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A Note from the Editor

Beth Snodderly observes in her book *Chaos is Not God's Will: The Origin of International Development*: "When the people of God, in whom the Spirit of God dwells, are absent, the Spirit of God is also absent, resulting in desert-like conditions in the physical, social, and spiritual realms … But when Spirit-filled people of God bring the light of Christ into a society and enough people respond to the outpouring of the Spirit, then we see real development in that society" (2014, 4-5). This issue of *WCIDJ* seeks to provide studies both of the need for and the results of the presence of Spirit-filled people of God.

Thanks to all our contributing authors who represent university academia, scholars and practitioners in international development, with each presenting a unique perspective from his/her area of expertise and research, thus adding to our understanding of international development. In this issue on Regional Research in International Development, we have included articles representing analysis of specific global regions that have seen transformation of lives within the kingdom framework, practical proposals with thoughtful reflection on cultural context for specific global regions that are in need of development, and case studies of cross-cultural ministries and organizations working toward international development within specific regions.

Chris Ampadu, a Ph.D. candidate with WCIU, examines the effects of African Traditional Religion on development efforts in Ghana, and explores consequences that these effects have on development in Africa as a whole with hope towards a solution against these effects.

Emmanuel Béché, a lecturer at the University of Maroua, makes a practical proposal for development solutions involving the use of Internet by high school students in Cameroon.

Jim Harries, WCIU faculty, calls attention to the need to reevaluate assumptions that can lead to tension and exploitation in intercultural partnerships between Africa and the West, and advocates for the use of non-Western language to facilitate more effective partnerships.

Namarr Newson, WCIU student, provides a case study of Wiconi International, a Native North American contextual movement in Christ.

As always, you are welcome to join the dialogue, discussion, and debate through commenting on the articles and blog postings, and sharing insights on your own social networks.

Reference

Snodderly, Beth. *Chaos is Not God's Will: The Origin of International Development.* Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press. 4-5. 2005.

Sean Curran *is Managing Editor for William Carey International Development Journal.*

A Correlation Between African Traditional Religions and the Problems of African Societies Today

Chris Ampadu

Africa, despite its rich natural endowments, is a continent ravaged with poverty, disease, corruption and conflicts. For years, international aid and development agencies have tried to deal with these problems—with limited success. A predominantly animistic worldview holds sways over the minds of many Africans—a worldview that sees man as a victim of nature, of other people, or of fate. This mindset shifts responsibility for Africa's social ills to the spirit realm, leaving individuals little hope or motivation for working towards a better future.

Even though the church has experienced tremendous growth on the continent over the last two centuries, all too often the church is disengaged from the crying needs of the community—focusing primarily on spiritual concerns. Despite the fact that Christians are the majority in many African communities, poverty, disease, conflict and environmental degradation still abound. The church is often seen as irrelevant by non-believing community members. But the fact still remains that the church is God's principally ordained agency for social and cultural transformation. It is perhaps the single most important indigenous, sustainable institution in any community, with members in virtually every sphere of society (the arts, business, governance, education, etc.). This is particularly true of Africa where statistically almost 50% of the populations (about 400 million people) are Christians and where an estimated four million churches exist.

Yet for the church to effectively advance God's intentions, its leadership needs fresh vision and insight. An understanding of African Traditional Religion is critical in understanding the problems of Africa societies today. Many governmental agencies, including development agencies, non-governmental organizations, multi-national and bilateral organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have disregarded the prominent role of African Traditional Religion and have been adopting various economic and political strategies and policies to try to solve Africa's problems. But Africa, with her enormous natural and human resources, continues to be regarded as the dark continent where there are wars, hunger and poverty. In the face of these needs, much of the work of the African church continues to be confined to the area of spiritual things, especially in the areas of deliverance from the powers of devils and witchcraft, healing and saving of souls for heaven—all akin to Traditional Africa Religion. However, the social and physical impact in terms of loving one another and the physical development of individuals and communities has rarely been seen. Large churches have been built and thousands of people go to church each Sunday but transformation of communities has not occurred. Even when people talk about the church, the discussion is typically related only to spiritual issues and all other events and everyday happenings are given spiritual mean-

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ing and importance only. This can be attributed to the overwhelming animistic perception in Africa where all natural events are viewed as ordered by the spirits, gods, and ancestors.

Traditional African religion was the indigenous religion of the African before the introduction of any other religions on the continent. It is the aggregate of indigenous belief systems and practices which existed in Africa prior to the coming of Christianity and Islam and to which millions of Africans still adhere covertly or overtly. The term "traditional" is used to refer to the technique of cultural transmission, that is, oral tradition—stories, myths and proverbs—that are used in passing this religion from generation to generation. Beliefs are passed on to posterity through songs, folktales, dances, shrines, and festivals. African scholar K.A. Opoku explains that the term, "traditional" indicates a fundamentally indigenous value system that it has its own pattern, with its own historical inheritance and tradition from the past. "African traditional religion is practiced by millions of Africans in our time and it is therefore a contemporary reality which exists objectively and in fact. It connects the present with infinite time." (Opoku 1978, 9)

This study is to help us to discover what traditional Africans actually believe and to see how these beliefs have inspired their cultures, molded their worldview, and impacted the general development of Africa in the area of hunger and poverty.

Belief Systems

In African Traditional Religion, certain beliefs run through most African societies even though the practices may be different in societies across the continent. Some of their beliefs are summarized in the categories below.

God: In all traditional societies in Africa and in all languages, God is known everywhere as the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent supreme being, and various ascriptions and names are accorded to him such as Onyame (the Supreme Being in Akan), Mawuga (The Great God in Ewe) or Oludumare (Almighty, Supreme, in the Yoruba language of Nigeria).

He is considered above all beings and things and is considered the creator of all.

Divinities: The divinities stand next in relation to God in the hierarchy of powers. Akans recognize the existence of divinities or deities (*abosom*) as intermediaries between God and human beings and who also derive their powers essentially, from God. They are to serve the Supreme Being in the theocratic government of the world.

Spirits: Spirits, according to African beliefs, are omnipresent since they are everywhere at the same time i.e. there is no area of the earth, no object or creature, which has not a spirit of its own or which cannot be inhabited by a spirit. So there are spirits of trees, stones, streams, lakes, the sea, rivers, animals, mountains and hills, forests and bushes, watercourses, birds and other natural objects. Good spirits are thought to bring rain, protection, and birth. Examples of bad spirits are witches, "*sasabonsam*" (wicked spirits living in the forests), or dwarfs who are thought to be spirits who have assumed human bodies and live in forests.

Religious leaders: Priests of the traditional religions are those who oversee the gods, the prophets, and diviners who do the consultations between man and the gods. They understand the language of the spirits and therefore can foretell future events and happenings. They are the rainmakers who can bring rain in times of draught, the sorcerers, witches and wizards who can cause, pain, diseases and even death to perceived enemies or competitors.

Additionally, the kings, queens and chiefs serve as custodians of the tradition of the people. They usually occupy the 'stools' or 'skins' of the ancestors and therefore are highly respected since they are the traditional rulers and leaders of the people. They are seen as ceremonial figures and are responsible for celebrating the rituals/festivals which maintain the proper relationship between the people, the ancestors, and the universe. They interpret

the traditional laws, norms, and practices and receive complaints and petitions. They are seen as the symbols of the community health and prosperity and serve as representatives of the ancestors. They therefore provide a link between the living, the dead, and the spirits.

Wholistic Nature of African Traditional Religion

The African traditionalist is therefore influenced by several forces including God, the ancestors, the lesser gods, spirits and others like witches, sorcerers and magic. According to Opoku, "Religion therefore becomes the root of the African culture and it is the determining principle of the African life. … It is no exaggeration, therefore to say that in traditional Africa, religion is life and life, religion. Africans are engaged in religion in whatever they do-whether it be farming, fishing or hunting; or simply eating, drinking or traveling, Religion gives meaning and significance to their lives, both in this world and the next."(Opoku 1978, 1).

The African Traditional Religion is very wholistic since it impacts every area of the African traditional life, whether in the city or village, in the office or in the farm, in the building of a structure or in marriage. Prof. Mbiti talking about the African religious heritage says, "Religion is part of the cultural heritage.… It has dominated the thinking of African people to such an extent that it has shaped their cultures, their social life, their political organizations and economic activities." (Mbiti 1996, 10).

Consequences of Worldview

"Ideas have consequences" says Darrow Miller (Miller 2001, 34), and "as a man thinks, so is he" (Prov. 23: 7 KJV). These sayings reflect the truth that a person's (or people's) beliefs impact their attitudes, and their attitudes in turn, impact their behavior, which brings forth consequences (either positive or negative) in their lives. Worldview can be defined as "a set of assumptions held consciously or unconsciously in faith about the basic makeup of the world and how the world works." (Miller

2001, 38)

African culture and tradition cannot be understood and appreciated without looking at the worldview reflected in the religious beliefs of the people. The worldview of a people not only informs what they see, but also it determines the type of societies and nations they build. African Traditional Religion is associated with fatalism, rooted in animism and ancestor veneration. According to Mbiti, animism is the system of belief and practices based on the idea that objects and natural phenomena are in habited by spirits or souls. (Mbiti 1996, 18) Animists believe in multiple gods which are capricious and unpredictable. For the animist, drought, famine, poverty and hunger are caused by unseen irrational forces. For them the physical world is overshadowed by spiritual realities. To the animist, problems originate from outside, such as lack of rain for growing crops, and therefore to solve the problems of society, the gods, spirits and ancestors must be consulted and appeased.

In these societies, community problems can be traced from the outside rather than internally. For example, instead of a community attempting to find out the environmental practices and attitudes that cause diseases like typhoid, malaria, and cholera, they resort to consulting the gods and appeasing them to ameliorate their problems. They believe that when there is drought or famine the gods must be angry and that these gods are inattentive to the needs of man because of mans' disobedience to the norms and regulations of the gods. The same reasoning applies to infertility of women, famine, epidemics, disasters or any other unfortunate natural events.

In recommending solutions to the total development of African countries therefore, these worldview factors need to be considered. Otherwise, in spite of the best economic, political, and financial measures intended to help solve the numerous problems of Africa, not much will be gained. Instead of looking at the root causes of Africa problems, international donor agencies have typically looked only at the fruits of the problems.

Africa's problems include poverty, hunger, diseases, malnutrition, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, malaria, wars and others. If granting of money and offering various forms of assistance could solve these problems, Africa's problems should have been solved by now. But instead, Africa's problems are getting worse. There is the need therefore to look critically at the reason why so many resources have gone to Africa with relatively little impact on the economy or people of the continent. Policies and strategies and proposals that have worked so well in other parts of the world do not work in Africa. Why?

I think the problem lies in the belief systems of Africans since belief systems give birth to the culture of people and culture also determines the attitudes and behaviors of people which in turn determines the laws, education, economics, lifestyle, politics, environment, arts and family life of the people. The African story, or worldview, has been unable to transform our lives as individuals, communities, or nations. The traditional belief system is based on power, control, and fear of death rather than on love, service, and reverence of life.

Correlation Between Worldview and Development

There seems to be a close relationship between the traditional African belief systems and the total development of the African continent. Animistic traditional religion believes in millions of gods that are capricious and unpredictable. The gods can be bribed, they can change their mind, and they are very discriminatory and very selfish. As a result, the priests, believers and people of the gods take after the likeness of these gods in their behavior. Some of the elements of this animistic worldview and their potential impact on societal development are described here.

Extended Family System: The traditional extended family system forms the basis of social and cultural life in African traditional religion. The broad network of kinship ties creates uncountable dependents who consistently drain resources such that investment in a viable venture becomes an impossible task for an individual since there are always many mouths to be fed and problems needing attention.

Taboos: Traditional beliefs and practices with various taboos and prohibitions prevent production and development of efficient processes. Industrialization and agricultural progress are inhibited by taboos on the use of large tracts of land or forest considered to be sacred or inhabited by gods, dwarfs and other spiritual powers. Nutritional taboos undermine health, especially among women and children. Needed sources of protein are prohibited, such as fish that represent children of the gods and spirits. In some traditional societies pregnant women are not permitted to eat eggs and snails for the fear that their children would develop baldness, and experience copious excretion of saliva in infancy etc. These taboos result in problems of anemia, vitamin deficiencies, and malnutrition which are injurious to the health and growth of women and the developing child.

Witchcraft: African traditional religionists believe that diseases, barrenness, and sudden deaths are all the works of witchcraft. Such people are not interested in scientific solutions or medical attention since they believe their problems are caused by witches who must be appeased. Due to these beliefs, promoting personal hygiene is a challenge and environmental conditions are a disaster. Preventable diseases like malaria have become the number one killer in Africa, but environmental considerations are generally not pursued due to the belief in witchcraft and magic. Valuable time and money are wasted on measures to counteract the activities of spiritual forces. The fear of witchcraft is so widespread that many people consistently live in fear. This dominant fear seriously inhibits progress and development in communities. Any attempt by persons in these traditional societies to lift oneself above others in terms of good education, business, or even an attempt to build oneself a house will attract

the vindictiveness of some of these witches.

Political mediocrity: In the political sphere, traditional religions have traditional rulers who hold all power and authority, assisted by family heads and a council of elders. The chiefs, who ascend to their positions by inheritance, derive their power and authority from the gods, ancestors and the spirits. Even though in modern times a few highly trained people and intellectuals are ascending to chieftaincy, a majority of them are illiterates and do not have the know how to be effective leaders. Some are oppressive authoritarian despots and enemies of development.

Female Genital Mutilation: The practice of female genital mutilation or circumcision in northern Ghana and other parts of Africa is a grave health hazard to women. (Dolphyne 1991, 37) This traditional practice is geared towards controlling the sexual desires of women and discouraging infidelity in marriage. In this process the clitoris of the female is cut and in some cases, cow-dung or ashes are applied. There is the risk of death from excessive bleeding or infection from the unhygienic methods, and for some women life-long incontinency is the result. But many see female circumcision "as a necessary evil, particularly in those societies where it is a deeply rooted in tradition." (Dolphyne 1991, 37)

Fatalism: The African worldview is deeply rooted in fatalism that says "we are what we are because we were made so and can do nothing about it." This worldview produces a "dependency" mentality—always looking and waiting for solutions outside oneself and not taking responsibility to improve one's circumstance or situation. Such a worldview surely will often lead to underdevelopment because people are not motivated to be creative or innovative, and will not do much to help themselves unless somebody from the outside brings help.

Corruption: One of the causes of underde-velopment is corruption, and indeed Africa is plagued with so much corruption that nearly everybody is involved, including Christians. In some cases, it is actually seen as an abnormality when one disassociates oneself from accepting bribes. In Africa corruption often means getting a contract approved and then doing a job haphazardly because the very officers who are paid to inspect the work are also bribed. For me, this is deeply rooted in African worldview and beliefs since the African gods are thought to be capricious and can be "bribed" through the giving of various forms of sacrifices, offerings or appeasements. Through the giving of "drinks" or some form of sacrifice, these gods can be bribed to kill, spoil, or destroy life or property. Corruption is a problem deeply rooted in the capriciousness of the African gods with the direct result of underdevelopment.

Concept of Time: Another African worldview that leads to underdevelopment is the concept of time. This is also rooted in the animistic belief system in which the gods have no respect for time. When they are consulted much time is spent drumming, singing, dancing and incantations before the presence of the gods is recognized in the priests and prophets as they become possessed. This is also seen during festivals when people must drum for a long time before the gods will supposedly come. This worldview has been passed on to the people who do not regard and respect time. A time set at 8 o'clock in the morning might mean a person will show up at 9:00 or 10:00 or sometimes 12 o'clock. This attitude is surely related to underdevelopment because it means that people are paid for what they did not work for or their jobs just do not get done. Benedict Opoku-Mensah recognized this problem when writing in the Daily Graphic of Ghana on June 11. 2008, "the route to a nation's success is hard work, determination, sacrifices, punctuality, and love for one's country. Our poor attitude towards time is drawing

our development as a nation backward."

Technology: Animistic beliefs have a great impact on technological development. The African traditional worldview believes floods, earthquakes, drought, and other forms of natural disaster are the physical manifestation of irrational forces. Bad things happen when the gods are angry. With this in mind no attempt is made to find scientific and technological remedies. Instead, the solutions are perceived to lie in constant appeasement of the gods. These are the ingredients of underdevelopment; they are the yeast that helps to ferment poverty and the catalyst that speeds up the collapse of a nation.

Conclusions

In a nutshell, Africa's problems arise from the roots of belief systems which are foundational in understanding poverty and hunger in the midst of abundance and plenty in terms of natural resources. For most agencies, including governments and even mission agencies, the causes of African problems have to do with the visible "fruit problems" that include poverty, hunger, deprivations, malaria, HIV/AIDS, wars, and general underdevelopment. Many measures, strategies, and billions of dollars have been poured into this continent by the West, and yet instead of improving the development of African countries, some are even getting worse.

For most mission agencies and churches, the perceived solution lies with evangelism and discipling, which has been taking place for over two centuries, and yet, our problems persist. The majority of believers live in poverty and hunger and some are very corrupt, so that it appears as if Christ came only to save souls and not lives.

The solution, in my opinion, can only be found through a critical examination of the roots of belief systems and the lies of the culture that have resulted in enslavement, bondage, and poverty instead of wholeness, dignity, and transformation.

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The Uses of Computers and Internet by High School Students in Cameroon:
From Prescribed to Misappropriated Uses

Emmanuel Béché

Résumé

Ce travail étudie comment les élèves camerounais s'approprient les prescriptions fixées pour réguler leur utilisation de l'ordinateur et l'Internet à l'école. L'examen des données d'enquêtes menées dans sept écoles pilotes d'intégration pédagogique des TIC au Cameroun montre qu'il y a un écart entre les usages prescrits et les usages effectifs, d'où le détournement. Ils utilisent à cet effet une diversité de tactiques qui révèlent leurs capacités d'agir plutôt que celle de consommer, ce qui implique de les considérer comme des acteurs de l'éducation aux médias.

Introduction

Au Cameroun, l'introduction des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (TIC) dans l'école constitue une innovation majeure, non seulement au regard des acteurs et moyens mobilisés, mais aussi du point de vue des objectifs visés (Fonkoua 2006). Ceux-ci portent sur l'éducation pour tous, la modernisation de l'école et l'ouverture des acteurs scolaires sur le monde. Il s'agit aussi d'améliorer la qualité de l'éducation, à travers une politique axée sur la promotion des usages scolaires de l'ordinateur et l'Internet (*ibid.*). Ici, les usages scolaires des technologies sont ce que les élèves font avec elles dans le cadre de leurs apprentissages (Béché 2013). Les expériences pilotes d'intégration pédagogique des TIC, la mise sur pied des programmes d'informatique et d'une série « *informatique* » dans le secondaire s'inscrivent dans cette perspective (Tchombé 2006). Il en est de même pour ce qui regarde la création des Centres de Ressources Multimédias (CRM).

Au côté de l'informatique enseignée, cette création des CRM dans des écoles secondaires est ce qui matérialise le mieux l'intégration scolaire des TIC au Cameroun (Kolyang et Mvondo 2012). Outre les lycées pilotes, la quasi-totalité des lycées urbains sont dotés de ces CRM (PanAf[1] 2012). Équipés d'ordinateurs connectés à l'Internet et contenant des outils (Office, Encarta, Antidote) et ressources (cours, exercices, sujets d'examens) utiles pour la formation, ils constituent des espaces d'apprentissage. L'ordinateur, l'Internet et les données qu'ils supportent sont d'ailleurs vus comme pédagogiques. Leur utilisation se fait exclusivement dans les CRM (Tchameni Ngamo 2007). Et les élèves sont censés y effectuer les activités de recherche et de production documentaires, celles de communication et de collaboration, le partage des connaissances, les devoirs et autres travaux d'apprentissage. En dépit du faible ratio ordinateur/élèves qui est d'un ordinateur pour cent élèves (Djeumeni Tchamabé 2009), ils sont des centres dédiés au développement des usages scolaires des technologies, surtout de leurs « *bons* » usages. Il s'agit d'y promouvoir des usages scolairement et socialement acceptables, et qui impactent « *positivement* » les apprentissages des élèves. Comme le déclare le proviseur du lycée Général Leclerc

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cité sur le site du PanAf[2] , « *la tâche est d'amener les élèves à développer des usages qui favorisent leur formation et à faire bon usage des TIC* ». Le proviseur du lycée bilingue de Yaoundé dont les propos sont sur le même site du PanAf, affirme aussi que « *l'objectif est d'amener les élèves à adopter de bons comportements et attitudes à l'égard des technologies à l'école* ». Accompagnées de sanctions, des normes de bons usages de l'ordinateur et l'Internet sont d'ailleurs instituées dans ce sens, tendant dans une logique technocratique, à faire des élèves des sujets consommateurs pour ce qui regarde l'éducation à l'usage des TIC.

Or, selon l'approche de l'appropriation notamment celle axée sur le détournement d'usage (Jauréguiberry 2008 ; Paquelin 2009), quelle que soit la construction technocratique d'un contexte, « *l'individu ne cesse d'intervenir, de ruser, de s'accommoder, de transformer le réel, de changer les lois, d'inventer des règles, bref, de s'arranger avec la vie* » (Kiyindou 2011, 10), même si ces règles sont comme dans ce contexte, faites a priori pour promouvoir son bien-être. Comme l'écrit De Certeau (1980, 40), dans les jeux de rapports de forces, « *il y a un écart entre la représentation offerte par la production dominante et celle que s'approprie effectivement son utilisateur* ». Les usagers développent « *des déviances, des variantes, des détournements et des arpèges* » (Perriault 1989, 14) dans l'appropriation des offres venant d'en haut, d'où l'écart entre les usages prescrits et les usages effectifs (Paquelin 2009). Sur cette base, nous cernons comment les élèves camerounais s'approprient les prescriptions définies pour encadrer l'utilisation de l'ordinateur et l'Internet à l'école. Quelles tactiques imaginent-ils pour les contourner ? Comment cerner la figure des élèves usagers de ces technologies, notamment en ce qui regarde l'éducation à leur usage ? En examinant ces questions, nous visons les objectifs suivants : rendre compte des usages de ces technologies à l'école, étudier les pratiques de leur détournement, cerner la figure des élèves usagers des technologies et son implication pour l'éducation aux médias.

1. Considérations méthodologiques

Suivant ces objectifs, nous avons situé ce travail dans l'approche de l'appropriation prise sous l'angle du détournement d'usages (De Certeau 1980 ; Perriault 1989). L'action des usagers, leur rôle d'acteurs, le contexte social et l'écart entre le prescrit et le réel sont les points sur lesquels cet angle insiste (Jauréguiberry 2008), ce qui nous a invité à mettre l'accent plus sur ce que les élèves font avec les TIC à l'école, leurs tactiques et figures, que sur ce qui leur est prescrit.

Les 105 élèves avec qui nous nous sommes entretenus sur les CRM, leurs usages et leurs tactiques de détournement, sont issus des lycées pilotes d'intégration scolaire des TIC : lycée Joss (LJ) et collège des Lauréats (CL) de Douala, Longla comprehensive college de Bamenda (LCC), lycées bilingue (LB) et Général Leclerc (LGL) de Yaoundé, lycées techniques de Bafoussam (LTB) et de Garoua (LTG). Nous les avons choisis sur la base de leur fréquentation des CRM et de leur cycle d'études. Nos observations directes ont aussi été menées dans les CRM de ces lycées, ce qui a permis de scruter les usages en contexte.

2. Contexte prescriptif de l'usage de l'ordinateur et de l'Internet à l'école

Dans cette section, nous décrivons le cadre normatif de l'utilisation des TIC par les élèves à l'école, ce qui invitera à cerner les finalités des usages prescrits et à déduire la place que les décideurs et les élèves y occupent.

a. Présentation des prescriptions d'usages des technologies à l'école

Dans les écoles que nous avons observées, l'utilisation des technologies se fait aux CRM. L'accès et ce qui y est réalisé par les élèves sont régulés de façon à en faire des cadres propres à favoriser les apprentissages. C'est dans ce sens qu'on peut situer les propos suivants du proviseur du LB de Yaoundé : « *Parce que les TIC peuvent susciter des pratiques et messages contraires à la morale, il est important de veiller à ce que leurs usages soient effectivement ceux en rapport avec les apprentissages* »[3] , d'où l'institution d'un cadre normatif d'usages dans les CRM. Le but est d'amener les apprenants à construire des usages responsables et citoyens, ce qui s'inscrit dans la perspective de l'éducation aux mé-

dias (Becchetti-Bizot et Brunet 2007). Des règles de conduite face aux technologies y sont mises en œuvre. Constituant une « *grammaire d'usages* », elles distinguent les usages prescrits de ceux interdits. Les prescrits sont les recherches documentaires sur Internet ou avec Encarta, les courriels et le traitement de texte. Ce sont ici des usages scolaires de l'ordinateur et l'Internet, du fait qu'ils s'inscrivent dans le projet d'apprentissage. Une fois aux CRM, les élèves sont tenus de n'effectuer avec que ces usages. Il s'agit de mener des recherches dans le cadre des études, exposés ou rapports, d'envoyer et recevoir des messages, et de réaliser leurs productions scolaires.

Quant aux usages interdits, ce sont les visites des sites pornographiques, les chats, l'usage de Facebook, les jeux, les téléchargements, le visionnage des films et l'écoute des musiques. Leur interdiction est matérialisée par des affiches qui, collées aux murs, portent les messages suivants : « *les visites des sites pornographiques sont interdites au CRM* », « *tout élève qui visite les sites pornographiques sera sanctionné* », « *il est interdit de chater* », « *l'usage des chats détériore l'orthographe et la grammaire* », « *il est interdit de faire des téléchargements* », « *j'aime pas Facebook* », « *soyez responsables !* », « *l'ordinateur et l'Internet, c'est pour apprendre, pas pour jouer!* » Ces messages signifient qu'il ne s'est pas simplement agi de formuler des prescriptions, mais aussi de leur conférer une autorité, afin de mieux configurer les apprenants et normaliser leurs usages informatiques à l'école. Ainsi, leur non-respect conduit à des punitions : avertissements, exclusions immédiates ou définitives du CRM ou de l'établissement.

b. Finalités des prescriptions d'usages

Ici, les usages prescrits ne relèvent pas de la conception technique. Ils sont le fait des usagers qui mettent en œuvre leurs représentations de l'ordinateur et l'Internet en tant qu'outils pédagogiques. Ce sont les promoteurs des TIC en éducation et les dirigeants d'établissement. Les prescriptions qu'ils fixent pour encadrer les usages informatiques des élèves, répond à deux préoccupations.

La première est que l'ordinateur et l'Internet doivent être utilisés uniquement dans le cadre des apprentissages, ce qui justifierait, d'un côté l'interdiction de l'écoute des musiques, des jeux et du visionnage des films, et de l'autre côté la stimulation des recherches en ligne et dans Encarta, le traitement de texte et les courriels. La deuxième est que cette utilisation doit être acceptable du point de vue de l'éthique sociale et scolaire, d'où la prohibition des visites des sites pornographiques. Ces deux préoccupations qui régissent la vie aux CRM, constituent le fondement de l'éducation aux médias dans ce contexte. Celle-ci désigne ici un programme qui invite les élèves à maîtriser les TIC et à en développer des usages qui contribuent à leurs apprentissages, dans une logique d'acceptabilité socioscolaire. Les prescriptions d'usages sont en effet basées sur une démarche qui encadre les apprenants et leurs usages technologiques en fonction des considérations scolaires et sociales, conduisant à aligner les élèves sur les projets des décideurs scolaires.

c. Place des décideurs et des apprenants au sein du cadre prescriptif

Le cadre prescriptif d'usages met ici les prescripteurs au premier plan de l'éducation à l'usage des médias. Ils imposent aux élèves les attitudes à tenir face aux TIC à l'école. Ils choisissent pour eux les pratiques informatiques qu'ils estiment utiles à leurs apprentissages.

Ce cadre prescriptif fait en effet d'eux les maîtres de l'éducation à l'usage des médias à l'école : ils initient, régulent et jugent les facteurs qui y interviennent. Les usages prescrits épousent ainsi plus les représentations des prescripteurs (Flichy 2001) que les données sociocognitives des usagers finaux que sont les apprenants. Ce qui est visé dans cette démarche, c'est la création des conditions éthiques et morales censées permettre à l'ordinateur et l'Internet de produire des changements voulus, d'où la nécessité de discipliner les élèves et leurs usages. Il s'agit de faire en sorte que les pratiques effectuées soient moralement acceptables et contribuent à améliorer les apprentissages, d'où la

configuration des usages que les élèves font avec les TIC à l'école. Du coup, le statut qui leur est attribué dans ce contexte de prescriptions d'usages, est celui de consommateurs dociles et passifs. Réduits à « *avaler* » les usages prescrits, ils sont vus comme des usagers récepteurs auxquels il n'est pas reconnu de possibilités de réflexivité et de participation. Or, des études (De Certeau 1980 ; Paquelin 2009) montrent que les usagers finaux sont dotés des capacités grâce auxquelles ils arrivent à contourner le système.

3. Usages prescrits et détournés : le statut des élèves

Outre les usages prescrits, nos enquêtés déclarent aussi effectuer des usages qui sont détournés par rapport aux prescriptions fixées.

a. Au-delà du prescrit, les usages effectifs

En évaluant ce qui est effectivement fait avec l'ordinateur et l'Internet par les élèves au regard de sa conformité avec les prescriptions, nous constatons qu'il y a détournement, c'est-à-dire un écart entre le monde prescrit de l'objet et le monde réel décrit par son appropriation (Akrich 1998).

Rappelons que les usages prescrits dans ce contexte sont les recherches documentaires sur Internet et dans Encarta, le traitement de texte et les courriels. Or, au cours des entrevues avec les répondants, nous avons relevé les formes d'usages suivantes : recherches documentaires sur Internet, recherches avec Encarta, activités ludiques, écoute des musiques, visionnages des films, traitement de texte, courriels, chats, visite des sites pornographiques, téléchargements, dessins, usage de Facebook et recherches sur les stars. De même, au cours des observations dans les CRM, nous avons noté en dehors du dessin, les usages ci-dessus mentionnés. Ils sont de diverses formes : scolaires, bureautiques, communicationnelles, collaboratives et ludiques, ce qui traduit les fonctionnalités de l'ordinateur connecté et combine les objectifs scolaires de l'innovation et les intentions personnelles des élèves. Cela traduit surtout un décalage entre le prescrit et le réel, ce qui signifie que malgré les

normes fixées, les élèves mettent en œuvre des pratiques autres que ce que leur administration attend d'eux (Perriault 1989). Les usages qui sont ici détournés sont les visites des sites pornographiques, les chats, les jeux, les musiques, les films, l'usage de Facebook et les téléchargements.

b. Quand les élèves refusent d'être consommateurs des prescriptions

Dans un article qui porte sur le détournement d'une innovation technoscolaire au Cameroun (Béché 2010), nous montrons que les apprenants ne sont pas toujours des « *béni-oui-oui* ». Comme dans ce contexte, ils ne se réduisent pas non plus à des usagers passifs et buvards, qui absorberaient avec docilité la façon dont ils doivent utiliser les technologies à l'école (De Certeau 1980 ; Jauréguiberry 2008). Ils possèdent des capacités et tactiques qui leur permettent de s'approprier les prescriptions d'usages de ces outils.

Lors des entretiens avec les répondants, nous leur avons demandé si les élèves respectent toujours les prescriptions fixées aux CRM. Des 105 répondants, seuls 19, autrement dit 18%, ont déclaré que des élèves y obéissent. Les répondants dont le point de vue se présente ainsi, sont notamment issus des classes de 6ème et de 5ème. Par contre, plus de 81% d'enquêtés affirment que ces prescriptions ne sont pas suivies à la lettre, ce qui veut dire que des élèves imaginent des tactiques pour contourner le cadre normatif fixé dans le but de discipliner leurs pratiques informatiques.

Selon eux, une fois que les apprenants sont dans les CRM, « *ils visitent les sites autres que ce qu'on leur demande de visiter* » (R23, 5e, LGL) ; « *certains jouent, d'autres regardent des films, et beaucoup mettent des choses interdites* » (R84, 4e, LTG). Le répondant R52 (2nde, LCC) déclare aussi qu'« *ils font comme ils veulent ; ils ne font jamais ce qui semble bon* ». Pour la répondante R12 (3e, LB), « *quand les élèves sont dans la salle d'informatique, certains regardent les films obscènes, parce qu'ils se croient toujours supérieurs* ». « *Parfois, ils s'informent sur la vie des stars au lieu de faire des recherches ; ils passent aussi leur temps à écouter la musique* » (R76,

3e, LTB).

Ces propos montrent que les élèves usagers des technologies ne se satisfont pas de leur « *statut de consommateurs* » (Vitalis 1994, 8). Ils n'acceptent pas « *la place qui* [leur] *est assignée dans la communication et l'innovation* » (ibid.), ce qui permet de dire avec Laulan (1985) que face aux impératifs de rentabilité scolaire assignés à aux technologies, leurs usagers « *résistent* ». Ils effectuent avec l'ordinateur et l'Internet des usages qui traduisent leurs besoins, savoir-faire et valeurs, et par lesquels ils font un procès en légitimité d'usage (Jauréguiberry 2008). Dans ce contexte, les effets d'une prescription ne prennent vraiment sens qu'à travers ce qu'ils en font. Parce que la technologie est équivoque et soumise à l'interprétation des usagers (Orlikowski 1992), et que les prescriptions butent aux tactiques des acteurs (Baron et Bruillard 1996), les élèves développent des pratiques qui ne sont pas toujours pertinentes au regard des objectifs fixés par les décideurs scolaires.

c. La figure des apprenants usagers de l'ordinateur et de l'Internet

Quelle est la figure les apprenants usagers de l'ordinateur et l'Internet à l'école dans ce contexte? Tout d'abord, ils ne sont pas des usagers passifs, qui seraient totalement soumis au cadre normatif de l'usage de ces technologies. Car, loin de toujours respecter les prescriptions fixées, ils arrivent à effectuer des usages interdits, traduisant ainsi leurs expériences et intérêts. Ce sont des acteurs qui refusent d'assumer la place que les décideurs scolaires leur assignent dans l'éducation à l'utilisation des TIC à l'école. Cela se traduit par de multiples stratégies de détournement des usages normalisés et par la mise en œuvre insinuée des manières de faire, ce qui signifie qu'ils agissent de façon à ne pas paraître sous la posture des usagers essentiellement buvards (Jauréguiberry 2008). Plutôt que d'être des récepteurs de stratégies, ils s'y inscrivent au contraire en mettant en œuvre les compétences qu'ils ont d'utiliser les technologies à l'école à leurs propres façons.

Mais il ne s'agit pas de surévaluer le pouvoir des élèves sur les prescriptions qui encadrent leurs usages. Ils sont des acteurs certes, mais pas totalement dans la logique de De Certeau (1980), dans la mesure où selon lui, l'usager est doté d'un pouvoir et d'une autonomie par lesquels il agit sur la technique de manière à en annihiler l'action et l'effet. Ici, les élèves usagers de l'ordinateur et l'Internet à l'école sont des acteurs pris dans les structures qui limitent leurs capacités de détournement, et avec lesquels toutefois ils agissent. Ce sont ces contraintes structurelles et prescriptives qui font d'ailleurs que leurs manières de faire existent. C'est en tenant compte des contextes, c'est-à-dire de leurs contraintes et possibilités d'usage, qu'ils mettent en œuvre des manières de faire et s'inventent des façons particulières de cheminer au sein du cadre prescriptif. Ce sont des usagers qui cherchent à affirmer leur identité et leur autonomie au sein des contraintes socioscolaires dont ils exploitent les failles.

4. Mise en œuvre du détournement d'usage de l'ordinateur connecté à l'école

Pour détourner les usages prescrits, les élèves camerounais mettent en œuvre plusieurs tactiques.

a. Des stratégies pour détourner les prescriptions

Telles que présentées dans le tableau ci-dessous, les élèves imaginent plusieurs tactiques pour contourner les prescriptions d'usages. [*Voir le tableau 1*]

Selon les déclarations des répondants, les tactiques les plus utilisées sont l'attroupement autour d'un ordinateur et le choix du fond des CRM pour utiliser l'ordinateur et l'Internet. La première est exprimée dans près de 92% de discours et traduite dans des énoncés comme : « *les élèves s'attroupent autour d'un ordinateur. Comme ça, c'est difficile pour le surveillant d'avoir un regard sur ce qu'ils font* » (R60, 2nde, CL) ; « *certains s'organisent en troupe, en masse. Ils s'attroupent alors autour de l'écran qu'ils utilisent afin de cacher ce qu'ils font avec l'ordinateur* » (R58, 4e, LB). Quant à la seconde tactique, à savoir le choix des ordinateurs situés au fond des CRM, elle apparaît dans 80% des réponses. Elle consiste à « *faire tout* » pour occuper les ordinateurs ainsi situés.

Comme ils le disent, leur but est de « *se trouver hors du champ de vision des surveillants* » (R2, 1e, LGL), et de « *faire ce qu'ils veulent avec l'ordinateur et l'Internet sans qu'on ne puisse les voir par derrière* » (R22, 5e, LTG).

Outre ces tactiques, d'autres comme l'ouverture simultanée de plusieurs fenêtres sur l'écran existent aussi. Traduite dans 65% d'entretiens, celle-ci est énoncée dans des propos de type : « *Les gars ouvrent au même moment 4, 5 voire 6 fenêtres. Quand ils voient que le surveillant arrive, ils zappent et font semblant de faire des recherches. Mais dès que le surveillant tourne le dos… Allez ! Ils reviennent sur ce qu'ils faisaient* » (R88, 1e, LTB). Des tactiques consistent aussi à utiliser les écouteurs pour écouter la musique, à diminuer l'éclairage de l'écran d'ordinateur ou à se rendre aux cybercafés afin de contourner les contraintes constatées aux CRM. Celles-ci se trouvent respectivement traduites dans 41%, 47% et 38% de discours. Lorsqu'ils sont pris la main dans le sac, ils « *négocient avec le surveillant* » (R50, 1e, LB), en lui donnant de l'argent afin de ne pas être dénoncés, punis ou traduits au conseil de discipline. Cela apparaît dans de 51% de réponses, dans des propos comme ceux du répondant R30 (1e, LB) : « *les apprenants concernés négocient avec les responsables du CRM. Ils le corrompent en lui donnant de l'argent* ». Certains élèves affirment aussi exploiter cette stratégie de façon proactive, afin d'effectuer librement leurs manières de faire. Dans ce cas et comme ils le disent, « *le surveillant fait semblant de ne pas surveiller les élèves avec qui il a passé le marché* » (R68, Tle, LJ).

Au cours de nos observations, nous avons aussi pu identifier les tactiques ainsi présentées. Nous avons ainsi observé en moyenne par séance de deux heures de temps, près de 65 fois des attroupements autour des postes d'ordinateur. Ce sont des groupes de plus de dix élèves. Plus de 62 fois avons-nous aussi remarqué des élèves qui se précipitent vers des ordinateurs situés au fond des CRM, avec des propos de type : « *réserve-nous l'ordi au fond* ». Nous avons également relevé en moyenne 47 ordinateurs avec plusieurs fenêtres ouvertes, 37 dont l'éclairage avait été diminué et 43 avec utilisation des écou-

teurs. Bien qu'il ait été difficile de savoir exactement les tâches effectuées dans ces conditions, cela confirme néanmoins les propos des répondants sur la mise en œuvre des tactiques de détournements d'usages aux CRM. Nous avons enfin noté des déclarations comme : « *c'est "better"* [mieux] *dans un cyber* », « *ici, on "ndem"* [trime], *on va chez moi à la "piol"* [maison] ». Se rendre dans d'autres contextes d'usage en l'occurrence les domiciles et les cybercafés, est aussi pour eux une autre façon de contourner les prescriptions aux CRM.

b. Les facteurs de détournement

Pour construire leurs tactiques de détournement, les élèves exploitent des facteurs liés au contexte, à la technologie, à la société et à eux-mêmes. L'un des éléments contextuels exploités, est le ratio ordinateur/apprenants très bas, ce qui contraint à utiliser l'ordinateur et l'Internet en groupe et favorise des attroupements. Souvent organisées par affinité, ces troupes permettent de dissimuler les usages effectués. Car, loin d'être spontanée, la formation de ces groupes est basée sur des liens tels que l'amitié, le voisinage ou la relation de groupe d'étude. Dans ces groupes, pendant que les uns utilisent l'ordinateur, d'autres « *surveillent les surveillants* », afin de « *ne pas être surpris* ». Les usagers exploitent aussi les ordinateurs au fond des CRM : c'est également un facteur qui relève du contexte. De plus, l'insuffisance des surveillants (deux) dans les CRM et l'absence de logiciels de contrôle et de filtre servent leur intérêt, car cela ne permet pas d'exercer un regard systématique sur le contexte d'usage.

Les élèves détournent les usages prescrits en exploitant aussi les possibilités liées à l'offre technologique. Grâce à cela, ils peuvent ouvrir simultanément plusieurs fenêtres et diminuer l'éclairage de l'écran pour justement dissimuler ce qui se fait avec les technologies. De même, ils exploitent la possibilité d'utiliser des écouteurs pour pouvoir suivre des musiques et films. Et en fonction des situations, ils corrompent les surveillants. Enfin, ils se considèrent malins, curieux, compétents et difficiles à contrôler, ce qui pour eux, les rend capables de contourner les prescriptions censés réguler l'usage de l'ordinateur et l'Internet aux CRM.

Conclusion

Dans ce travail, nous avons étudié comment les élèves camerounais se positionnent par rapport aux usages prescrits (recherches, productions documentaires et communication) de l'ordinateur et l'Internet à l'école. Nous avons alors vu que loin de s'y conformer, les élèves mettent en œuvre des tactiques pour les contourner et effectuer des usages qui, traduisant leurs propres intérêts, sont autres choses que ce qu'on leur demande : jeux, musiques, chats, visites des sites pornographiques, Facebook et téléchargements. Plutôt que d'accepter le statut de consommateurs des prescriptions, ils se posent en acteurs, faisant ainsi valoir leurs compétences, attentes et intérêts.

L'enseignement tiré au plan de l'éducation à l'utilisation des TIC a trait à la prise en compte des élèves dans ce processus. Comme dans l'approche de l'appropriation (Chambat 1994 ; Millerand 1999), il est important de les impliquer en tant qu'acteurs, considérer leurs paroles (Cottier et Choquet 2005), et faire de leurs usages et représentations l'un des fondements de l'éducation aux médias.

Notes

1. Agenda Panafricain d'Intégration pédagogique des TIC

2. http://observatoiretic.org/institutions/show/32

3. http://observatoiretic.org/institutions/show/30

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Tableau 1.

Des stratégies pour contourner les prescriptions

Catégories thématiques des tactiques	Descriptions des tactiques	Occurrences dans les discours (n= 64)	Occurrences moyennes dans les observations (t= 2h)
Attroupement autour d'un ordinateur	On s'attroupe autour de l'écran pour cacher ce qu'on fait ; on vient nombreux utiliser un ordinateur.	97	65 fois
Choix du fond de la salle	Les élèves choisissent les endroits du fond ; certains se pressent pour occuper les postes situés au fond de la salle, afin de se cacher.	85	62 fois
Ouverture simultanée de plusieurs fenêtres	On ouvre plusieurs fenêtres à la fois pour facilement zapper ; pour cacher ce qu'on fait, on travaille dans plusieurs fenêtres en même temps.	68	47 fois
Négociations avec le chef du CRM	De fois, on corrompt le responsable de la salle d'informatique…; On lui donne quelque chose.	53	22 fois
Diminution de l'éclairage de l'écran	D'autres diminuent l'éclairage de l'écran, pour qu'on ne voie pas très bien ce qu'ils font.	49	37 fois
Usage des écouteurs	J'utilise des écouteurs pour les musiques.	43	43 fois
Aller dans un cybercafé	c'est "better" [mieux] dans un cyber ; gars, on "go" [va] au cyber.	40	36 fois

Effective Partnership Between the West and the African Church

Jim Harries

Abstract

This article challenges intercultural partnerships, especially those instituted by Christians and churches across the cultural divide between Africa and the West, that can become a means of exploitation, of limiting people's freedom, and of introducing and encouraging corruption. The author observes a massive influence on African communities by the West. Material and financial dependency discourages speaking out against a system that orients communities towards the pleasing of foreigners even when what the latter bring is neither understood or in some ways desired. Definitions of 'success' have in parts of Africa become integrally linked to the pleasing of donors. Three case-studies illustrate outcomes of foreign donor-based partnerships. This article advocates for the institution of some partnerships, focusing especially on Western and African churches, that are rooted other than in the superior languages and resources of the West.

Introduction

Partnerships have so profoundly affected the Christian scene across vast tracks of Africa that it would be hard to imagine how things would have been in their absence. Those partnerships between Western and African Christians and churches that form the focus for this article demonstrate powerful ways in which God is continuing to work in the hearts of his people. They have undoubtedly deeply influenced and inspired thousands if not many millions of people on all sides of the Atlantic Ocean. They represent a period in the history of the world that stands like a beacon of light: There has probably never been another time when three great continents (Europe, Africa and North America) have been able to meet and engage with each other not only very amicably, but also compassionately.

My consideration here is of partnerships in intercultural context. The size of the inter-cultural gap between one church and another, or one person and another, of course varies. That is to say – no two people who enter into a partnership agreement or any other agreement, ever have exactly the same 'culture'. The amount of difference between their cultures presumably varies. Our focus is on partnerships that cross a wide divide, which has resulted from the peoples concerned having had little or no relationship for centuries,

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or longer. An example of such is the cultural gap between many African people and those of European origin.

My perspective in writing this article is that of a northerner, who was born and raised in the North of the United Kingdom, but who has since the age of 1988 lived in the South. I have in those years entered into numerous 'partnerships', in the broad sense of this term. (If I define partnerships as; 'interpersonal or inter-group relationships that involve some mutual obligation'.) I have also been closely involved in a number of more formal partnerships between the North and the South. Some of my understanding of partnerships arises from my experience of living closely with African communities with whom people other than me in the West have entered into partnership. I have observed partnerships entered into by secular organisations as well as by Christian ones.

Some of the content of this article is critical in nature. I ask my reader to bear with me. I believe the Christian command that needs to underlie partnership is the command to love one another. Love is not easy. Power inequalities that quickly and easily arise in partnership arrangements can cause tensions. These come under particular scrutiny below. My concerns about inter-cultural partnerships in general and inter-church partnerships more specifically tend to overlap. Thus the categories that form the subheadings below demonstrate my effort at making a clear articulation of the issues concerned.

My own practice of relating closely with African people around me in the rural community of which I am a member prompts many of the thoughts that I want to share in this article. I have lived since 1993 in one community in western Kenya (before which time I had already spent 3 years living in rural Zambia). I have looked after local orphan children in my home for over 15 years.

Since coming to Kenya from Zambia in 1993 I have endeavoured to stay close to the people in my home community through functioning as far as possible in local languages, and refusing to use outside funds to subsidise key activities, relationships and 'projects' in which I am engaged.

I appreciate that one of the difficulties of the case I am making, is that what I say below is a subjective interpretation of events. It is an interpretation that I have learned to make as a result of being vulnerable as a Westerner. That is in a context in which Westerners are rarely vulnerable (I am defining "vulnerability" in this context, as using their languages and resources in key ministry). The problems that arise from partnership contexts that I attempt to unveil in this article has me advocate not so much that practice in partnership be radically changed, but rather that some Westerners 'change sides'. That is; I invite some westerners to attempt to see how partnership works through the eyes of poor 'traditional peoples'. Once they have done this (which in my estimate takes 10 years plus of vulnerable exposure) then they should fault me in my critique. In the meantime the reason I am a lonely prophet may be because truths I am telling are hard for others to see.

Fellow Westerners

While living closely with African people, I have cause to frequently reflect on the activities of 'my own' people. That is, I find that my 'African' home in western Kenya is massively and constantly impacted by the actions of westerners. The level of this impact seems to rise as the years go by. It does not need special effort to engage one's thoughts with 'the West'; in much of Africa the West is 'in your face'. Activities being engaged by Westerners are frequently on the agenda. Sometimes this is prompted by my presence as a westerner. Very often it is in view anyway on the agenda. When one looks around from the perspective of many Af-

rican people, much appears to originate from the West: concrete, reading glasses, books, short skirts, English, formal education, coca cola, second-hand clothes, shoes, mobile phones, people's 'modern' attitudes, women's fashions, preferred foods, knowledge of time and appreciation of its importance, to mention just a few things.

As people consider their own lives, they evaluate the impact of others, including the West, on them. That evaluation is at times relatively neutral, at times complementary, and at times critical. Sometimes I am sure that discussions pertaining to the impact of the West on them are engaged in my absence. Those I am aware of include me or are engaged within my earshot. They cause me to consider and to reflect. My own reflections will be different from those of my African colleagues, in so far as I have an understanding, arising from my having spent my first twenty four years immersed in the West (I lived in the UK), that many of my African colleagues do not share. Questions are raised in my head that my African colleagues may not perceive, or that they perceive differently. Having this foundation enables me to communicate with and relate to the West in a relatively unique way. Being in this unique position raises questions, such as of my moral obligations in relation to what I am coming to understand. My conscience obliges me to speak up and underlies my motivation for this writing. My conscience requires me, prayerfully and carefully, to write things, even if I know that sometimes my Western readership may prefer not to read them.

The activities of other westerners constantly impact what I do and how local people choose to relate to me in Africa. The nature of this impact saddens me; it saddens me to find that my own people's great and genuine efforts can be receiving anything but the most hearty appreciation on this continent. To have begun many years ago to

perceive a lack of appreciation for what my people (Westerners) are conscientiously doing for people in Africa, saddens me. As the years have passed, this small critique has grown in my own mind. It has been unsettling to find myself agreeing with African people. To their critique I can add my own; arising from my privileged access to the West mentioned above.

A prophet is required to be attentive to the words of almighty God. What goes on around us as people is understood through interpretation. Interpretation is subjective and subject to partiality and whim. Prophets must have their ears tuned to God's guidance. Prophets can be unpopular; that seems to be part of their role. True prophets face opposition through their consistent telling of truth and not through changing the truth to suit powerful people. Amongst the 'powerful' involved in the setting up and implementing of intercultural partnership in Africa are Westerners. It is tempting not to speak out against people with the money. Unfortunately kowtowing to the powerful can leave important truths concealed.

As someone who attempts to work with African people (mostly in Western Kenya) without dominating or setting the terms of my relationships using foreign money, I can find myself implicitly under siege through practices of other westerners. Not surprisingly, people compare. Not surprisingly, it is easy to 'value' a partner according to their financial/material generosity. A decade ago, tears marked the resignation of a successful fundraiser from a key executive position in Western Kenya. His success could be gauged by the number of new buildings he had erected using foreign funds. By implication, a westerner who works with people on the ground but does not build buildings is not a 'success'. The higher the bar is raised by those who are backed by donors, the greater the efforts other Westerners need to make to achieve acclaim, or

sometimes even acceptance, by Africans for their efforts. In this way the donor activities of other Westerners in partnership with Africans can make life more difficult for Westerners who do not want to be known as donors.

The above is aggravated by the way in which cultural learning and fundraising activity tend to be mutually antagonistic. I will say more about this below. One factor here is that time taken raising funds from the West, then ensuring that the funds are properly accounted for, results in less time being available for language learning and other activities that help towards achieving cultural familiarity. Another factor is that those who raise funds tend to end up associating with people of the upper classes who are more distant from their ancient traditions (the upper classes in Africa tend to use English in conversation with family and friends, a practice that conceals aspects of their people's traditions) A widespread and common outcome of fundraising on the part of certain westerners on behalf of their partners in Africa is to make it more and more difficult for them, and then by extension for other westerners, to draw close to and identify closely with indigenous people. This contributes to the growing degree to which the ignorance of outsiders is more highly valued than their understanding about the indigenous context: People who are firmly rooted in the West are often the most adept at raising funds. Cultural familiarity with Africa can detract from the above role.

A prominent donor presence makes it more difficult for a non-donor to get an audience in an African community. This applies whether or not the non-donor is African-born. That is; by comparison with outsiders who are able to implement their ideas with bountiful funding, it becomes harder and harder for innovative Africans to get an audience with their own people. Local people's informed views being overridden by those of rela-

tively ignorant outsiders, is one of the pernicious impacts of the recent rise in partnerships from the West to Africa. An outcome related to the above is that the innovativeness of Africans that comes to be the most rewarded is their ability at pleasing donors, and not their ability at interacting with their own people. In other words in many African communities today, 'success' for young entrepreneurs, innovators, and potential leaders entails first and foremost the ability to draw and hold on to western donors. The latter remains the most important key for their ongoing 'successes'.

As the activities of Christians in the West in engaging local African churches and Christians in partnership makes it more difficult for a missionary on the ground to acquire an effective voice in their own local African community, the same difficulty is met by Africans. The 'partners' who are pulling the strings are inaccessible. They do not speak the local language, they do not comprehend local issues and contexts, and they are not available for informal exchanges of ideas. Local managers that they appoint are directed by people in far flung countries who must be spared certain kinds of feedback because they are unfamiliar with local contexts. The last thing a 'local manager' can afford to have happen, is to have another local set up direct communication with his donor independently of him.

My reader may be thinking that it is important that donors who sit in far-flung countries work through local managers. Widely accepted wisdom is that funds received by locals are empowering them by enabling them to better do what they were anyway doing. Instead of going to talk with people at the source end of funds; why not talk with those implementing projects at the local level? The problem is – that local implementers of projects are not very 'free'. Their key relationship(s) being with distant and relatively ignorant donors

(as mentioned above), makes them wary of people with local knowledge who in any way appear to threaten those relationships. Although themselves often very familiar with local conditions, local managers are engaging in a balancing act: They are trying to ensure a match between their donors' relatively uninformed view of what a particular project should be doing, and the reality on the ground that is visible to them. They are aware of local conditions but do not have the freedom to truly respond to them. The primary nature of the need to satisfy a donor means that constraints put by a donor on the implementation of a project easily results in limited local 'fit'. The donor and their people must often be kept in the dark. Westerners being easily and visibly identifiable as amongst the donors' people make it especially hard for them to be on the 'inside' of projects.

The involvement of 'invisible' outside donors can easily undercut the activities of westerners who, in the interests of living closely to local people and so as not to create dependency, choose not to root their activities in outside funds. The donor who knows the least has the greatest impact. Local people are forced to engage in concealment and lies in order to keep the donor happy. Ontologically it is almost as if – donors are little-understood powerful spirits that need to be given appeasing feedback even if provision of that feedback requires irrational or contrary action. The position taken by local people in respect to donors and their activities is of course that of the prosperity gospel; the presence of Christian donors means that the Gospel of Jesus is valued for the prosperity that it brings.

Case Studies

1. Dave is an enthusiastic born-again Christian living in an African community. His hard work on the family's farm has enabled him to make free time in which he would like to teach others the truths of Scripture. Dave puts much effort into reading Bible. He is attentive to the preaching and teaching of older Christians in his community. He truly loves God's word, and is popular amongst church leaders and laity of a variety of Christian denominations. Dave decides to call a meeting of interested people in the hope that he can begin a theological education programme. People respond to him as follows:

> *Person 1*. "You cannot teach unless you have formal qualifications."

> *Person 2*. "I will not join a theological education programme unless it is accredited, and allows me to transfer credit to an institution that is recognised by the government."

> *Person 3*. "Our troubles are caused by spirits, and I don't see how theological teaching can help us to overcome them."

> *Person 4*. "We cannot work with you through fear that if our overseas partners do not approve of what you are doing that could result in a cut in our supply of funds."

> *Person 5*. "You must find a donor before beginning. I cannot afford to get involved in a programme that has not yet identified its donors. It is possible to acquire up to $100,000 for a theological education programme, so why begin one without first having an agreement with a donor?"

Dave's initiative completely fails to take off. Dave has no choice but to further his aspirations in Bible teaching by joining a western-run theological college. To do that he first has to raise funds for English classes. He has to pay handsomely for his course. The education he will receive will be of limited relevance to the context in which he lives. His fellow students will encourage Dave to forget about going back into a life of 'poverty' in his village. They will try to persuade him to use his qualification to get a job with an international NGO. Dave himself can easily get discouraged about going back to

engage in his home community. Even should he still be intent to endeavour to fulfil his original vision, he knows that the most important thing to enable fulfilling of the vision – is to impress and please a Western partner.

2. Enthusiastic Western donors want to partner with a national in the setting up of church clinics. Stephen, an African, makes an international trip, so meets up with these donors. The donors visit Stephen's church. They are impressed by the enormous respect that church members have for Stephen. The whole church is enthusiastic about the building of the clinic which they say is desperately needed and will be an enormous help. The donor agrees to help the church to build and equip the clinic. The donors want to see locals build the foundations and walls using local resources before they release their money. The donors take this position to ensure local ownership of the project.

The problem now faced by the local church is that the large amount of money needed to complete the clinic project will only be made available once the foundations and walls of the clinic building have been erected. Various frantic efforts are engaged in. Church leaders approach local money lenders with a copy of the letter from the donor. A colleague is found who has received an amount of money intended for another project that has been delayed through the death of the local manager. He makes that money available to the church for the purpose of building the foundations and walls of the clinic, on condition that he is repaid with interest as soon as they receive the funds from their donor. The need to pay back the money to cover the building of the walls and foundation unfortunately means that the funds from the donor are no longer adequate for completion of the clinic. Relations with the donor, who accuses the Africans of misappropriating funds, go sour.

Half way through the building process, the church headquarters becomes aware of the activities of this branch of their church. Local church leaders are reminded of church by-laws, which state that foreign currency received by a local church must be processed by the national church headquarters. The local church had ignored those by-laws. The project having become a point of great contention, the leader of the denomination decides to transfer Stephen, the pastor of the church that was building the clinic, fearing that if he did not do so many other churches following his example would result in an unacceptable loss in levels of accountability for funds. Church members' refusal to accept the transfer of their beloved leader Stephen results in a denominational split. Intermittent shedding of blood in the course of the ensuing conflict hitting the national media headlines damages the reputation of the church nationally.

3. African pastor Ian was very appreciative of the help that Peter from Germany was giving him. Peter didn't mind roughing it. He was courageous enough to live in an African community. A few times he found himself sleeping on a mud floor with merely a grass mat instead of a mattress. Ian did not discourage Peter from talking to other people in the community.

Paul was jealous of Ian's ability at befriending foreigners, especially because of the help they extended to Ian and his family and close friends. Paul had a good education. He enjoyed talking with Peter. In fact, he seemed to get Peter's jokes even when others didn't. The two would laugh together. Paul's ability at laughing together with Peter built a deeper collegiality than was normally found between Westerners and Africans. As Paul and Peter spent more time together, Peter learned more of Paul's view of the African context. Paul more clearly articulated and explained what was happening than Ian had ever done. Peter began to raise funds for Paul's projects.

One day Ian found his friend Peter behaving coldly towards him. 'What was wrong', he asked himself? 'Confidants told him that Paul

was now a better friend to Peter than was Ian. Peter's interest in Paul increased. Paul received an increasing proportion of the donor funds that Peter managed to raise. Ian was no longer so important to him.

'Paul has stolen my Western friend Peter! What should I do about it' Ian one day asked his friend Brian. 'You don't know how to look after a white man' responded Brian. 'If you leave him free to interact with other people, someone who has a sweeter tongue than you will end up wooing him' he said. 'It is important to protect your white man. You can do that by telling him that it is too dangerous to live in the village. He has little choice but to believe you. The best thing to do is to put up your white visitor in a hotel in town. Don't let other people know where he is. You and your family and a few trusted friends look after him. Be careful to warn him that your community is full of con-men. When you go with him to the church, arrive late so that you find the congregation already sat down. Once he has preached, take him away before people have a chance to talk to him. That way you won't loose him.' 'Oh, I see', responded Ian.

Response

Much of what I have described above is probably not all that startling or new. The kinds of dynamics that I have articulated have been troubling human communities for decades. Life has to go on despite concerns such as the above. Resources are, after all, needed by everyone. Even if their delivery is messy, some will argue, we have to continue to provide them anyway.

My concern in writing this article focuses on resource provision as a part of mission. Given the problems above, my suggestion is not that resource provision by the better off for the poor cease. There is a strong case to be made for its continuation; despite the problems that such continuation brings. The appeal that I would like to make – is for there

also to be some mission including some partnership in mission between Western and African Christians that is not rooted in resource provision. For many of the reasons given above, and others in addition, I consider this to be essential.

The question that then arises is – how can partnerships that do not include resource provision be engaged? I think it must be conceded that this could make the initiation of partnerships more difficult. There is a risk that Christians and churches in Africa may be much less enthusiastic about entering into partnerships with Western people in the absence of material or financial incentives. While in some ways it makes the continuation of partnerships more difficult, I do believe in the long term that it will result in much healthier partnerships that can survive for much longer and make a more positive contribution to the Kingdom of God.

How are inter-cultural partnerships between churches that do not include a material/financial component be set up and followed through? These days, I suggest, wisdom being sought in endless discussions and massive efforts on the part of the church in the West to set up partnerships, almost all presupposes that part of the partnership will include a net flow of resources from the capitalist West to the poor world. Much of current wisdom and teaching on how to do partnerships may therefore not be relevant to the kinds of partnerships that one could enter in to that do not include the creation of resource dependency. The kind of wisdom we will need to look for in non-dependency creating partnership relationship is much akin to biblical practice. Partnerships entered into in biblical times did not include making partners materially dependent.

The kind of partnership that I want to consider here is that of the 'loan' of Christian workers from one part of the world, or from one culture, to

another. Whether it is from Africa to Europe or from America to Africa – I suggest that it is the responsibility of the sending church to take care of the immediate physical needs of their missionary. These material needs could be met in a whole variety of ways. If we take, as is our main study here, a missionary from the West to Africa, those needs could be supplied by employment undertaken by the person concerned alongside their ministry engagement. Alternatively, it could be supplied in the way of funds directly from the sending church(es). Meanwhile their missionary agrees not to use foreign-sourced funds to boost his or her ministry.

Before going on, I need to concede that the contents of the above paragraph do not necessarily describe the ideal. The 'ideal' arrangement is often, in my view, for a missionary who is sent to become dependent on the provision of the community to whom they are sent. Whether it be a missionary from Africa to Europe, or from the West to Africa, being kept economically by one's host people while doing ministry would seem to be the ideal way to build close relationships with them. This is a biblical model (1 Timothy 5:18), although Paul seemed to make an exception with the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:5-15). (Presumably he made the latter exception because he wanted to be able to speak out freely against the problems that he met in the Corinthian church, which he felt he could not do if he was dependent on them for his funding.)

An additional difficulty that arises with Westerners' taking commercial employment in Africa is the corruption that they are likely to face. This alone can prove very difficult in almost any career path that someone might pursue. It usually, to my understanding, would make it very difficult for a budding Western missionary (or any other Westerner) to work in Africa for anything but an internationally managed company.

Because of the above difficulties, there are good reasons for suggesting that Western missionaries in Africa be supported from outside of the continent. If this happens, it be understood that resources they receive should be confined to their personal upkeep and that of their family, rather than for subsidy of whatever ministry (including if it is a development project) in which they are engaged. (Unless such a missionary invest in a project that is relatively disconnected from their main ministry, i.e. their key relationships with African people. This can be advisable in order not to give the impression that the missionary (or development worker) is unconcerned for the physical wellbeing of others. Such giving should be done carefully, so that it not be used to 'buy' unfair advantage in ministry.) The aim behind doing this is not to privilege the foreign worker in their interaction with local people on the side of access to resources. That is, to enable foreign missionaries to use their God-given gifts in a way that local people can imitate, on a level playing field.

It should be clear that many of the issues that arise when partnerships involve resource transfer are avoided by the approach advocated here. Acute problems between Westerners and African or other majority world nationals frequently revolve around resource use, and economic imbalance. These would be eradicated. Other issues would be 'minimised'. Accountability structures checking on the work being done still need to be in place, but will not be as desperately needed as they tend to be these days. Mutual-learning would be aided, as reluctance to speak out would be curtailed given the absence of fear about the cutting of funds should the wrong thing be said; people will be more free to speak honestly. This approach, of not taking advantage of superior resources in ministry in the majority world (our focus has been on Africa) is known as vulnerable mission. [subscript and in italics] The other component of vulnerable mission is that foreign workers engage using indigenous languages; more

discussion on the latter falls outside of the scope of this article.

Conclusion

Endeavours at setting up partnerships with African churches and communities that are being reproduced around the Western world are a wonderful demonstration of compassion for others. Unfortunately even such compassion has mixed motives. Good intentions do not guarantee helpful outcomes. This author, having discovered problems that beset inter-cultural partnerships on the African mission-field, is endeavouring to advocate strategies and approaches that could overcome such.

As a result of observing a great deal that is foreign in their host cultures, it can be difficult for Westerners in Africa to notice the depth and breadth of penetration of Western ways of life, especially in the material culture all around them. Many African people in my experience greatly appreciate what they have acquired from the West, at the same time as regretting being so strongly dominated by foreigners. The existence of gross levels of dependency, economic and otherwise, obliges African people to play the game of 'compliance' while looking for outlets through which they can express more of what is in their hearts. The clash between these two can bring negative outcomes. It would be fantastic, if only some Western-African partnerships could be empowering what is indigenous without at the same time imposing foreign cultural ideologies.

While certainly we are not going to be able to evade all messy relationships, this article proposes that there is a way of designing partnerships that avoids a lot of them. That is – partnerships that block resource dependencies by not including transfers of resources from the start, and in which the complex task of engaging inter-cultural translation are shared between partners instead of being loaded only in one direction. (In my experience there is these days a growing reliance in mission from the West to Africa on African people to do the required translation.) These kinds of partnerships that would operate on the basis of what we call 'vulnerable mission' refuse point blank to incorporate resource transfers, and operate in the language of the people being reached. They are in effect partnerships in which one church or Christian community offers a human resource to another. An African church wanting to share in ministry in the West will prepare someone to minister in a Western language but will not load this person with gifts or financial rewards with which to boost his ministry; the same for a Western church wanting to offer someone to share in ministry in Africa. This is in many ways a Biblical style of ministry.

My major concern, writing as I am in English, is with Western churches' efforts at developing partnerships with Africans. The most effective, sustainable, and empowering partnerships in the interests of African people, are those in which the Western partner commits to engaging in ministry using African language(s). This, plus refusing to purchase power in ministry using 'own' resources, will force those engaging in such a Western mission effort to consider very carefully what they are doing and how. Working in partnership in this way, will challenge the Westerner involved to think and work in the light of African contexts that the use of European languages and domination that was possible through privileged access to resources used to occlude from view. This way of operating will, to be honest, open up a new world of missionary challenges, and opportunities – a 'new world', of course, which reflects ways in which ministry was done in the past, including in Biblical times.

Wiconi International: A Native North American Contextual Movement in Christ

Namarr Newson

Introduction

This is research about a phenomenal form of ministry and theology practiced by renowned First Nations ministers of North America within an organization. This research reflects personal observation, volunteer involvement, personal conversations with these leaders, and academic study utilized to establish good perspective. This perspective involves contextualization necessary to share the Gospel with North American Indians within their own cultural context and negate an enduring custom of ridding them from their cultural values to become Christians. This customary practice of Christian mission towards these people discouraged them to not follow Christ or to follow Christ at the expense of disregarding their own tribal culture.

As a result of this problem for multiple generations, it is often believed that the First Nations are unlikely to accept the Gospel as ultimate truth. If they do accept it, then the propaganda is that Indian cultural values must not be practiced anymore or it shouldn't be as important as was to the person(s) before. The aim of this research study is to reveal that there are more First Nations followers of Christ than many others be-

lieve, and that there are tribal leaders sharing the Gospel contextually and academically. This is an issue about theological development in the North American region. It is a robust phenomenon that is commonly opposed by other ministers. This study will also serve as an illustration that not only is this contextual movement through this particular organization known as Wiconi International a testimony of the teaching of Jesus, but why it is very necessary to be practiced by the First Nations that were historically victimized from ethnocide enforced by practitioners of Western tradition that misrepresented or misunderstood the teachings of Christ Jesus.

Overview of the Organization from a Business Perspective

Wiconi International is a 501c3, approved to provide tax deductible receipts to those who donate to the organization. Wiconi is supported through the donations received from individuals and churches across the world. The organization also applies for and receives funding from various grants and foundations for specific events, programs and projects. Wiconi has a combination of salaried and self-supporting staff. Each year it hosts camps and powwows.

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Overview of the Contextual Movement

Wiconi International is one of the influential organizations within the emerging Indigenous expression of following Jesus as Lord in North America. The aim of Wiconi ("we-cho-nee" from the Lakota/Sioux language meaning "Life") International is

> to provide education, encouragement and offer practical support to Native American families and communities in creating a preferred future. Historically, Native people have been underrepresented and under-served in mainstream America. Economic, cultural, and social barriers continually limit access to viable resources, thus hindering many healthy community change efforts. Wiconi's primary mission is to empower and serve Native people to experience a desired quality of life with a hope-filled future through authentic relationships and culturally supportive programs.[1]

Some leaders involved with Wiconi International serve as board members for NAIITS (North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies). NAIITS is a Non-sectarian Christian organization dedicated to encouraging the Native North American evangelical community to develop and to articulate Native North American perspectives on Christian theology and mission practice. [2] The objective is to increase a form of theology and biblical teaching via academics-that reasons with the cultural perspectives and traditional customs of Native North Americans.

Wiconi, as part of the Native North American contextual movement of following Christ, seeks to live and walk among all people positively in order to create new friendships and an appreciation of people's cultural identities in Christ, while simultaneously affirming, respecting, and embracing the God-given cultural realities of Native American and Indigenous people. This organization does not stand for rejecting or demonizing these sacred cultural ways.[3] Preferably, it is more appropriate to identify these people as Christ-followers instead of using the term "Christians," because this term used to be similar to a curse-word to many of these people, especially Native Americans that do not follow Jesus Christ.

Dr. Richard Twiss, a Sicangu Lakota (Lakota Sioux) and graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary, was this organization's co-founder and president before dying recently on February 9, 2013. In February 1997, Richard and his wife Katherine founded the non-profit ministry of Wiconi International. Through Wiconi, Richard and Katherine touched the lives of countless thousands of people. The outreach ministry continues today and honors Richard's legacy, vision, and passion for sharing the Gospel and loving the Creator's children with an indigenous experience. Dr. Twiss was often asked what he thinks is the greatest problem among Native Americans. Some expected answers included alcoholism, teen suicide, unemployment, and gambling. However, Dr. Twiss believed the greatest challenge facing Native peoples is the unresolved anger, distrust, hatred and bitterness in their hearts toward Euro-Americans, based on centuries of injustice and oppression. He was also referring to the injustice and rejection that have taken place within the family of God, the community of Jesus Christ, between Anglo and Native Brethren. The Word of God calls for repentance and correction.[4]

Considering correction, leadership is necessary. These Native leaders lead with a genuine concern for the people. In doing so, they follow the example of St. Augustine of Hippo, who taught that it is just for a man to give orders not from a lust for domination but from a dutiful concern for the interests of others, not with pride in taking precedence over others, but with compassion in

taking care of others.[5]

Several others have contributed to this movement in Wiconi International. One of the outstanding figures is Vincent Yellow Old Woman. Vincent is of the Blackfoot tribe located in Canada, and he is now a Chief, an elder, pastor, preacher, council member, and chairperson. One of the obvious characteristics Vincent exemplifies is humility, and his willingness to be openly honest with people in his presence. He is a caring person who seeks to encourage other people to emphasize their relationship with Jesus Christ. At a very young age, he was told that he could not speak his native language, and was sexually abused by the Anglo priests and elders. During this time, he cried out to God asking Him to free him from those situations. Because of these unfortunate events, Vincent hated Anglo people for a while. As he grew in his faith in the Lord, he repented from this hatred, and now serves with many other Native peoples within this movement aiming to encourage people to engage in reconciliation and forgivingness.

An important feature of this movement is to call on the Holy Spirit to organize the ministry instead of attempting to evangelize and do outreach by our own power. This can lead to an attitude of *doing the work for them* which has existed for centuries within the Western tradition of evangelism, especially in ministry directed towards Native Americans. The problem with this approach is the propaganda that inspires Christians to do ministry *to* the Native American people instead of doing so *with* them. Missionaries will view them as more of a "needy" people group who must receive help and change. This common practice remains dissatisfying to Native Americans and does not challenge Western ministers to take a different approach when sharing the Gospel. One of the dangers of this is that many Western missionaries indirectly or perhaps unknowingly emphasize that it is more important to follow a specific Western tradition that will help all people across the world instead of prompting them to develop a personal relationship with Christ.

Wiconi includes various different tribal members. These tribes, like many Native and/or Indigenous peoples, differ from other cultures in the idea of how to handle time. They are what Storti would call polychronic.[6]

> Polychronic is a term used to describe time as limitless and not quantifiable. This means that there is always more time and people are never too busy. Time adjusts to fit the needs of people, schedules and deadlines often change. People may have to do several things simultaneously, when circumstances cause it. It is not necessary to finish one thing before starting another, nor for someone to finish his or her business with one person before starting in with another. A circumstance always has to be taken into account and adjustments have to be made. In this case, interruption does not prevail.

While Wiconi includes people from diverse tribal backgrounds, they all share this polychronic view of time, and try to incorporate it into their ministry with others. In the past, leaders in society such as theologians, philosophers, and moralists, have helped control the poor simply by preaching to them. By being firmly strict with their beliefs towards them, they often told them what is right and what is wrong.[7] The Western tradition of Christianity consists of a more systematic and objective practice of worshipping Christ, which often suggests that Native American cultural customs are wrong or unacceptable. Western ministers must notice that many Native peoples follow Jesus Christ. Just because they don't follow Christ exactly the same way as Western tradition

teaches, does not mean that they are not as devout. They are disciple-makers and teach God's Word. It is not necessary to westernize them in order to be sure that they are devout Christians. Wiconi reveals to Native people who follow Christ that it is not necessary to only abide by systematic Western Christianity in order to be a good Christ-follower. In this way, Wiconi empowers Native people to embrace their cultural heritage, while also seeking to follow Christ. They can use their cultural heritage to honor Christ.

Demographics and Data

It was reported that statistically that there are approximately 4.9 million Native Americans in the U.S.A., but only 3-5% claim to be a Christian. That is a total of less than 250,000 who have a relationship with God and His Son, Jesus.[8]

This 3-5% claim of Native Christ-followers was brought to the attention of Dr. Richard Twiss, but he seriously doubted the accuracy of these figures.

> Vincent Yellow Old Woman informed Dr. Twiss that his (Vincent's) reserve, Siksika (Blackfoot) in Alberta, Canada has a population of 6500 and about 300 Christians, which works out to 4.6% of the population. In Portland, Oregon there are some 38,000 Native people with two Native churches in the metro area with a combined average Sunday attendance of approximately 75, which equates to less than 1%.[9]

Dr. Twiss concluded:

> this percentage is based almost entirely on church attendance on Sunday morning. In any typical Native community of 1000 people, if there are 50 believers sitting in the pews of the eight churches on a particular reservation on Sunday morning, then the conclusion is drawn that five percent of

the people on the reservations are Christians. There is a considerably larger percentage of Native people that would identify themselves as followers of Jesus that regularly participate in powwows and other ceremonial gatherings, but never attend a local Christian church. The problem is that if they participate in cultural gatherings, they do not feel welcomed by the evangelical Christians in church on Sundays. The question is how many Native people would consider themselves as followers of Jesus, but not necessarily *Christians* or *Church-people*?[10]

There are multitudes of Native Americans involved with Wiconi's events and activities that follow Christ but will not label themselves as Christians or people that regularly attend church. Wiconi seeks to reach out and include these Native people in their community by including cultural events and ceremonial traditions.

Social/Cultural Values of this Phenomenon

Wiconi International, like many Native North American contextual Christ-followers, value communication. Communication is away to deliver a specific message to another person, or means of doing this, or the message itself etc.[11] This is the sending and receiving of messages, one of the most common of all human behaviors.[12] It is a complex form of engrossing interaction with another person. This form of interaction consists of a type of immersion experience. Wiconi attempts to value all types of communication, including highly symbolic ritual communication to carry the message of Christ within a Native cultural context.

Considering cultural values, it is important to understand how culture is defined. Culture consists of the civilization of a people or a period.[13]

Culture is shared assumptions, values, and beliefs of a group of people, which result in characteristic behaviors.[14] However, not all behavior is cultural. There are many behaviors and many things people do and say, neither caused by, nor related to their culture.[15] Culture is a term used by anthropologists to refer to a system for creating, sending, storing, and processing information developed by human beings, which differentiates them from other life forms.[16]

Culture is collective; it consists of different patterns of behavior, the information a group uses, and programming. Human society develops a culture, which consists of mannerisms, social customs, beliefs, language, arts, behaviors, etc.

For example, in Navajo religious culture, some viewpoints of time are, that it is eternal, having no beginning or end. Once an event takes place, its effects may be repeated at any future time; for instance, occurrences in the underworld still affect this world and man. Although temporal duration is of little moment, timing is a major device of the ceremonial order. Timing in this case relates to number, direction, song, offering, prayer, and all other elements that make up the chant, since, to be effective, each must come in at exactly the right time. It measures the number of nights of a chant's duration and determines the sequence of events. Some events must occur simultaneously.[17] Wiconi appreciates cultural values of both Natives and non-Natives, and augments integration between different cultures and ethnicities. Although there may be cultural differences, Wiconi has no intentions enforcing barriers. While members of Wiconi come from many different tribal backgrounds, and includes non-Native Americans, the group seeks to form a common bond by emphasizing cultural traits found in most Native American communities.

Sacred Spaces

Two sacred spaces emphasized in Wiconi as well as Native American culture in general are sweat lodges and the powwow. Additionally, orality is an activity within a sacred space. Sweat Lodging is a valuable custom. It usually takes place inside of a teepee or a type of circular tent-like setup that is like a hot sauna. People come in and sit inside of it, temperatures arise while we (I include myself because I have participated in this) are sitting, and we sweat abundantly. Meanwhile, we are sharing our troubles, confessing our problems, and singing songs while sweating. The purpose is for us to utilize this activity as a practice of detoxifying our impurities, which may occur because of substance abuse, stress, or other addictions, etc. A medicine man (traditionally), or a Native leader that follows Christ (contextually), who is a man among North Americans believed to have gifts of healing, commonly leads this activity.

Casey Church, a Pokigan Band Potawatomi tribal member and his wife Lora (Dine/Navajo), two distinctive people greatly involved with Wiconi, are spiritual leaders and lead a ministry together in New Mexico known as Thunderbird. One of the major additions to their ministry is the use of the sweat lodge as one of the components to a resident alcohol treatment program where Casey leads a Christian sweat lodge during each month of the program.[18] At every summer event hosted by Wiconi known as Family Camp, Casey leads a sweat lodge for men while Lora leads a sweat lodge for women. Together, they also give motivational speeches to crowds of people and lead group discussions. The aim behind doing this is not to privilege the foreign worker in their interaction with local people on the side of access to resources. That is, to enable foreign missionaries to use their God-given gifts in a way that local people can imitate, on a level playing field.

Testimony and orality (telling stories) are important features in this movement and they occur within a setting of a group of people. Some sacred stories are not meant to be told to others, and some are not fully explained. Some are not shared with cultural outsiders because they are held in trust by a tribal community or by an individual because the experience is deeply personal and therefore private. In some cultures it is thought that telling stories will diminish their power.[19]

During St. Augustine's era, theology and ministry were normally presented via expression, revelation, testimony, and story-telling among people. This form of theology and ministry somewhat differs from that of theologians such as John Calvin, John Wesley, and possibly a few others, which consisted of a heavier reliance on the printing press, written work, and some systematic principles. It is intentional within this movement for testimonies and stories to pass down from one generation to the next. This also serves as a helpful tool for Indigenous cultures to honor and remember their heritage. Community stories are often shared in the background of a powwow. A powwow is a conference of or with Native North Americans.[20] Wiconi's Mni Wiconi Wacipi (Living Waters Powwow) serves as an inter-tribal ceremony, and it is a joyful celebration of Native American heritage as members of many different tribes come together to greatly honor our Creator. Members of Wiconi also get involved in powwows across North America whenever possible.

Opposition in Society

What opposes the polychronic culture, typical of Native Americans and groups like Wiconi International, is a monochronic culture. According to Storti, monochronic, unlike polychronic,

> is quantifiable and there is a limited amount of it. Therefore, it is necessary to use time wisely and not waste any of it. The needs of

people are adjusted to please the demands of time such as deadlines, schedules, etc. It is considered effective to do one thing at a time or wait on one person at a time. The objective is for a person not to allow any circumstances, unforeseen events, interfere with his or her plans. Interruptions are annoying.[21]

Western culture is a dominant monochronic culture. Considering the contrast of a monochronic-driven culture versus a polychronic-driven culture, Wiconi, a predominantly polychronic culture, seeks to almost balance these two contrasting structures. Native American people need to be able to relate to the monochronic worldview, and so Wiconi tries to help people adjust to this world, while still valuing and being able to express themselves with a polychronic worldview as well. However, they will focus on creating availability. The encouragement to everyone is to be communal and make ourselves available to others.

There seems to be a general stereotype of these unique Indigenous people, and this view comes from other people at an ostracized distance. The view from these other people is that Native Americans are mostly alcoholic, lazy, pagan/polytheistic, and do not want to save themselves from their troubles. The people who hold this idea are people that are either conservative, or wealthy, or have no understanding of the meaning and experience of being Native American, and no experience of generational poverty. Sociologically, there is a difference between generational poverty and situational poverty. The difference is that situational poverty is a form of poverty that is more of a temporary and interpersonal experience and has the potential of lasting for someone's entire life, but not necessarily for a family's entire generation. Whereas generational poverty consists of a generation(s) of families being victimized by indigence and it is not just a temporary experience. Wiconi members often have to deal with the effects of these negative stereotypes.

Oscar Lewis reveals that the culture of poverty is not just a matter of economic deprivation, but that it involves behavioral traits as well as personality traits. Once people adapt to poverty, attitudes and behaviors that initially developed in response to economic deprivation are passed on to the following generations through socialization.[22]

> Throughout recorded history, in literature, in proverbs, and in popular sayings, we find two opposite evaluations of the nature of the poor. Some characterize the poor as blessed, of moral excellence, undisturbed, independent, honest, kind, and happy. Others characterize them as evil, mean, violent, morally low, and criminal. The culture of poverty can come into being in a variety of historical contexts.[23]

It tends to grow and flourish in societies with the following set of conditions:

• A cash economy, wage labor, and production for profit

• A persistently high rate of unemployment and underemployment for unskilled labor

• Low wages

• The failure to provide social, political, and economic organization, either on a voluntary basis or by government imposition, for the low-income population

• The existence of a bilateral kinship system rather than a unilateral one

• The existence of a set of values in the dominant class that stresses the collection of wealth and property, the possibility of upward mobility and careful managing of money, and explains low economic status as a result of personal inadequacy or inferiority.

The way of life, which develops among some of the poor under these conditions, is the culture of poverty.[24] There appears to be optimism that anyone is capable of fulfilling "The American Dream", in which he or she can rise above poverty and achieve wealth, and that it is just that simple of a concept. However, there has to be a sense of urgency potent enough influence someone to rise above expectations. Realistically, such goals can be achieved but it is not as simple for everyone as it appears to be. Many ostracized outsiders might not understand that.

The culture of poverty is both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-based, highly individuated, capitalistic society. It represents an effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair, which develop from the realization of the improbability of achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society.[25] There are cultural and societal characteristics in today's modern society of the poor throughout America that differ from some common customs of the people that are not poor.

> It can be considered that many of the characteristics involved within the culture of poverty are endeavors at solving problems not met by existing institutions and agencies because the people are not eligible for them, cannot afford them, or are ignorant or suspicious of them. An example of this is someone that is not able to get credit from a bank, will go to their own resources and organize informal credit devices without interest.[26]

Many Native Americans that gets involved with Wiconi's events endure the culture of poverty and might accept it as a way of life. They may not complain about it but rather adapt to it:

> The culture of poverty, however, is not just an adaptation to a set of objective conditions of the larger society. Once it comes into existence, it tends to cause itself to be remembered from generation to generation because of its effect on the children. By the time children from a populous area with very poor

living conditions (such as a slum) are six or seven years of age, they have usually absorbed the basic values and attitudes of their sub-culture and are not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their lifetime.[27]

As leaders of Wiconi recognize the commonality, they address the difficulties faced by tribal members on both reservations and urban areas. It is very important to Wiconi to consider carefully the necessities of ministry with different tribal members. They want to understand the way of life of these people and believe that there has to be a way to share the message of Christ with First Nations people enduring the culture of poverty as a way of life.

> People with a culture of poverty usually produce very little wealth and receive very little in return. They have a low level of literacy and education, usually do not belong to labor unions, are not members of political parties, generally do not participate in the national welfare agencies, and have very little use for banks, hospitals, department stores, museums, or art galleries. These people are likely to have a critical attitude toward some of the basic institutions of the dominant classes, hatred of the police, mistrust of government and some of those in high positions, and are skeptical of the goodness or sincerity of specific people, like those that belong to a church. This gives the culture of poverty a high potential for protest and for being used in political movements aimed against the existing social order. [28]

> People with a culture of poverty are locally oriented. They know only their own troubles, their own local conditions, their own neighborhood, their own way of life. Usually they do not have the knowledge, the vision, or the ideology to see the similarities between their

problems and those of their counterparts elsewhere in the world. They are not class-conscious, although they are very sensitive indeed to status distinctions.[29]

Wiconi acknowledges the influence that the culture of poverty has on the majority of the Native American population in society. Therefore, Native leaders, ministers, and educators give encouragement to the Native American community to follow Jesus Christ, endure hardships without bitterness, and embrace the quality of education, as ways to leave behind the culture of poverty. The goal is to establish a paradigm shift that defeats the stereotypes of being mostly alcoholic, lazy, uneducated, disgruntled, and quick to complain about the difficulties rather than becoming conscientious in order to achieve what is greater such as higher education and successful employment.

Disagreements and Misunderstandings

There are similarities and differences in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and following Him from the perspectives of Wiconi International and conservative fundamentalist Christians, even within the Native American community. Conservative Christians with an objective fundamentalist approach (this includes some Native American Christ-followers) towards the Gospel believe that Jesus is the true way to God and there is no other way. This view reflects Scripture that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes through the Father except through Him. [30] There is faith in the Trinity, that being God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit being three distinct persons but one God. Either we follow Him or we do not, and that Scripture is the Holy Word of God that cannot break.

Similarly, Wiconi International wholeheartedly agrees with these beliefs, and wants to contextualize these beliefs. Contextualization helps us to understand and express theology within our own cultural context. Stephen B. Bevans describes contextualiza-

tion as the preferred term to describe the theology that takes human experience, social location, culture, and cultural change seriously.[31] The disagreements occur as contextual enforcers like those of Wiconi International view conservative fundamentalists as being too objective. This means that they (conservative fundamentalists) adhere to a religious view that does not embrace much of or any form of contextualization. The problem is that conservative fundamentalists often mistake contextualization as being a form of syncretism. Religious syncretism is the blending of diverse cultural elements into one religion. Negatively, the term syncretism is usually used to imply inauthenticity or contamination, the sly or treacherous infiltration of a "pure" religious tradition by meanings, symbols, and ritual practices borrowed from an alien, impure religious tradition.[32] These misunderstandings are what separate these groups from each other; despite the fact that they claim to worship the same God.

Reflections of the Ministry/Movement

This ministry and movement of Wiconi International reflect the example described in a section of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book entitled *Life Together*.[33] In this book, Bonhoeffer depicts ministry in a few different forms.

These forms are:
- Ministry of Meekness
- Ministry of Listening
- Ministry of Helpfulness
- Ministry of Bearing (bearing burdens)
- Ministry of Proclaiming
- Ministry of Authority (brotherly service)

Wiconi International reflects this example because it encourages people to experience the journey of the Christian faith together and cross-culturally. This movement serves a victimized minority without necessarily seeking to be their problem solvers. Each year, Wiconi International connects with seminary professor Dr. Walter Jay Moon to lead a group of people into engaging in an immersion experience on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, which is Dr. Twiss' Native Reservation. Wiconi International values the quality of this immersion and reminds Christ-followers to immerse in their culture as Jesus did when He came to Earth and took the form and life of a human being and ultimately humbled Himself while ridding Himself from the kingdom of heaven to live in this fallen world amongst fallen people.

The Rosebud Indian Reservation, of the Sicangu Lakota (Lakota Sioux) people, happen to be reported as one of the poorest (if not the poorest) ethnic group in America. There are several disadvantages of these particular Natives on this reservation; Dr. Moon informs those participating in this immersion experience that some of these disadvantages include:

- One-third of the women here on this reservation reportedly are raped. Because of this, they usually do not try to make themselves look very attractive or glamorous.
- Committing suicide is prevalent.
- The unemployment rate is 80%.

This immersion experience is both an educational and interpersonal experience. Dr. Moon personally tells the participants and students (including myself) in conversations "there are things in Scripture that Christ-followers will never learn from their own culture, but only from engaging with other culture/ethnic groups."[34] These experiences continue to prosper as education and theology from an Indigenous perspective will continue to spread throughout North America. The emerging Indigenous expression and illustration of following

and serves as an influential revelation in the Native American community. Wiconi International is an illustration of this expression, and it is hoped that similar illustrations will continue to evolve in the Native American community.

Following Christ in an indigenous context revealed by Wiconi appreciates the idea of being a follower of the Lord in the specific cultural context that the Lord placed before us. Our Spiritual formation is a matter of balance between being and doing; but the focus, the primary element, is being. This is what we see in the Great Commandment.[35]

Endnotes

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25. *Ibid.*, 177

26. *Ibid.*, 177.

27. Gmelch, Kemper, Zenner, *Urban Life,* 177.

28. *Ibid.*, 178.

29. *Ibid.*, 180.

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34. Walter J. Moon, "Contextualization." Lecture, Rosebud Immersion from Sioux Falls Seminary, Rosebud, July 14, 2012.

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