross it. After consultation with the traditional priest, the spirit of the river asks for a sacrifice, a human sacrifice, and particularly a male baby. Abla Pokou offered her only son to save the tribe. As soon as she offered her son, the hippopotamus made a bridge to allow them to cross.

After the crossing the fugitives could have said ‘the sacrifice of the child brought us into a new land’. Instead said, ‘Ba-ouli’, the child is dead. From that, they surround Abla Pokou to honour her and make her the Queen of their New Kingdom. Unanimously they approved the choice of Abla Pokou as the Queen of the ‘Baoulé’. To the question, you want Abla Pokou as your Queen? They respond, “We want and swear to be faithful to her”.¹¹ Then Abla Pokou accepted to be their Queen.

The sacrifice is seen as the corner stone on which the Kingdom was founded. To mark that unity, the Kingdom renews annually the sacrificial act. It can be an animal sacrifice or human sacrifice but it is good to show our ignorance on that what

⁹ « Fraternité Matin », Vendredi 16 juillet 2004 40^e année / N. 11906, 9, (My translation).

¹⁰ J. S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 58.

¹¹ J. N. LOUKOU - F. LIGIER, *La Reine Pokou, Fondatrice du royaume Baoulé*, 129 (My translation).

we know is that, the sacrifice is offered to the "Bia" (throne) which is the symbol of the faith of the people to the Kingdom

1.3.3 The Alliance

John Mbiti said: "Africans are notoriously religious, each people has its own religious system with a set of belief and practices".¹² Following this assertion, we can say that human history and different groups of people have known different forms of Alliance with divinities, with their neighbours or in the case of marriage. These different experiences of alliance have been influential in the creation of some Empires, Kingdoms and tribes. That is the case of the 'Baoulé Kingdom'.

The new 'Baoulé Kingdom', founded on the sacrifice of the son of Queen Abla Pokou, developed an original and brilliant civilisation as the matrilineal regime and devoted finally the pre-eminence of the royal family. From now on by the alliance, the basis for the powerful kingdom had been laid down characterised by the institution of the golden throne, symbol of the kingdom's unity.

Queen Abla Pokou died around "1776 in the region of 'Walèbo' in the region of 'Sakassou', the actual central part of Ivory Coast, which became later on the capital of the Kingdom".¹³

1.4 Conclusion

It has been shown that myth cannot be neglected, rejected and discarded as mere fable or fantasy. What one needs to do is to go beyond his own imagination, his own world and reality, and see reality in a different way. In order to appreciate the 'sweetness' of a myth, narrow mind based only on historical and physical

¹² J. S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 9.

¹³ *Fraternité Matin*, Vendredi 16 juillet 2004 40^e année / N. 11906, 9, (My translation).

science approach should be avoided. A myth is like a closed calabash, the outsider cannot know and appreciate what is inside, its sweetness. It provides answers to life's situations and to light for many peoples and cultures.

Myth is always concrete and expresses life better than abstract thought can do; its nature is bound up with that of symbol, myth is the concrete recital of events and original phenomena of the spiritual life symbolised in the natural world, which has engraved itself on the language, memory and creative energy of the people... it brings two worlds together symbolically.¹⁴

In order to deepen our understanding and the importance of myth in our effort of evangelisation, let us put the myth of the 'Baoulé' in dialogue with the biblical Exodus.

¹⁴ N. BERDYAEV, as quoted in J. TAVLOR, *Christian Presence Amid African Religion*, 18.

CHAPTER II: BIBLICAL EXODUS

"The Bible is the Word of God in Human language. The Bible is the Word of God for all ages."
Interpretation of the Bible in the Church

2.1 Introduction

For us Africans, what is the message of the Biblical Exodus today? The Book of Exodus, in which the story of salvation is recounted, is devoted to the history of the people of Israel with whom God had made a covenant on Mount Sinai. And for us, in order to make the Exodus meaningful, we should see it in its capacity to enlighten us in order to understand the intrinsic relationship between revelation and history.

The work of a historian, as it's usually understood, is to recount past events, to explain their nature and significance, and to correlate them with one another. In a similar way the work of one who writes the story of pre-Christian revelation is to indicate the steps taken by God to prepare mankind for the appearance of the Redeemer who 'in the fullness of time' reunited all things in himself.¹⁵

By entering in solidarity with the Exodus event, we will understand the deeper meaning of God's intervention in human history. It could have been in different ways all pointing to the same reality as an 'advent' of the full revelation. In this chapter, we will admire the result of this dialogue.

2.2 The Exodus

The word Exodus is the Latin form of the Greek *exodos*, which means 'departure' or 'going out'. The Book of Exodus proclaims the Good News of God's powerful interventions among people, freed and summoned by him into a holy nation (cf. 10: 4-6). It could be called the 'gospel' of the Old Testament. This liberation experience is considered the creative event of Israel.¹⁶

Yes, the book of Exodus could be said and read as the gospel of the Old Testament or the gospel of the Israelites. It is so because liberation is the aim of God and it is also the key theme in the Book of Exodus. It reminds us of the salvific act of God of the chosen people; "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt

¹⁵ P. HEINISCH H – W. G. HEIDT, *History of the Old Testament*, 3.

¹⁶ Introduction to the Exodus: Background of Exodus, *African Bible*.

and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well that they are suffering. Therefore, I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey". (Ex: 3:7-9)

Following that, we can conclude without any hesitation that "the Exodus is the birth of the chosen people, through whom God, by the power of his word, calls from the chaos of Egypt and establishes in the beauty of the Promised Land."¹⁷ And God called and said to Moses "Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt" (Ex: 3:10).

2.2.1 Moses

God heard the cry of his people and did not want them to perish, and for this reason he chose and called Moses for that special mission.

In fact, as a result of the second decree against Hebrew infants, the child whom God had destined for the liberation of his people was given an education in the royal palace. [...]

After having been concealed by his parents for three months, he was placed in a basket on one of the Nile's tributaries, then found by pharaoh's daughter who called him Moses. It was an Egyptian name and is interpreted to mean 'child'. To the word Moses the name of a god was usually prefixed, e.g., Thutmosis, Ahmosis, Kemosis. The Biblical author derived the name Moses from 'masah', to draw.¹⁸

Despite his affiliation and adoption, Moses did not renounce his vocation. He remained faithful to God's call and to his people. As ambassador of God to Israel, Moses carried out his duty as a charismatic leader and brought the people of God to the Promised Land. He was the voice and the hand of God, and it was through him that the Israelites encountered God and came to know him. "Moses' role emerges exactly in line with the plan of salvation, for it was through Moses that the tribes of

¹⁷ A. MAGNANTE, *The Message of Exodus*, 17.

¹⁸ P. HEINISCH – W. G. HEIDT, *History of the Old Testament*, 76.

Israel were delivered, from the bondage of Egypt, and it was through Moses, as liberator and mediator that the people came to recognize the presence of God in their historical happenings”.¹⁹

2.2.2 *The Sacrifice*

Sacrifice is a practice of giving something of value to God, to gods and goddesses or divinities. In our case here, the sacrifice is offered to God in order to show him devotion and commitment, “You shall observe this as a perpetual ordinance for yourselves and your descendants. Thus, you must also observe this rite when you have entered the land which the Lord will give you as he promised” (Ex: 12:24-25).

“Moses called the elders of Israel and said to them, ‘Go and procure lambs for your families, and slaughter them as Passover victims’ [...] When your children ask you, ‘What does this rite of yours mean?’ you shall reply, ‘This is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over houses of the Israelites in Egypt” (Ex:12:21-27).

With the sacrifice of the lamb, the people of Israel were protected and saved. The sacrifice of Passover had significant meaning; it brought protection, liberation and unity. From that, the new community was born. “The Passover becomes, therefore, the sign of the family unity: all the members are united in eating the same sacrifice. They reach undoubtedly a good standard of communion. The family is a small ‘tent’ in which the head of it (father) presided over this liturgical celebration”.²⁰

¹⁹ A. MAGNANTE, *The Message of Exodus*, 33.

²⁰ A. MAGNANTE, *The Message of Exodus*, 86.

2.2.3 Covenant on Sinai

The covenant on the Sinai marked an important point in the life of the Israelites. The covenant gave a new sense to their life and through that the life of the humanity. From there we can say that: "With the institution of the Sinai covenant between God and the Israelites; recently escaped from the Egyptian slavery, we arrive at a landmark in the history of Israel as well as in the history of religion which becomes a historical fact with its law, rites and hierarchy."²¹

"Moses went up the mountain to meet God. Then the Lord called to him and said, 'Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites (...) If you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine" (Ex 19:3-5)

The alliance of Sinai is founded on the election of Israel among all peoples and it is without any merit. God freed his people to enter in alliance with them: "I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me" (Ex 20:2-3; Cf. Dt 5:6). The liberation oriented and led Israel to the covenant on Sinai. There, Moses offered the sacrifice, which makes Israel the people of God and he sealed his covenant with God in the name of Israel (Ex 24). From that, the God of the covenant demands from his people an absolute trust and fidelity. "You shall not bow down before them and worship them. For I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God" (Ex: 20:5; cf Dt 4:24). The fundamental law of the covenant is that Israel must be different from other nations. The covenant gives the privilege to Israel to be the property of God. "Sacred to the Lord was Israel, the first fruits of his harvest; should anyone presume to

²¹ A. MAGNANTE, *The Message of Exodus*, 99.

partake of them, evil would befall him, says the Lord” (Jer: 2:3). The Sinai covenant reveals definitely one essential aspect of God’s plan of salvation. Through the alliance, God establishes his reign over Israel and through them the entire earth. It opened the way of divine revelation to Israel and to all humanity as well. Israel discovered through a long history that God has never ceased to be on her side. They came to know that, God, the God of their fathers, is faithful to his promise.

2.3 Comparative Elements

According to the Council of Vatican II "All men form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (Cf. Acts 17:26), and also because all share in a common destiny, namely God" (NA. 1). Following this statement we can say that in each religion God calls people in what is positive.

2.3.1 The Convergence

On both sides, we have an encounter between divinity and the people. With the people of Israel, Yahweh met ‘Israel’ and spoke with Israel through the intermediary of Moses. This encounter was made during the Exodus. Through their charismatic leader Moses, Yahweh concluded a covenant with Israel by the blood of the victim. From that, Israel became the people of the covenant, the people of God. We are therefore at the beginning of a new and fabulous history, God walking with his chosen people for the birth of a new creation, the people of the covenant.

If Abraham is the ‘father of the believers’, then Moses remains the prophet who lay down the people of the covenant. This covenant would have a universal dimension because “all the earth belongs to God” (Ex 19:5). Therefore, Moses made

present the Word of God, the Torah among the people of the covenant. They now have an identity and a mission, which is to be the witness and light of God among the nations.

In the account of the sacrifice of the son of Abla Pokou and the seal of the alliance, there is an encounter between the divinity and the fugitives. This encounter was also made during their own exodus. At the head of this exodus, there was a charismatic leader, Abla Pokou. It is by her and through her that the child would be offered in sacrifice for the sake of the fugitives. With Abla Pokou, we are also at the beginning of the history of the new kingdom, the 'Baoulé' kingdom. Like the Israelites, from war to freedom, from slavery to freedom, granted by the sacrifice, laid down the New Kingdom which is characterised by the institution of the golden throne 'Bia', symbol of unity. The throne represents the umbilical cord of the 'Baoule' people.

2.3.2 The Divergence

*Biblical covenant: God who walks with the people of Israel reveals himself to them by his Word. His Word is revelatory "You have seen yourself how I treated the Egyptians..." (Ex: 19:4). What God has done before showed that he is always close to his people. It is also God who takes the initiative to conclude the covenant with Israel after freeing them from slavery in Egypt "... I bore you up on eagle wings and brought you here to myself" (Ex 19:4). In fact, it is to the free people that the covenant of God is proposed and Israel discovers the closeness of God, a personal God and a liberator. Therefore, they can respond to the call of God and accept it: "Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people..." (Ex 19:5). All this is

done friendly because fear and great anxiety are excluded. The relations between God and Israel are not based on a business deal that is you gain and I gain. They share, first of all in the gift of God's revelation, and secondly, they are guided by his Law. It is because of that, that the people of Israel can say with one voice," Everything the Lord has said, we will do it" (Ex 19:8; 24:3).

*The story of the sacrifice of the child: In the first place the divinity of the river did not reveal his identity. For that reason, the traditional priest was obliged to divinise in order to know his intention. The story said the spirit of water manifested himself in a moment of great fear. The spirit did not offer them any choice since their lives depended only on the crossing of the river. It is in this situation that they are obliged to offer the sacrifice. The free commitment of the fugitives is excluded since they are between death and life. The freedom here is not a gift but an exchange, a deal. We first see in the story an observance of recommendations and prescriptions of the spirit. The cost of the freedom is the sacrifice of the child.

Whereas in the Biblical revelation, human sacrifices are forbidden and condemned by:

- Deuteronomy: 12:31; 18:10
- The prophets: Jr. 7: 31; 32: 35; Ez 16: 20-21; 20: 26; 23: 39
- The Law of sanctity, Lv. 18:21; 20:2-5

What was seen as horror in the Bible has been practiced in the crossing of the river 'Comoé' and accepted by the people.

The Bible, by condemning human sacrifice, wants to preserve human life which is a gift from God. As it is recommended in *Evangelium Vitae (EV)*:

Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves 'the creative action of God', and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole

end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can, in any circumstance, claim for himself the right to destroy directly an innocent human being (EV 53).

No one has the right to take a life and do whatever he wants. Human life belongs to God that is why Pope John Paul II said “Indeed ‘the blood is life’ (Dt 12:23), and life, especially human life, belongs only to God: for this reason whoever attacks human life, in some way attacks God himself” (EV 9).

According to the African Synod, “The Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world” (EA 42). Those values are for sure, a providential preparation for the transmission of the Good News. Now then, what is the newness brought by Christianity?

2.3.3 The Originality of the Biblical Covenant.

The newness brought by Christianity is found in Jesus, the Son of God who took our human condition.

“The history of the revelation of the Old Testament is a long and patient effort of the pedagogy of God. This history should be manifested and fully achieved by Jesus Christ”²². And it is from that, at each level of history, that God acted. From Abraham through the Exodus and the prophets up to Jesus, God speaks to humankind by revealing himself. He starts by profound changes of attitudes which invite all people to come to the fullness of the resurrection with Christ, the New Alliance. We can now understand that all the values contained in the traditional religions remain a preparation for Judeo-Christian faith. By choosing Israel first, it

²² J. BUR, *Initiation au Mystère du Salut*, 44, (My translation).

was the wish of God to make them the light of the nations. So through Israel, he concluded a covenant with all the people on earth "...though all the earth is mine" (Ex19:5). It is in fact with Christ that the New Alliance is sealed and opened to all nations and races.

In fact, this New covenant in Jesus Christ is not reserved to one particular group, ethnic, racial or social, "They said to the woman ...and we know that this is truly the saviour of the world" (Jn 4:42). Only one condition is asked from all people: to accept and confess the faith in Jesus Christ as the unique and only mediator between humanity and God. Then, we will be able to understand that Christ and his Good News accomplish and enlighten all the shadows of different cultures and religions. The coming of Christ, if we can say so, is to purify and transform the inside. It is to say that the New Covenant sealed by Christ is totally against what is 'bad' or 'unjust' in our ancestral traditions and religions. We can observe that in the various cultures, the accent is put on the sense of belonging which provoked isolation because the cultures did not give room for openness. With the coming of Christ, all barriers fall apart and disappear; "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person ...for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

2.4 Conclusion

Each culture will be enriched by evangelic values if it is accepted. It is by looking at Jesus who is God, but did not claim that equality and, became man that the true and false values of each religion should be discovered. As the seed of wheat must die before bearing fruit, each of our African religions will gain to be transformed and purified by the Gospel.

By studying this aspect, we appreciate some religious values which are the preparation for the encounter of the Gospel of Christ and of the sealing of a definitive covenant with Jesus Christ, the new Moses.

CHAPTER III: JESUS, THE NEW MOSES

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life".

Jn 8:12

3.1 Introduction

The Divine revelation started with the Old Testament and found her accomplishment with the New Testament in Jesus Christ, author and the object of revelation. In Jesus Christ, God revealed himself once for all. God himself came to meet humanity and humanity met God, the God he was looking for, the unknown God. "In time past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe" (Heb 1:1-2)

We have seen how God revealed himself in the Old Testament to his people, we are going now to see how Jesus Christ realise the Scriptures in himself. He is the revealer of God in himself.

3.2 The One who Fulfilled all the Promises

Moses was the great prophet of God, with him, God freed his people, sealed his covenant and revealed his name and law. Through the mediation of Moses, God gave his law to Israel. But, it is through the mediation of Jesus Christ that God saved all peoples. Moses gave the law, but grace and truth came from Jesus (Jn 1: 11). God promised to send another prophet like Moses and he did it by resurrecting Jesus Christ from death. The gospels say that Jesus is a prophet but not like any other prophet, he is higher than Moses. Jesus is the eschatological prophet who came to close the list of the prophets and fulfil the will of God (Lk: 3: 4-6).

In Jesus, the primitive Church sees the one who fulfils the prophecies of the Old Testament by his Davidic descendance and his prophetic mission. He is above all prophets, even above Moses. The ancient prophets used to say 'Oracle of the

Lord' and Jesus said 'In truth I say; Amen Amen', 'I say to you'; 'It has been said to you but me I say to you'.

Jesus brought the law to its end since through him all believers are justified. "For Christ is the end of the law for the justification of everyone who has faith" (Rom 10: 4). By fulfilling everything which was written in the Law of Moses, he was resurrected by God his Father so that he may give the Holy Spirit to all (Lk 24: 44-49).

We can clearly see that Moses is really the finger of God pointing to Jesus Christ. The time of Moses was an advent season, a long vigil for the Messiah. And through Moses, God saved his people from Egypt. But, it is only through Jesus Christ his Son that he finally and definitively set all his people free. Jesus is then, the new Moses who brought the total liberation, liberation from sin to a new land, a new creation, a new humanity. In this sense, we can say that the process of our salvation begun with Moses and was crowned by Jesus through the redemptive act on the cross.

3.2.1 The Plenitude of Salvation in the Paschal Mystery

The life of Jesus and his mission took place within his relationship with his Father through the Holy Spirit. It is in the mystery of his death and resurrection that this relationship, which unites the three divine persons with humanity is revealed and expressed. The birth of Jesus, his public life, his teachings and actions and the Pentecost event found their climax in the paschal events, passion, death and resurrection. The death of Jesus was neither the fruit nor the result of external violence imposed on him but it was accomplished in total freedom, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own" (Jn 10:18). That is why it is necessary to

know and understand that the most important action of Christ as the new Moses, who brought his people to a land of plenty, is when he offered himself as a sacrifice for our redemption on the cross. What we heard first from the apostles is the kerygma "Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified. By his death and resurrection, Jesus became Lord for the salvation of all. The resurrection of Jesus, however, makes the whole difference; it marks the starting point of Christian faith and stands at its centre."²³

In the past, God acted through our human history and continues to act in it at this present time and the focus of our Christian message as it is proclaimed by the early kerygma, the death and resurrection of Christ has brought the plan of God to his climax.

The divine action referred to consists essentially in raising Jesus from the dead. This action is presented as God's decisive intervention in the history of salvation. If the God of the Old Testament was essentially the God who saved the chosen people from Egypt through the Exodus, this for men event is now understood as a type or foreshadowing of the new event of salvation. The resurrection of God from the dead is the final saving event of God.²⁴

3.3 Conclusion

We have seen that Jesus Christ is the New Moses, the revealer of God, the perfect image of God. Jesus is the one who brought us salvation by offering himself on the cross. The cross became our hope, the sign of our salvation. That salvation, offered by Christ, is for all and needs to be proclaimed to all as Jesus recommended to his disciples and to us today, "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

²³ J. DUPUIS, *Who do you say I am ?*, 54

²⁴ J. DUPUIS, *Who do you say I am ?*, 61

teaching them to observe all that I have commended you". (Mt 28:19-20). Following that statement, the Church has been commissioned to bring the Good news to all. In carrying out that duty, the Church faces the problem of diversities of cultures. The universalism of our Christian faith has invited the Church to make the Good News available to all cultures through inculturation.

CHAPTER IV: THEOLOGY OF INCULTURATION

"Efforts must be made to try to put the Sacred Scriptures into the hands of the faithful right from their earliest years."
Ecclesia in Africa 58

4.1 Introduction

The Divine revelation points to the mystery of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ, God is inviting humanity to enter into a relationship with him. The response of humanity to that divine invitation is made through faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true human. This chapter will give to the 'Baoulé' a new approach to welcome the fullness of Christ's sacrifice.

4.2 The Protagonists

The two stories direct to bodily personalities consciously animated by a strong desire. Parallel to the sacrifice of Abla Pokou for her people, we have Jesus who offers himself for his disciples and for the world. "I am the living bread that come down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51).

4.3 The Intention of the Agents

Abla Pokou sacrifices her son so that the people can cross the river and escape from the enemies. Life was given so that the group could survive. Jesus too offered himself on the cross for the salvation of all and his offering is made available in the sacrament of the Eucharist. He offers himself as bread and wine so that the human community could have life (Jn 6:51).

So the goal of the two agents was for the salvation of their people. The intentions of the protagonists are not enough, but it is the blood poured out that realised it. What is the value of blood in the two stories? Do they have the same value?

4.4 The Function of Blood

Blood is the symbol of life in traditional cultures and in the Bible (Gn 9: 4; Lev 17:11; Nb 35:33; Dt 12:23). When we pour the blood of someone, we take his life. That is the case of the sacrifice of the 'Baoulé people' and the death of Jesus Christ.

4.5 The Uniqueness of Christ

Although there are common elements between the sacrifice of the child and Christ, Christ supersedes by far that sacrifice as we are going to see.

4.5.1 The Blood of Christ

The blood which has been poured out increases life, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruits" (Jn12:24). The covenant is sealed with human blood. It is the pouring of blood that cement the tribes and makes them one entity, one nation. A new community is founded united by the same blood (Ex 26:8).

The blood of Christ poured out for all cements and unites all people, "Take this, all of you and drink from it: This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me."²⁵

In both sacrifices, we have the same understanding of the pouring of blood. It is the highest expression that humans use to seal alliances among them. It expresses oneness, one flesh united by the same blood.

²⁵ Eucharistic Prayers, The consecration.

God chooses the same way to unite all people through his Son, “Worthy are you to receive the scroll and to break open its seals, for you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God those from every tribe and tongue, people and nation” (Rev 5:9). In fact, the ways of God and the one of humans meet to make the history of salvation. But which history of salvation since humans and God cannot be put on the same level. No doubt, the blood of the Son of God has greater value than the one of humans. No one can mix God’s action with the one of humans. That is to say that their nature and gesture are different.

4.5.2 Jesus Christ: Truly Human and Truly God

Born of a woman, Jesus of Nazareth is fully human. But, he is also fully God. This statement was affirmed and amplified at the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon that Jesus has the same substance with God his Father, Christ has a double nature. It is in that context that we can affirm the superiority of his covenant of blood.

4.5.3 Human-Divine Blood

The blood of Christ is biologically human blood. But his very nature expresses the value of his blood. In the sacrificial aspect, the tradition established a level of appreciation between things of the same value. The ‘Baoulé’ indicates that the spirit of water, to enable them to cross the river asked for a noble sacrifice. The religious customs of the Jewish people request for example for the Passover that “The Lamb must be without blemish” (Ex 12:5).

The religious circle chooses what the human mind can always remember as precious. The value and importance of the blood of Christ is in his double nature,

human-divine. For that, his blood is more precious than the simple human blood offered for some one, “And Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel” (Heb 12:24), and “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God” (Heb 9:14).

4.5.4 The Pouring of his Blood as a Sign of Love

The summit of the action of Jesus is that he offered himself freely for all. Christ did not offer and spread his blood like in the case of the ‘Baoulé myth’. His first goal was for the love he has for us, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friend” (Jn 15:13). He offered his life for us freely, his blood, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:28). Here Christ is the Priest and the victim who decided to offer himself voluntarily in sacrifice for all. The inauguration of this new covenant in the blood of Christ goes far beyond the one of the ‘Baoulé myth’ because it is the self-offer in sacrifice, it is free and voluntary. If this sacrifice was made by force, it should have no value and therefore it is not salvific. It would have been a useless sacrifice. So, the emphasis in this sign of love should be put on the voluntary self offering rather than the blood.

4.5.5 The Double Dimension of the Covenant of Christ

The ‘Baoulé’ covenant concerns only the clan. It united only the ‘Baoulé’ and made them one tribe. That covenant of the ‘Baoulé’ is focused on one dimension since it did not have the intention to establish a relation between the ‘Baoulé’ and God.

The coming of Jesus opens a new covenant which is at the same time horizontal and vertical. It unites people among themselves and with God. With Christ, all become children of God but also because his special partner in this world, especially when we come for the Eucharist which remains the highest memorial of the covenant sealed between God and human through the blood of Christ.

4.6 Conclusion

By entering into the world, Jesus said, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepare for me; holocaust and sin offerings you took no delight in. Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, behold, I come to do your will, O God'" (Heb 10:5-7). It is not by the former sacrifice of the child that the 'Baoulé' will go to God, but through the only Son, the unique mediator. He is the unique way which can bring us to the Father. This will be our following task, a task that will bring the 'Baoulé' to accept fully the Gospel and live according to it.

CHAPTER V:

**PROPOSITION OF THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD IN THE
'BAOULE' MILIEU**

"Every culture needs to be transformed by the Gospel."

Ecclesia in Africa 61

5.1 Introduction

The need of proclaiming the gospel is entrusted to all and to the church in a special way, as Jesus recommended to his disciples “Go, therefore, and make disciples all of nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commended you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

Inculturation is a way of responding to the call of Jesus. And as we are aware, inculturation is a great concern of our African Church today. It is good also to notice that inculturation is not a new reality. It started with the incarnation of God into our world, God became man in Jesus Christ. That is why on various occasions, the African Synod Fathers stressed on the particular importance for evangelization of inculturation, the process by which “catechesis takes flesh in the various cultures”(EA 44). Therefore, we need a support, and a model to follow in proposing Jesus Christ to the ‘Baoulé’.

5.2 Following the Primitive Church

Since his origin, the mission of the Church has been enriched by various cultures. Saint Paul, apostle of the nations became “all things to all, to save at least some” (1Cor 9:22), Greek and Gentiles.

Following the Apostles, Saint Paul and especially the Church Fathers had a great concern to translate the Gospel into the language of their people. By all means they defended the faith of the Church by using Greek philosophy to make it easier for the people to fully understand the Gospel message.

On the frontier between Jerusalem and Athens, that is to say, in the transition between the synagogue and the temple, Paul announced to one particular group of his hearers that the ‘unknown God’ of the Athenian Greeks at whose altar the devout crowded

was none other than the God of the risen Christ (Acts 17:23-31). The apostle had used the studied modesty of Greek thought to proclaim the gospel.²⁶

The aim of the history of mission is to incarnate the Gospel in the various languages, customs and traditions in the entire world. This effort to translate the Gospel and to make it available to all cultures belongs to the very nature of the Church as we say, 'the Church is by nature missionary'.

The time has now come for all to put more effort in that project, especially by us, the Children of Africa. It is important to build Churches. But what will be the use of those Churches if their members are not really involved and did not understand the Gospel message. What we Africans need is the availability of the Gospel message, not buildings.

I am personally against that vision of mission by which its primary aim is to build Churches. Africans are able to build their own Churches, even in grass, when the Gospel message will take roots in their life. It only by that, they will have an authentic Church in African, if not all efforts will be in vain. Experience is the best teacher as my father used to tell me.

5.3 The Council Vatican II: New Inculturation

The Vatican II Council in his decree on the Church's missionary activity (*Ad Gentes Divinitus*) renewed the missionary conscience of the Church. Following the Council, the Church adopted the evangelization through cultures as a new initiative of the Church. Just as "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn1:14), so too the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations, must take root in the life-situation of the hearers of the world" (EA 42).

²⁶ L. SANNEH, *Translating the Message*, 157.

The main aim of missionary activity is the evangelization and the implantation of the Church among the peoples to whom the Good News of Christ had not yet been preached. The universal church of Christ will be richer and more colourful by integrating the youngest Churches. By integrating their various cultures, the Church will look more like a mosaic, very beautiful to see, and it will express more its universality rather than be seen as foreign. "There are many links between the message of salvation and culture. In his self-revelation to his people culminating in the fullness of manifestation in his incarnate Son, God spoke according to the culture proper to each age" (GS 58.1).

Christ penetrates in all customs, purifies them and brings them to their perfection. The Church for sure needs to save the substantial unity of the Roman rite by accepting some legitimate differences and adaptations according to various assemblies. Vatican II has brought a new 'breath by opening the windows' of the Church of Christ. By taking into consideration the values of each culture, the entire world will become the true people of God.

There may well be many aspects of Christianity that we have not as yet discovered and that we shall not discover until Christianity has been refracted through every facet of the prism of human civilization. It has been refracted only through the Greek and Roman worlds, but it will have to be refracted through the Chinese facet and the Hindu facet in order to attain its total fulfilment; and this total fulfilment will not come through the conversion of individual men, but through the Christianization of all civilizations of the earth. All these civilizations must be permeated by Christianity, and Christianity must bring to blossom whatever in them has been in the nature of providential preparation.²⁷

Inculturation is the pastoral and the theological dynamic of the church in Africa. It is the fundamental process of the missionary activity of the Church since its origin. "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14).

²⁷ J. DANIELOU, *The Salvation of the Nations*, 36.

5.4 Invitation of God for a New Covenant

The will of God is to be in full communion with humanity. For that he revealed himself progressively and under various names. But, it is the revelation of his divine name to Moses in the burning bush that has been the fundamental revelation of the Old and New covenant. God is not outside of the life of his people because the covenant linked has them forever and they depend on him.

In Sinai, the Israelites freed from slavery, entered into a covenant with God. Then, the cult of God became a national religion. "It is not because you are the largest of all nations that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you (...) Understand, then, that the Lord, your God, is God indeed, the faithful God who keeps his merciful covenant down to the thousandth generation towards those who love him and keep his commandments" (Dt 7:7-9). The covenant of God with humankind is gratuitous. God took the initiative to meet humankind. He took in charge Israel's existence and wanted to win her heart. From that, Israel recognised her role: God offers himself gratuitous and want humankind to respond to it freely.

The whole history of salvation has been a proposition, always renewed by God. It is an invitation to live in communion with him, to enter in covenant with him. The History of the covenant recovers the history of the entire humanity. It is the covenant that gives sense to creation by putting *en route* towards the history of salvation. This history becomes then, a holy history, a divine adventure where God takes the responsibility to make humankind happy.

And it had been possible through many mediators chosen by God. Our Christian ancestors were well known for their mediation role; Abraham through

whom all nations were blessed, “All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you” (Gn 12:3), he interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 18:22-32)

After Moses, the prophets, the priests, and the kings, all played the role of mediation on behalf of their people.

5. 4.1 Jesus, the Unique Mediator

The responsibility of God took place in Jesus Christ. He is the only mediator and his humanity allows him to be the saviour of all. “For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human who gave himself as ransom for all” (1 Tm 2:5)

Moses was chosen by God to free Israel and to conclude a covenant as the mediator of the revelation. Responsible of his people in front of God, he acts like a chief and legislator in the name of God. Seeing the importance of his mission between God and Israel, Moses is called, with Jesus, mediator (Gal 3:19). By the positive and decisive response of Mary, humanity came to know Jesus and vice-versa. Between God and humankind, Jesus Christ is the unique mediator of the New Covenant. “As the God-man, Jesus Christ the, Son incarnate, is the way to the Father who stands beyond the mediator. The Gospel of John expresses it clearly when Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, but by me”²⁸

The person of Jesus Christ is at the time an act of God who turns to humanity and the response of humanity to God. Christian mediation is not an abstract concept, it has a face and has become a person who is Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus in the New Testament, is called mediator and also the High Priest. Jesus is at the side of

²⁸ J. DUPUIS, S. J, *Who do you say I am?*, 3

God and as well as at the side of humanity. In him, we found the foundation of all mediations between God and humanity. To emphasize more on that, the author of the book of Hebrews used abundantly the expression of Priest and declares the uniqueness of Christ, the eternal High Priest. To underline the radicalism of this newness to the one of the Old Testament, A. Vanhoye says this: "The function of the High Priest was the object of our ambition: Christ obtained the glorified name by humbling himself and dying on the cross. Then, the function of the high priest was founded on the separation with the profane world: Christ on the contrary assumes the solidarity that includes all our brothers"²⁹

5.5 Jesus among the 'Baoulé'

"This man is the way for the Church - a way that, in a sense, is the basis of all the other ways that the Church must walk - because man-every man, without any exception whatever-has been redeemed by Christ" (RO 14).

In which way or sense can the Exodus experience of the 'Baoulé' help them to root their faith in Jesus Christ without denying their identity? Through this work, we can say that God has always been with the 'Baoulé' people. He has been silently with them in all their experiences, like the unknown God of the Athenians as Paul said; the 'Nyamien' for the 'Baoulé', their creator of all things. The experience of God is familiar to the 'Baoulé'. In his traditional belief, day and night, he is profoundly religious and lives with the sacred. As their proverb says '*Sè sran nou man lè, Nyamien olè*'; 'If human is absent, God is present'.

²⁹ A. VANHOYE, Prêtre ancien Prêtre nouveau selon le Nouveau Testament, 48. (My Translation)

For the 'Baoulé' God is the creator of all that exist. He fully trusts in God since he is the one who responded positively to all his needs and go everywhere with that faith.

With the coming of Jesus Christ among us, the 'Baoulé' found a new reason to live since he is preoccupied to have the life he is looking for through the ancestors: Abundant life. This abundant life is seeing in Jesus Christ who gives that entire life "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10). For the 'Baoulé', to live is not only to accept and receive life, but also to enter in the logic of the creator, to create and to favour a relationship with others and the world. Despite that affirmation, the sacrifice of the child was limited only for the salvation of the 'Baoulé' and concerned only the 'Baoulé'. Those who are outside are not concern and are not invited into it. The sacrifice is limited to the clan by blood, a pure blood of the tribe. That is why in the succession, the 'Baoulé' takes the nephew to be sure of that blood. We are then 'Baoulé' by birth not by invitation or affiliation. The sacrifice of the 'Baoulé' is therefore limited and did not have universal dimension. The new clan and the new land belong only to the 'Baoulé'. With the sacrifice of Christ, we have a new era, a new vision of sacrifice. His sacrifice has a universal dimension. It invites all, for salvation is for all. Through the sacrifice of Christ, we become children of God by sharing in the sonship of Christ. By the pouring of his blood, Christ for once make us all one family, a new creation, a new people of God all belonging to the same promises.

To help the 'Baoulé' to enter into this logic, they need a deep instruction which will help them to understand fully the Gospel message proposed to them by the Church and to have a strong faith in Jesus Christ, the only saviour of the world. This

will help them to be authentic Christians, not half Christians; Christians in the day and something else in the night. To help, these are my recommendations for a deep catechesis among the 'Baoulé' over three a period of years for the preparation of Baptism. For that reason one need to know that

At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, 'the only Son from the Father... who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever'. To catechise is to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfilment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him. Catechesis aims at putting 'people... in communion... with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.'³⁰

***First Year: Salvation for all through the sacrificial act of Jesus Christ**

- Help the 'Baoulé' to understand that a great sacrifice has been made for the salvation of all and for their salvation too, through Jesus Christ.
- Help the 'Baoulé' to understand that the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ is gratuitous and he made it freely for our own salvation.
- To invite the 'Baoulé' to live the new life offered by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

***Second Year: Jesus Christ, the Unique Sacrifice for Humanity**

- Help the 'Baoulé' to understand that Jesus Christ is God who gave himself for us.
- Help the 'Baoulé' to understand that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is beyond all sacrifices and replaces all other sacrifices.
- Invite the 'Baoulé' to act in the sense of conversion by abandoning other sacrifices.

³⁰ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, N. 426.

***Third Year: The New Life in Jesus Christ**

- Help the 'Baoulé' to understand that the new life in Jesus Christ is made available through the sacrament of baptism which is a gateway to the other sacraments.

- Help the 'Baoulé' to understand that they need to participate in the new life of Jesus Christ which is offered in the Eucharist.

- Invite the 'Baoulé' to act by being active and by participating in the mission entrusted to us by Christ, in proclaiming salvation to all.

5.6 Conclusion

As we have seen with the incarnation, God revealed to us who he is. He promised to save all humankind by making himself visible through Jesus Christ in their history. In the ancestral practice, the salvation that the 'Baoulé' were looking for concerned only human and his human history. Salvation proclaimed by Christianity is linked to the faith in Jesus Christ. His death and resurrection manifested the final and absolute salvation of God. Through the ancestors, the 'Baoulé' has salvation but through Christ, they have the fullness of that salvation, he is the giver of life.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Our world today is becoming through 'globalisation', a small village. It is "characterized by increasingly rapid and far-reaching change. It is in this world that mission takes place. Missionaries must foresee and respond to this change if they are to be truly at the service of God's peoples"³¹ The challenges of mission are many today and one of the most important is inculturation

Our reflection based on inculturation in 'Baoulé' land has two aims, the first aim is to participate fully in the mission of the Church by the implantation of the Word of God in every culture in a way to make it part of their life. This reflection is not a 'way' but one of the many ways. The second aim is that the Church should be open to the multiple expression of a common faith,

The dynamics between culture and gospel are such that each is enriched and challenged by the other. There is a call and a response. And there is rejection of elements of the culture, which are contrary to the gospel and a critique of and removal from the Church of elements which are not genuine gospel, but its westernized interpretation.³²

Myth has been used in this essay as an important tool for evangelization in 'Baoulé' land and can be used in many African set-ups. Through the different myths, the 'Baoulé' perpetuated and still perpetuates their tradition and culture from generation to generation. Myths are a living seed that contain the soul of the 'Baoulé' people; it is a giver of life in a symbolical sense. Therefore the Church cannot dismiss this important value in its mission of evangelization. Rather, the Church needs to present myths as an important tool for inculturation. In this way the Church's mission will remain unchanged but it will be seen in its richness that it assumes in a particular individual, community, institution or culture; "by virtue of

³¹ W. JENKINSON – H. O' SULLIVAN, *Trends in Mission* (Towards the 3rd millennium , xix.

³² A. BELLAGAMBA, *Mission and Ministry in the Global church*, 2.

her mission and nature, she is bound to no particular form of human culture” (GS 42).

Jesus Christ became by his incarnation an intrinsic part of all cultures of the worlds, and this is explicitly manifested in the inculturation of the gospel message in every culture. “A faith that does not become culture is a faith that has not been fully accepted, not thoroughly thought, not faithfully lived”³³ This brings us to the fact that any inculturation of Christian faith in any culture should be rooted in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, his passion, death and resurrection, “The resurrection made it possible for him to identify explicitly with the cultures of every time and place, through the proclamation of the Gospel to every nation.”³⁴

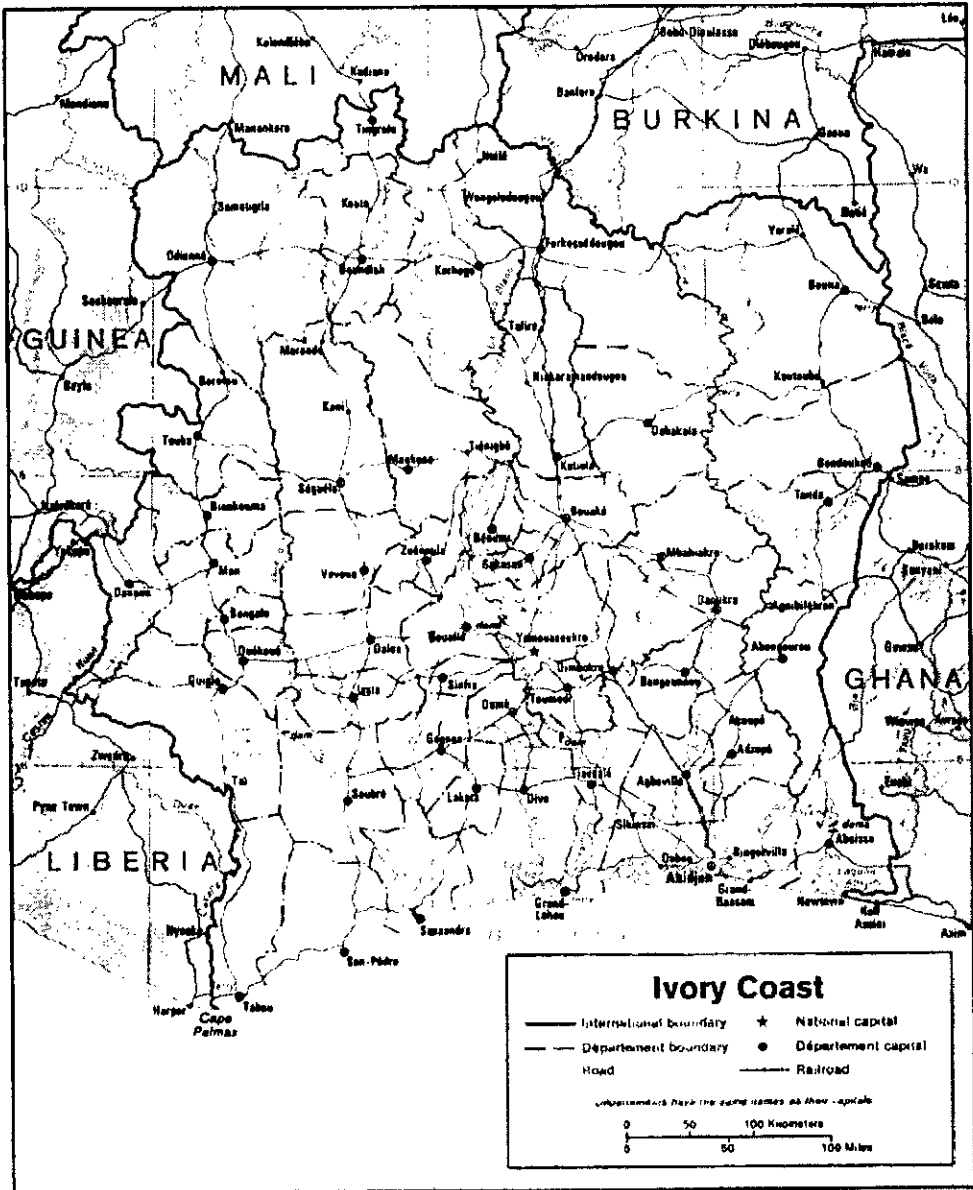
Today, to help the ‘Baoulé’ people to live fully their faith in Jesus Christ, the Church must take into account the authenticity of the culture of this people by integrating the gospel message in their culture. In return, the ‘Baoulé’ need to open their culture to Jesus Christ and to his words. It is only at this price that the ‘Baoulé’ Christian will fully be rooted in Christ because he will have established the bridge between the message of salvation of Christ and all the aspects of his life. As ‘Baoulé’ myself, I have tried to open our gate of culture to the gospel message by putting in connection the ‘Exodus of the ‘Baoulé’ by the crossing of the river ‘Comoé’ with the biblical Exodus. But as one of our proverbs says: ‘One person cannot open a road in a forest’; so I hope many will follow working in that direction in their various different cultures so that tomorrow, they will not show the ‘Church with their left hand’.³⁵

³³ JOHN. PAUL II, Discourse to the participants on the National Congress of “Movimenti Ecclesiali di impegno Culturale, of May 20th, 1982.

³⁴ A. SHORTER, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, 83

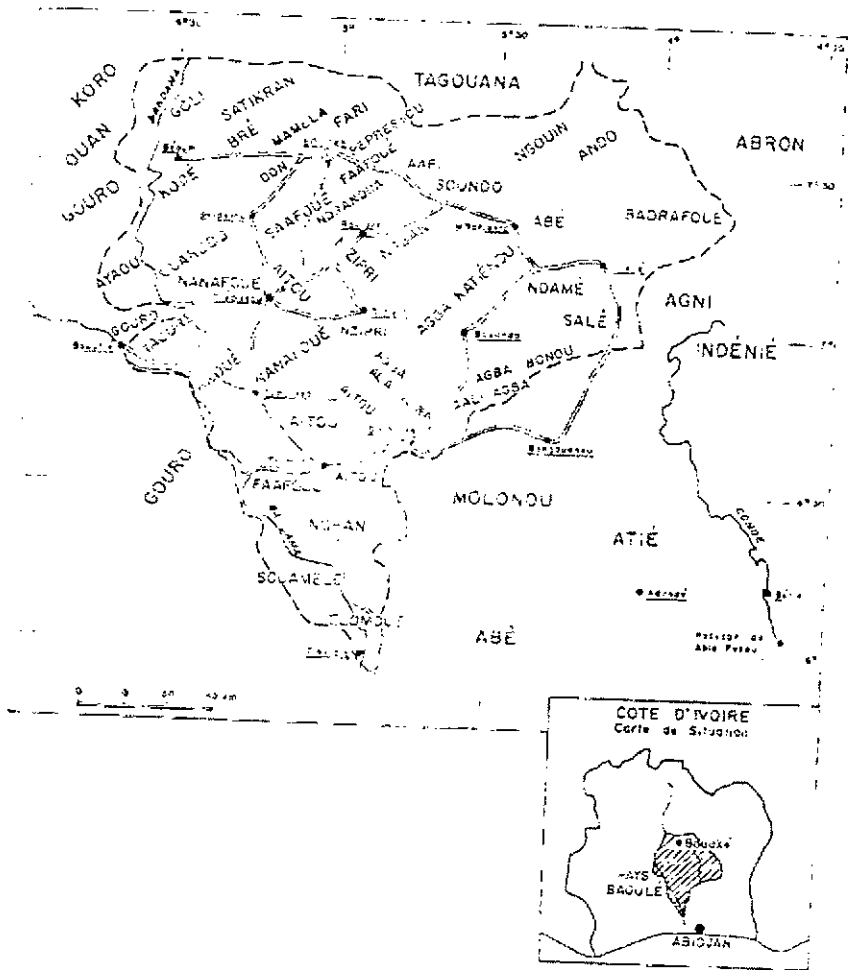
³⁵ It is a sign of disrespect, rejection in the Akan tradition.

APPENDIX 1: MAP OF IVORY COAST³⁶



³⁶ <http://www.greenwichmeantime.com/time-zone/africa/ivory-coast/map.htm>, 20/01/05

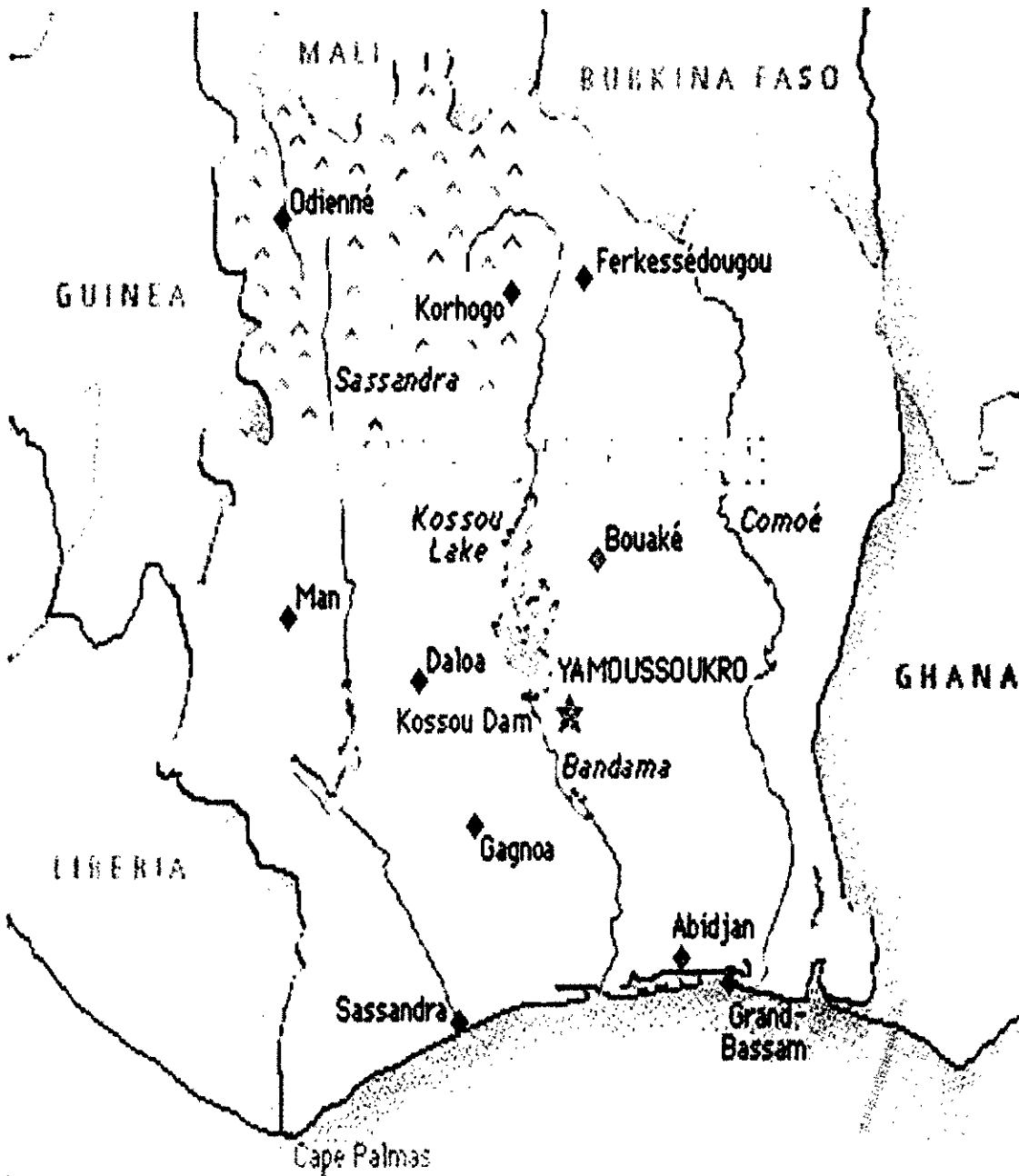
APPENDIX 2: MAP OF 'BAOULE' LAND³⁷



Les groupes de la région baoulé dans la République
de Côte d'Ivoire

³⁷ J. N. LOUKOU – F. LIGIER, *La Reine Pokou, Fondatrice du royaume Baoulé*, 61.

APPENDIX 3: MAP OF IVORY COAST³⁸



Map 3: Map of Ivory Coast showing the rivers including river 'Comoé beside Ghana.

³⁸ <http://www.greenwichmeantime.com/time-zone/africa/ivory-coast/map.htm>, 20/01/05

APPENDIX 4: BASILICA OF IVORY COAST IN 'BAOULE' LAND³⁹

losviajeros.com



³⁹ http://www.losviajeros.com/fotos/afrika/costa/index.php?fn_foto11, 20/01/05

APPENDIX 5: ABBREVIATIONS

1Cor	First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians
1Tm	First Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy
Dt	The Book of Deuteronomy
EA	<i>Ecclesia in Africa</i>
Ed	Editor (s)
EV	<i>Evangelium Vitae</i>
Ex	The Book of Exodus
Ez	The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel
Gal	The Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians
Gn	The Book of Genesis
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
Heb	The Letter to the Hebrews
Jn	The Gospel according to John
Jer/ Jr	The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah
Lev/ Lv	The Book of Leviticus
Lk	The Gospel according to Luke
Mt	The Gospel according to Matthew
Nb	The Book of Numbers
Rev	The Book of revelations
RO	<i>Redemptor Ominis</i>

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