



Telling the Story of Jesus  
The Interrelationship of Orality and Bible Translation for the  
Angolar People

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# Preface

I want to express my gratitude to the Martin Ekenes' stipendiefond and the Norwegian Government Educational Fund for their financial contribution to this research project. Thank you to Wycliffe Norway and my supporting churches, Wycliffe South Africa, Seed Company, Jim and Janet Stahl for list of bibliography and good advice, OneStory, A.B.N.N. and Adelásio, the Angolar translation team, the Angolar church, and VID vitenskapelige høgskole, Misjonshøgskolen. My sincere thanks go to Knut Holter, Old Testament professor at the School of Mission and Theology, who has been my mentor. I want to express my gratitude to the participants in my field study, and finally, my wife and children who have kept up with a part-time student over a long time and my times away on travels.

The title for my thesis came about one day through a song as I was contemplating the oral nature and storytelling form of the Gospel: 'Tell me the story of Jesus, write on my heart every word; Tell me the story most precious, Sweetest that ever was heard.' (Frances J. Crosby). This song captures components of the Gospel of Jesus, the salvation and the method of *telling* and *hearing* the story, the writing on the heart rather than on paper. Jesus clothed many of his principles in parables, in stories *to* and about *people*. Orality is about *telling* and about the *Story*. In communicating the message about Jesus, the method of storying replicates the method Jesus *himself* practiced in order to reach the audience of his time. 'He did not say anything to them without using a parable' (Gospel of Mark 4:34a, The Holy Bible, NIV).

In this thesis I present my research project, and elements that go into that process. My research project will apply qualitative methods. In qualitative research there is a potential for dynamics in which all phases of the project are subject to a reflexive process. This means 'hypotheses' and research question, methods, and sampling of cases, were possibly going to change as the project progresses.

Ethnographic research is not testing hypotheses but is "concerned with producing descriptions and explanations of particular phenomena, or with *developing* theories, rather than with testing existing hypotheses" (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, p. 21). Even analytical method is result of a process. So the induced theory that comes out in the final report is all together the result of a hermeneutical process. I will present the title and my motivation for this

project. Next I will present my research question, and the methodology I have applied. Ethical considerations are commented on in a separate point of the essay. I then present theory on orality, next the fieldwork, then the analysis, before I answer the research question and give a brief conclusion.

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# 1 Introduction

In this thesis I will study orality and literacy in the Angolar people group of São Tomé and Príncipe, and how it relates to Bible translation. In particular I study how Angolar people practice oral stories and how they perceive written texts. The thesis is a context analysis of the Angolar people as it relates to the larger context of Bible translation.

## 1.1 Theme

“I am still oral!” These words were uttered by Bonifácio Paulo, at the time a PhD student, a Mozambican citizen who had studied for 4 years at the University of Stellenbosch, Western Cape Province in South Africa. He was in his final year of fulfilling the requirements for his PhD. “Education does not pull me out of what I am,” he said. “Having degrees as an oral person does not mean I am no more an oral person. *I am still oral!*”

How come that Bonifácio says this? How come that a PhD student considers himself an ‘oral person’? He continues: “What makes me an oral person is that *oral* is the easier way for me to communicate.” He even says “it is easier for me to get the concept when you tell me orally than when you tell me: ‘Go and read this book!’” And he continues, “moreover, it [the message] is written in a foreign language.” This is said by a highly educated man, born and raised in Mozambique, now a Bible translation consultant who is used to working daily with texts.

How would it be then for people with less education, or the non-literate who wants to approach texts, let us say a written text like the Bible - let alone in a foreign language? Could the method of telling and hearing the Bible in oral form help give the ‘reader’ a deeper understanding of what the biblical message is about? With this panorama, the title for my thesis became: The interrelationship of orality and Bible translation for the Angolar people. The reason for this theme is based on my curiosity concerning oral storying within Bible translation. I wanted to know: How are orality and literacy related? Amongst mission thinkers and practitioners, orality has been given more emphasis in recent decades. This emphasis has come from the growing awareness that maybe two-thirds of the world’s population are oral learners either because they have not gained sufficient competence in literacy, or because, even though literate, they have a preference for oral learning. There has been a movement

away from dependence only on literate methods for evangelism, leadership, discipleship and training. Rather, the teaching and training are adjusted to accommodate to learners preferring oral styles of learning. Research conducted by Tannen also speaks to this issue, “literate tradition does not replace oral” (Tannen, 1982, p. 3). This is indicated in what Bonifácio said, ‘I am still oral!’, and Tannen goes on to suppose that “when literacy is introduced, the two are superimposed upon and intertwined with each other. Similarly, no individual is either ‘oral’ or ‘literate.’ Rather, people use devices associated with both traditions in various settings” (Tannen, 1982, p. 3). This indicates that orality as a phenomenon does not disappear in the introduction of literacy. Moreover, the importance of oral studies in missions and Bible translation are crucial if these indications mentioned above reflect the reality.

This study is concerned with the subjects of orality and literacy because I wanted to see how they are relevant to Bible translation, both theoretically and in practice. From what I see, there is need for more knowledge and research on this topic. I hope the results of this study could be useful in current and future Bible translation contexts, especially in the African Sub-Saharan contexts where the field study for the present thesis was done.

## **1.2 Aim and purpose**

I am aiming at elaborating on orality as a method of communicating the Gospel of Christ to the so-called oral cultures, with particular focus on the interrelationship of orality and Bible translation, critical to Bible storytelling practitioners and Bible translators of written texts. Sometimes, the two approaches go hand in hand and produce both an oral product and a written product. The term ‘oral learners’ is used to define people who can’t, don’t or won’t read or who may not have a written language.

My purpose for the research is to create knowledge that could have potential benefit for the future Bible translation into the Angolar language, that in turn could benefit their society and culture. In addition, my purpose is to create knowledge about potential benefits for the Bible translation community at large. Some scholars claim that 91 percent of learners in Africa are secondary oral learners (Chiang, 2013, p. 43, referring to Bowen, E. A. and Bowen, D. N., 1988).

I am studying how people relate to storytelling and written material in a particular people group. Those who create theories of written Bible translation, and long standing Western Bible translation practices may gain from knowing more about orality and literacy to consider the most appropriate for the translation processes. A large portion of people groups who have not heard the Gospel have large groups of non-readers. Given that oral communication is their preferred way of communication, we need to ask ourselves why Bible translations should come in written form only. By choosing the most appropriate communication form in the sharing of the Gospel, Scripture portions may become available for more Bibleless people groups of the world, and improve the progress of Bible translation overall.

Within the history of missions, the spread of the Gospel and the written word walked hand in hand. Since the beginning of missions and Bible translation in Africa, missions and education were “handmaids” to the degree that “the Gospel could not be divorced from the written word” so that, to establish Christianity among Africans, they “must have Bibles which they *must read*” (Ayandele, 1979, p. 79, italics are mine). The spread of the Gospel and literacy were twins and the “goal of colonial educational policy was to extend to the Africans the “blessings of civilization” as well as the cultural heritage of the West” (Thompson, 1998, p. 1) at the expense of “devaluing authentic African experience and tradition” (Hargreaves, 1967, p. 131). This implied that the development of literacy walked closely connected with colonial interests and devalued the African (oral) tradition. Education was implemented but it may only have masked the inherent feature of the oral cultures. Paul Hiebert tells us, “(a)s Western missionaries we need to realize how deeply literacy has molded our thinking, producing patterns of thought that seem perfectly natural to us, but which are strange to those in nonliterate societies” (Hiebert, 1986, p. 134).

The problem of a literary approach to sharing the Christian message is that many “are not really *hearing* it”, according to the Lausanne Issue group 2004 document (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005, p. 3). The estimate of numbers of oral communicators vary according to definition and the way of counting. The Lausanne document claims that oral methods are not being implemented for those “4 billion oral communicators in the world: people who can’t, don’t, or won’t take in new information or communicate by literate means” (2005, p. 3). However, an estimated “90% of the world’s Christian workers presenting the gospel use highly literate communication styles” (2005, p. 3), so this calls for some evaluation of methods. The training of Western workers going to

oral cultures is part of the problem, “most of these workers were trained in, by, for, and through Western literate programs that never developed a focus on the oral nature of the people they helped equip”. (Madinger, 2010, p. 203). This is a problem that needs to be addressed. I will not have time and space to discuss the theme of training workers as such in my thesis but training in oral methods seems a crucial point for missions and I hope the thesis may show the need for more relevant training.

The existence of oral communities, however, does not imply the absence of literacy. Literacy training is crucial for individuals and communities in order to stand up for their rights and against oppression and exploitation by world powers. Growing globalization may require the oral learners to adapt - by choice or by necessity - to the literary style of learning, in order for oral learners and communicators to have an influence in the gradually more interconnected world.

### **1.3 Context and basic assumption**

In order for the reader of this thesis to understand the context better, I want to explain the place of my study in the broader picture. There are two Bible translation projects in São Tomé funded by Seed Company.<sup>1</sup> One for the language called Forro, and one for the Angolar, both are run by the São Tomé based Association called A.B.N.N..<sup>2</sup> The Forro and Angolar work as separate teams. The initial phase of the projects, the oral Bible storying phase, was still ongoing during my field work, and the written phase had not yet begun. The Angolar Bible translation team had been working for 22 months, and translated some oral Bible stories but had not finished publishing all of them. The translation of the Gospel of Luke in written form into Angolar had not yet begun at the time. These are the circumstances for my study. Thus, my research question is part of this broader context of Bible translation into the Angolar language: Bible translation for the Angolar people group, into the Angolar language group, done by Angolar speakers. The thesis is part of this broader field.

The thesis is a context analysis of the Angolar people. It may function as a contribution for future Bible translation decisions, as it looks at the potentials and limitations of oral and

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<sup>1</sup> Seed Company is an affiliated member of Wycliffe Global Alliance.

<sup>2</sup> A.B.N.N. is an acronym for ‘The Bible in our Language’, in the Forro language.

written communication strategies among the Angolares. It is a context analysis of the Angolar people because it was too early to find much empiric material on possible effects of Angolar oral Bible stories and Angolar written Bible texts.

Before I present the research question for my thesis I will explain my basic assumption underlying this thesis: The presence and usage of oral stories is a sign of orality in a people group. So, if people already have traditional stories and the habit of telling and retelling them, then oral Bible stories will have a cultural resonance among the people and be an appropriate means to communicate the Gospel. Bible translation and orality may be interrelated, based on this assumption. This is the assumption on which I base my study of the interrelationship of orality and Bible translation in this thesis. What if people rather have preferences for written texts and literacy over oral stories? Then oral Bible storying may not be the right medium for communication of the Biblical truths.

#### **1.4 Research question**

As a context analysis of the Angolar people group, my study aims at finding the answer to this main research question: How do people among the Angolares perceive the relationship of orality and literacy?

I am asking the question because it is important in the context of the ongoing Bible translation project into Angolar. Knowledge about people's perception of how orality and literacy are related, will inform future Bible translation decisions on the most appropriate translation form, whether it should be in the written form or oral, or both.

The research question has to be divided into manageable entities so that I can do interview questions and analyses of the data. I divide this question into two sub questions. The first sub question is concerned with orality: How do Angolares practice oral storytelling in their daily lives? This question is important in order to understand how people may perceive, receive, and use oral Bible stories.

The next sub question is concerned with literacy, and what preferences people have for written material: How do people relate to literacy in general, and to the potential of having

written material in Angolar? The answer may guide future Bible translation priorities on the translation of written texts.

These two sub questions will work together to guide the choice of method, the choice of theoretical data, and to guide the field work and analysis of field data.

I have now presented the basic assumptions on which I made this study, the main research question of my study, and the sub questions which guided the interview questions. The interview guide is part of the Appendixes to the thesis.

## **1.5 Methodology**

In order to achieve my goal to find the answer to my research question, I have chosen a qualitative approach. The research project is a form of ethnography, it aims at having “a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, p. 248). This methodology permits me as researcher to go to the field with an open mind and see what is there.

I prepared to use focus group interviews to elicit data and collect field observations on how people apply orality in their daily life and how they perceive the use of written material.

Why did I use qualitative methods, in particular interviews and observations? According to Drønen, the strong influence from other fields like anthropology makes qualitative methods the choice of priority when it comes to methods of eliciting data in Africa. “Most researchers agree that the interview (in some form) is the best and easiest way to acquire information ‘from the field’” (Drønen, 2006, p. 3). Through participant observations I explored the social phenomena of orality and the way it is noticed in storytelling. Interviews seem to be the best way for me to gather data from the Angolares. Interview is a method that allows the field and the researcher to arrive at a cooperative product, based on interaction. According to Briggs, “(i)nterviews are cooperative products of interactions between two or more persons who assume different roles and who frequently come from contrasting social, cultural, and/or linguistic backgrounds” (1986, p. 102). I had to decide whom to interview, and how to make the selection of participants.

I decided to invite two groups of the community: elders and youth, to separate group interviews. In preparation for the interviews I selected themes to discuss. I asked the Angolar Bible translation team (my Gatekeepers) to invite participants before my arrival, the interviews were performed according to the plan, although the program during the interviews was adjusted for the time frame and to how the sessions developed.

With the help of the Bible translators (who are speakers of Angolar and Portuguese), we translated the interviews into Portuguese, and I in turn translated them into English. I organized the interview data for this thesis to give a chronological presentation of my observations, and I organized what the groups expressed concerning the themes. I labeled the interview data and field observations into categories that served to answer the research questions.

The data I gathered and analyzed are the observed phenomena and expressions of storytelling and my observations and their reported perception of the effects of written material. This present study is based on my remote contact with the field over several years, and visits to the field several times. I participated in training workshops and had some weeks of focused research field work.

## **1.6 Plan of presentation**

I will accomplish the purpose of the study in the following way. I begin, here in chapter one, by introducing the theme and reasons for this study. I then explain the background for the study and the research question and methodology. These are followed by the plan and challenges, with comments on ethical implications. In chapter two, I present an overview of theoretical considerations. In chapter three I present the fieldwork with interview data and observations. In chapter four I do my analysis and discuss possible interpretations of the findings. Finally, in the conclusion in chapter five I present the answer to my research question, and possible outlooks for Bible translation and further studies.

### **1.6.1 Design and challenges**

Methods on field data collection and interviews have their challenges and limitations. My exposure to the field was limited by time and financial resources. I did not develop a long term relationship with all the participants of the interviews, except for the relationship with the translators in the project, which again is a relation based on my role as Field Coordinator. Metacommunicative clues may be missed as the respondents are not very well known to me and our cultural references differ. One real challenge is that I am not submerged in the culture but observe and ask as an outsider. Members from the Bible translation team were present with me while I was doing my field study and helped me understand more of what was being said and give their interpretation of it.

### **1.6.2 Procedures**

I chose to do field visits to the Angolar communities and the translation team. This epoch in the translation project seems to me as an appropriate time to do the study of orality and Bible translation. The phase for producing written material had not yet started and the oral story project had been going for almost two years. I chose to do group interviews as the formalized part of field work. Two groups were selected: Youth between 18 and 25 years of age who were also students, and elderly men and women.

In the selection of participants, I relied on the Bible translation team to do the invitation some weeks ahead of my arrival, using a *Request for Participation* written by myself. The Request is in compliance with NESH guidelines on participants' free and informed consent.<sup>3</sup> Selection was not arbitrary but rather systematic as the translators knew people and also took cultural considerations into account (consciously and unconsciously), there are some people in the community that 'must' be invited.

Informants were invited for the formal interviews, not as individuals, rather in groups of up to 12 people. I gave each group an introduction orally. I presented the scope of the interview. Those who conceded, said their name into the recorder and I gave each participant a number

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<sup>3</sup> NESH (The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities). Ethical Guideline #9, securing participants' free and informed consent.

in the data. Those who would not concede were free to leave the meeting. No one left the sessions. The Request for participation document is part of the Appendix of this thesis.

### ***1.6.3 Data reliability and phases of data collection***

I had no control of whom the team invited besides the required age groups. Why did I strategically select people from those two particular groups? In my pre-understanding, I came with the notion that the youth are students and would be heavily influenced in school by the Portuguese written approach to knowledge. What would be their approach to orality? The elders are mostly non-readers and not accustomed to reading and writing. What would be their approach to orality and literacy?

My initial study notes derive from my survey trip in January 2017, where I visited the Angolar communities with the purpose to gauge the scope of what would be a possible approach for doing data collection on my next field trip. On that first visit I judged it strategic to do research on those two different parts of the population. My main field work happened in October 2017. Interviews were recorded on a sound recorder, and I wrote transcriptions of the Angolar utterances in Portuguese with the help of the translators, which I then translated into English.

### ***1.6.4 Literature on orality***

Field data had to be interpreted with literature on orality. The field of *Bible translation and orality* is growing but still relatively small. I chose to base my orality discussion on the work by Walter Ong. He is called ‘father of the modern orality movement’. Walter Ong (1912-2003) wrote about orality and he illuminated a cloudy area of study, as he pointed out that the oral form of communication is quite different from the literate and should be studied as such. I find that much of the literature on Bible translation and orality base themselves on some assumptions and notions that Ong introduced. I think those assumptions need to be challenged, so I selected articles that search to broaden the debate on orality in the light of Bible translation. Ryan Bush (2016) and Charles Madinger (2010) are asking for a more thorough discussion and a more holistic view on orality as a phenomenon. Ruth Finnegan

(2007) discusses reasons for how the interaction of oral and written forms is not unusual, that the correlations of literacy and orality is a fruitful discussion and puts orality in a more healthy perspective. I have used other sources to complement my discussion throughout the thesis. The International Orality Network, an affiliation of agencies and organization, and Bible translation journals and missiology journals have been useful sources of literature for this study.<sup>4</sup>

### **1.7 Ethical reflections**

I acknowledge the need for ethical reflections due to my roles in the research work. In my research and data collection I am obligated to complying with the ethical guidelines of The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH).<sup>5</sup> I am employed by Wycliffe and work for Seed Company as Field Coordinator. In this role I initiate new Bible translation projects with local partner associations in accordance within Seed Company's visions for Lusophone Africa. My job consists of creating conditions for and give advice to local associations so they take full responsibility for their projects. Funding for projects comes for the great part from Seed Company, the rest is local contribution collected by the local associations.

A group of pastors and church leaders had formed a committee with the aim of doing Bible translation in São Tomé. They invited Seed Company in 2013 to help them move forward. Various people from the USA, South Africa, and I, came to visit the committee on various occasions between 2013 and 2015 to help set up the local Association. The leaders formed the Association called A.B.N.N.,<sup>6</sup> with the vision to starting Bible translation into the Forro language, also called Santomé, and other languages in São Tomé. The Angolar people group is a minority group in São Tomé, in terms of numbers of speakers, and culturally. A.B.N.N. did not see the need for translation into Angolar at that point but Seed Company with the vision to work with minority groups, wanted to include the Angolar parallel to the Forro project. I was heavily involved in this decision to translate also for Angolar and not only for Forro. I was consequently involved in project planning and in writing the proposal to Seed

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<sup>4</sup> <https://orality.net> retrieved 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

<sup>5</sup> NESH, Ethical Guideline #2, The social, cultural and linguistic roles of research.

<sup>6</sup> A.B.N.N. is an acronym for 'The Bible in our Language', in the Forro language.

Company to fund the two projects, which commenced on January 13, 2016. The technical part of the oral Bible translation projects is entirely run by OneStory,<sup>7</sup> with consultants traveling from USA to São Tomé for workshops three times a year. A.B.N.N. selected and employed the translators. Angolar is entirely under A.B.N.N.'s responsibility and the team reports to them. So there is no direct connection between me as Field Coordinator and the Angolar team in terms of payments and employment. Translation progress is reported to me quarterly by A.B.N.N.. Funds flow from Seed Company to A.B.N.N. who reports on finances.

I had met the Bible translation team before as Field Coordinator in several OneStory translation workshops. So they had perceived me before as one of the people behind the funding. I was aware of the tension this could create, maybe it would be difficult for the Bible translation team to perceive me now in this temporary role as a researcher during the field study, when I am also the Field Coordinator for the organization funding the project. The team and I talked about my intentions and this research role before the interviews, and they said they understood my role. I still had be careful, not to create misunderstandings. I did not feel much tension but I was very aware of the potential problems during the time of my research.

## **1.8 Scope and limitations**

The data collected in the field only represent the selected people from the Angolar community and does not as such convey other people's opinions and feelings. Data in the observations are limited to the people I have met in the field.

Data have been transcribed from Angolar and translated from Portuguese to English. This poses a challenge and hinders a direct quote of what respondents have said in Angolar orally.

As the researcher I am an outsider and interpret data from that perspective. To restrict this effect, I discussed my interpretations with the Angolar translators.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.onestory.org> Retrieved 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

## 1.9 Definitions

There is need for defining some key terms for this study. Since this study concerns orality and oral communicators in Bible translation, I find it critical to present my definitions of what it is and is not. Harriet Hill earned her Ph.D from Fuller in the area of communication and translation and is an SIL Anthropologist, she says “(t)o date, there is widespread confusion about what qual-ifies as “orality.” (...) More research is needed” (Hill, 2010, p. 217). The theme is complex but I hope my study can shed some more light on what orality means in the practice of Bible translation.

Orality in this study is the notion of a holistic model of communication where messages are delivered and processed in oral form as short stories without involving writing or reading. Rick Brown has extensive experiences in Africa and Asia, and in Bible translation and consulting. Brown examines core principles for communicating biblical truth in primarily oral cultures. According to Brown’s definition, “(o)ral communicators are ones who depend mostly on verbal, nonprint means to learn, to communicate with others, to express themselves, and to enjoy a story” (Brown, 2004, p. 122). I argue that this definition may apply to parts of the community and not to the whole. Grant Lovejoy is Director of Orality Strategies for IMB.<sup>8</sup> He co-edited *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*. He says oral communicators can be distinguished by their “reliance on spoken, rather than written, language for communication” (Lovejoy, 2012, p. 12). He defines orality as the extent to which people rely on (put their trust in) oral rather than written, communication.

Brown says they depend ‘mostly’ on verbal (oral) means for communication - but not in all life situations. There are domains (practical areas of life) where oral medium are being used, and other domains for written. As we will see later in this thesis, this ‘reliance on oral and written information’ may not always correspond so much with this definition.

There is a wide spread perception that orality is the antithesis of literacy. However, one can describe orality as a phenomenon in its own positive terms without referring to its believed counterpart: literacy. Lovejoy gives a positive definition above, describing people according to what they do, not by what they cannot do (they do not read). Orality is not simply

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<sup>8</sup> Formerly Southern Baptist Mission, USA.

'illiteracy' which can be minimized by introducing literacy programs at a larger scale. It has qualities on its own which oral communicators appreciate and take advantage of.

For convenience, I use the term 'Africa' to refer to the more sub-Saharan Africa. Unlike North Africa, with its ancient history of communication and interchange with the Middle East and Europe, Africa south of the Sahara has in general had a more isolated development. Many commonalities can be found across the region in traditional cultural patterns and in the historical experience of colonialism.

After having introduced the theme, the research question, and methodology, I will now present the theoretical reflections appropriate to orality and literacy.

## 2 Theoretical reflections

My study deals with the relationship between orality and literacy in the context of Bible translation. The history of Bible translation has been one of producing written texts which are then meant to be distributed to readers. Practices in Bible translation have traditionally not paid much attention to orality issues. People groups have received written Bibles in their languages even in places where the ability to read was still low at the time. Hence, literacy then became a necessary part of training people to become potential readers of the translated written texts. This in turn required the establishment of schools and education institutions.

With this background it is appropriate to present orality and its alleged contrast, namely literacy.<sup>9</sup> Or, are they really contrastive? Orality is often contrasted with literacy because an orally oriented person or society is perceived (by the literate person) as having so many characteristics that differ from the literate person or society. As this contrast is elaborated further, we see that our theoretical framework determines how this contrast is played out into real life practices. Theory informs pragmatics. In other words, for the academics of Bible Translation,<sup>10</sup> the alleged contrasts and differences inform the choice of method or form of communication employed for sharing the Gospel - that is, the choice of a written form or an oral form. Historically, Christian missions have generally produced and distributed only written Bible translations.

Why has Bible translation been synonymous with written translation, even in cultures with a strong tradition of oral forms of communication? Could it stem from the lack of understanding of orality and its qualities? Or is the perception of oral forms foreign? From our Western perspective, it is easier to implement our own methods of communication into another culture than learning new forms of communication. Orality in missions is, as we will see below, a fairly new field of study, and is still also much debated.

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<sup>9</sup> "Literacy" in this context is referring to the ability to read and write, not the pedagogy of reading and writing.

<sup>10</sup> Bible Translation with capital *t* in Translation refers to the critical study of Bible translation, not the practice per se.

## 2.1 Overview of Walter Ong

It is difficult to describe the field of orality versus literacy without including Walter Ong and his book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. His writings on the differences of orality and literacy have been analyzed and criticized over many years - and his presuppositions have been and are being used also in the discussion on Bible Translation. Ong's theories form part of my theoretical framework for this thesis, however, modified by more recent studies and critiques.

Ong's way of thinking on orality and literacy may have implications and consequences for Bible Translation and the choice of forms for sharing of the message we believe is for all human beings. Ong makes a point of the same when he considers various theorems: "Orality-literacy theorems challenge biblical study perhaps more than any other field of learning, for, over the centuries, biblical study has generated what is doubtlessly the most massive body of textual commentary in the world" (Ong, 2012, p. 170). Bible translation is one contributor to this *massive body of texts*, namely Biblical texts. Our challenge is to actually see this massive contribution of texts as a problem, given the existence of cultures that presumably 'rely on' the spoken word over the written word.

Ong's book was launched in 1982 along with other works on literacy, literary criticism and popular culture. The target group for his study were new students on communication studies. Paul Soukup wrote an article, *Orality and literacy 25 years later*, and says Ong's book has stood the test of time well (Soukup, 2007, p. 16). The book was re-published in a 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition in 2012, while its original from 1982 is still in print. Ong opened people's eyes to a different vision of communication, in that Ong asked how the *speaking* of words marks a way of being human.

Ong is mostly occupied with primary orality in his works but introduces the concept of secondary orality to describe modern day digital uses of the oral word. Primary orality is a term used where people have no knowledge at all of writing. Ong has been assessed and praised by many scholars (Soukup, 2007, pp. 6-7). He has also been criticized for his seemingly simplistic dichotomy between orality and literacy as we will see below. Ong says oral thought is not prelogical or illogical in any simplistic sense. He claims the understanding of causal relationships is not absent but different in oral thinking than in a so-called literate mind, therefore Western literates may have difficulty in understanding an oral learner's mind.

Rather, oral cultures can produce amazingly complex organizations of thought and experience. Ong marked a way forward in the domain of communications study, especially in the area of primary oral cultures.

We have seen that Ong and his claims on orality may challenge the Western literate mind in understanding the orally oriented mind.

## **2.2 The oral word and the literate word**

We will now see what Ong says about differences and contrasts between orality and literacy and how it affects Western perception of orality. The intended reader would be a Western literate person, a Western academic or scholar. The book is thus written for the people “acquainted with literate culture from the inside”, to whom verbal expression in oral culture seems “strange” and at times “bizarre” (2012, p. 1). I can recognize the feeling of strangeness from my own interaction with people and life experiences in Western and Southern Africa; How can people really get along in their daily life without the knowledge of reading and writing? This is orality in practice. I concur with Ong that the issues are deep and complex and “also engage our own biases”, as we are so literate that it is difficult to conceive of an oral universe of thought “except as a variant of a literate universe” (2012, p. 2). Therefore, the term ‘oral literature’ had been proposed as a way to classify works of oral culture. The term itself is “self-contradictory”, according to Ong (1982, p. 13), and only reflects signs of a limited picture of the whole concept of orality. Also the term ‘text’ is loaded with literate connotations. The terms have since been widely used by other authors in describing oral presentations, without the weight of this ethnocentricity (Finnegan, 2012, p. 19, among others). Another term for describing orality is ‘preliterate’. This has a heavier weight of judgmental attitude as it suggests orality to be at a lower stage beneath or before the real thing: being literate. Ong suggested that we use the term ‘to weave’ (1982, p. 13) for the creating of oral utterances and oral art, or the term ‘voicings’ (1982, p. 13) to ground it in the human voice itself. These terms did not gain much ground, though.

### 2.3 The oral and the literate mindsets

Ong's arguments run along two lines: 1) the basic orality of human language is permanent and written language has to relate to the world of sound which is the natural habitat of language; 2) there is a *shift* in mindset when a person becomes literate, from an oral to a literacy mindset. He treats these as the *oral mind* and the *literate mind*, the two being very different entities or mindsets, so much that it entails completely different ways of restructuring thinking, and rationalizing (1982, p. 131). Some accuse him of being racist. This interpretation is most likely not Ong's motive in his presentation, however, he wanted to point to the problem of studying orality the same way one studies literacy, without being aware of their inherent differences. Science and literary studies have, until recently, shied away from orality. Why is this? Do we see here a disparagement of non-literate people and possibly hints of racism on the part of the academia? Are post-colonial studies more concerned with how 'they' can become more like 'us' than seeing people for whom they are?

Ong says the oral word *unites*, as the audience normally becomes united when listening to a speaker (2012, p. 73). This uniting capacity of orality is being employed to a large degree globally by political orators and religious speakers alike. The goal is to unite and the medium is oral performance through speeches. Unity does not come so easily with written texts. Ong says it is difficult to use the word 'audience' to a crowd of people reading the same handout (2012, p. 73). Thus, one can say about reading and writing that each of them isolates, while oral forms of communication unite. Ong mentions that in countries where there is more than one major language, these countries are more likely to have major problems maintaining national unity than where a country is united by one common language (2012, p. 73). I argue that one may say the same about a people group where there is a national written language and an oral locally grounded vernacular. Oral storytelling is specifically taking advantage of these qualities of the oral spoken word as we will see throughout this study.

Further, writing and reading are described as passive, separating the word from the living present (2012, pp. 79 & 81). A written passage cannot answer back if you ask it a question. Writing and reading are technologies, artificial things compared to oral speech, which is natural and living. Here, we see how Ong appraises the oral language above the written.

On the other hand, written text has its own advantages, the text assures endurance and has in its potential to "being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potentially infinite

number of living readers” (2012, p. 80). Writing is artificial but still it is worthy of praise, as it is created to the realization of “fuller, interior, human potentials” (2012, p. 81). So also with the potential of a Bible that is translated. I argue that written texts have the potential for transforming the mind and lift human consciousness, and the result could be the advance of biblical understanding and spiritual revelation. The written word has the inherent ability to transpose people to a new dimension of enhanced understanding. The use of this tool can enrich human spirits through the interiorizing of the message – but only if the user of this tool is trained and understand its limitations.

#### **2.4 Oral cultures vs. writing cultures**

Orality is closely connected with world view. Ong claims boldly that “writing restructures consciousness” (1982, p. 77). Writing replaces a dependency on the mind’s memory to preserve a people’s traditions and history. This is probably Ong’s most extreme assumption as he is generalizing and universalizing from his topic to the whole of mankind’s mind. Ong is not a neuroscientist but he surely caught attention for this claim. As a media theorist he goes to length in describing how writing is a technology from the earliest alphabet to the present day.<sup>11</sup> He claims that “(w)riting (...) was and is the most momentous of all human technological inventions (...) it moves speech from the oral-aural to a new sensory world, that of vision, it *transforms speech and thought* as well” (2012, p. 84, my italics). The claim about transformation of speech and thought is a bold claim.

While oral cultures’ discourse comes in “fixed ritual formulas”, reading of texts encourages and justifies solitude, thus removes people from their sharing of communal wisdom (2012, pp. 77 & 102). There is also a distance between person and text, there is separation of the “knower and the known” (2012, p. 104). Oral expression never disappears and is the natural way of expression to humans, while literacy is always something a person must learn to master it well.

Communication in oral form is not *sharing of information*. Ong refutes a *medium* model of communication. Oral form is not a channel or pipeline for sending messages, according to

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<sup>11</sup> Media in the sense of medium of communication.

Ong. The message is not a unit of information where a mind is sending and the other receiving it, the mind being like a box-thing (Ong, 2012, p. 172). This model has little to do with human communication. Rather, the medium is human, humans *inter-act*, in a very wide sense of the word. Humans take the full context into consideration before and while communicating. I am not going deep into this model, I just want to relate this to a storytelling approach as opposed to a written media approach to Bible translation. Human communication is never one-way but happens in community, it calls for response by the interlocutors for shaping the form so that the receiver can relate to the utterance. Humans modify words to the context of the situation. “Oral communication unites people in groups” while “(w)riting and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself” (2012, p. 68).

Needless to say, a written text does not have these same potential interpersonal properties. Not to say that an author cannot write with a certain audience in mind - as the writer always got to have a pretended reader in mind - but the writer has no control of whom the audience might be and no way of mentoring their reactions. This is quite different in an oral-performance communication. In oral cultures, speech has a performance-oriented character (Ong, 2012, p. 173). This is a feature that oral Bible storytelling takes advantage of.

## **2.5 Characteristics of oral communities**

Ong presents some “psychodynamics of orality”, and sets out to generalize about these features of “primary” oral cultures (2012, pp. 31-57). For these chapters he has been praised but also criticized, and maybe misunderstood. In his presentation on universal cognitive dichotomies, such as ‘prelogical’, many people in so called ‘logical’ cultures may have interpreted him as denigrating and disparaging the very people he describes - namely the oral communicators. He suggests nine characteristics of orally based thought and expression, and asserts these as typical features of primary oral cultures. I will mention these nine in 2.5.2 below, but first I will explain the way Ong describes orality and memory.

### 2.5.1 *Remembering and storing*

Oral learners have a way of storing what to remember. After all, Ong says, they are not writing down memories and cannot ‘look it up’. Memorization, for oral learners, is not verbatim repetition. Oral memory differs significantly from textual memory, as the oral word never exists in a simply verbal context but is accompanied by intonation, volume of voice, pitch, bodily movements and mimics. Many times, hand movements and head postures give clues to meaning. There are patterns to this oral communication, often marked by rhythm, repetition, alliterations, formulaic expressions, and many times tied to proverbs. These go into the memory of a ‘text’,<sup>12</sup> as the whole body is part of the communication of the message, and the audience or interlocutor are part of recalling the message. Ong asks how a person in an oral culture recalls thought (2012, pp. 33-34). He says the thought and retention of thought is virtually sustained through an interlocutor and tied to communication, thus heavily communal. These are assumptions on which the following nine characteristics are based.

### 2.5.2 *Characteristics of oral thought*

Ong presents nine characteristics of oral thought and expression. The characteristics are important to inform us of his thinking on orality (Ong, 2012, pp. 37-57). Firstly, expression is *additive* rather than subordinative: The and-and repetition pattern signals this. Secondly, expression is *aggregative* rather than analytic as it carries a load of epithets: A princess is *beautiful* and not only a *princess*, the oak is *sturdy*, not only an *oak*. Next, language is *redundant* or copious: Repetition keeps the hearer and the narrator on track. Fourthly, expression is *conservative* or traditionalist in that oral societies invest great energy in saying over and over what has been learned. Ong says this inhibits intellectual experimentation. Society regards highly those wise old men and women who specialize in conserving knowledge, who can tell the stories of the days of old. Printing the stories downgrade the figures of the wise old man. Language is *close to the human lifeworld*: Knowledge must be conceptualized with reference to the human life. Closely connected, expression is *agonistically* toned: Life is agony, by keeping knowledge embedded in the human lifeworld, orality situates knowledge within a context of struggle. It is more common to describe

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<sup>12</sup> If we are allowed to call an oral communication unit as ‘text’, referring to the discussion by Ong on oral utterances.

exterior crisis (“we’ are struggling”) more than interior crisis (“I’ am struggling” - personal struggles). Next, oral culture is *participatory* rather than objectively distanced. Learning is achieved by close communion with the known in apprenticeships, whereas writing separates the knower from the known. Reaction to the known is encased in the communal reaction to the knower. Also connected to real life, expression is *homeostatic*: The meaning, semantics, of words is controlled by real-life situations in which the word is used here and now. The oral mind is uninterested in definitions, rather, words acquire their meanings only from their actual habitat, including gestures and facial expressions. Finally, expression is *situational* rather than abstract: Concepts are used in situational and operational frames of reference, keeping the internal environment relatively constant. Oral societies live very much in the present, getting rid of memories that have no present relevance.

### ***2.5.3 Two types of orality***

There are two types of orality, according to Ong; primary orality as opposed to secondary orality, where primary refers to cultures untouched by literacy, the culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, ‘primary orality’. It is ‘primary’ compared with the ‘secondary’ orality, that of present-day high-technology culture, in which yet a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices (2012, p. 11).

According to Ong, secondary orality is “both remarkably like and remarkably unlike” primary (2012, p. 134).<sup>13</sup> The descriptions on differences and similarities may serve us in this present study of the Angolar culture - and not the least - its subcultures. Maybe primary orality exists in Angolar or would we find what Ong points out: that “today primary oral culture in the strict sense hardly exists” (2012, p. 11). So I have to ask, why has Ong dedicated so much time to talk about primary orality if it hardly exists?

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<sup>13</sup> Similar, in the sense of group identity in both primary orality and secondary orality. Different, in that secondary orality covers larger crowd of people, and of diverse people, by some called the ‘global village’.

## 2.6 Critiques of Ong

The critiques of Ong have to do largely with his generalizations of the differences between oral and written. The description of his nine psychological processes of the human mind are also not deeply grounded and would take more than a linguist to elaborate thoroughly. Ong's dichotomy between oral cultures and literate ones has received the most critical remarks, some have called it 'the great divide theory' as the lines of division coincide with anthropological borders and in many cases racial divisions.

I will turn to the dichotomy further below, and refine it with other theoretical approaches. Paul A. Soukup teaches at the Santa Clara University at the Communication Department and has explored how orality can enhance the understanding of theology. In his review, *Orality and Literacy 25 Years later*, Soukup presents several reviews and other authors' critiques of the book. He says scholars "question one or another premise of the book" but what is certain is that they "certainly took up the challenge" and began discussing these terms with a new outlook (Soukup, 2007, pp. 9-10). The discussions spurred on by Ong's books benefit the whole discussion of what the two terms entail. In the aftermath of Ong, any study after 1982 exploring oral cultures "will make reference to Ong's work, either to disagree, (...) or to address the contentious issues" (Soukup, 2007, p. 11). Ong has left a legacy for the study of orality.

To conclude the presentation of Ong, his book *Orality and Literacy*, either the 1982 or the 2012 edition, I would argue is worth the study as it challenges the very view of communication. Ong challenges basic assumptions of each of the two forms of communication. He invites even Biblical scholars to re-visit long-held conclusions about the origin of Biblical texts. This present study does not move into the field of oral-literate composition of Biblical texts, but the oral features of narratives could definitely have implications even for written Bible translation practices and methodology.<sup>14</sup> Ong states that orality came first and is the basis of written words. Ong encourages the reader to refute his writings, argue with them, study them and think with them. Ong helps us (the Western reader) look at our literate state as through a mirror: we are literate and we get a glimpse into who we are for ourselves. Then, secondly, we see the oral ('non-literate') through new glasses.

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<sup>14</sup> Writings by Werner Kelber elaborates more on this theme: *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul and Q.*

One question relating to present day's cultures in any part of the world is: are there places untouched by knowledge of writing or print? This question becomes imperative to this present study of the interrelationship of orality and Bible translation in the Angolar society in São Tomé. If there is primary orality and no print available in a given society, then we should maybe follow Ong and his theories. If there are signs of something other than primary orality, then we need to modify the theoretical framework and think of other alternatives.

## 2.7 Ong and beyond

One particular scholar who has argued against Ong's unfortunate dichotomization of the two modes of communication, is James Maxey. Maxey is a PhD in World Christianity and Mission, he is currently Translation and Biblical Scholar at the Nida institute for Biblical Scholarship at the American Bible Society and former missionary to Cameroon. He says:

In Africa, where various functional levels of literacy exist, there remains today a strong oral dominance. This oral ethos has been recognized by theologians, anthropologists, and missionaries, but until recently its legitimacy has been marginalized. Proponents of BT [Bible Translation] have vaunted the introduction of literacy by BT. (...) Yet, postcolonial studies question whether the oral ethos of communities has been sacrificed in the pursuit of literacy (Maxey, 2010, p.181, My explanation in square brackets).

Dichotomization distorts our view on what counts more, namely the *interface* of orality and literacy. This *ethos* of orality in communities deserves our respect and proper studies, not a simple solution where we introduce our dichotomized view from a Western point of view - using, still unknowingly, our own Western *literate* glasses of interpretation. Ong's dichotomized view is merely a theoretical framework and should be discussed more thoroughly so that proponents of oral Bible storying projects do not interpret him too simplistic. There are recent critical voices demanding a more thorough discussion: Ryan Bush (2016), demanded that the status quo must be challenged; Lourens deVries (2000), debated the absolute differences between literate and oral societies; Charles Madinger (2010), asked for a more holistic model.

Some describe the oral Bible storytelling movement as having hyper-Ong tendencies. One example is Harriet Hill, who says:

Those involved in the orality movement tend to be very enthusiastic. They not only endorse Ong's claims but go beyond them. For example, some claim that oral communicators are not able to think abstractly and so limit the canon to narrative, or re-write the epistles in story form so people with an oral preference can understand them. ... (It is) education that affects a person's ability to think abstractly, not literacy itself. In fact, history contains innumerable examples of oral people who thought abstractly (Hill, 2010, pp. 216-217).

Claiming that oral people cannot think abstractly is patronizing and insulting to the oral learners. Instead of generalizing and simplifying, orality enthusiasts would do better to think of oralities and literacies in plural, as context driven. It is more correct to think of all people as oral, with some also literate, than to create a schism of oral and literate people. In most communities of the world today, both orality and literacy are present and alive, practically no community is just one or the other.

Ong seems to convey a so-called *universal view* on orality and literacy, wherein individuals or a society can be placed on a line of continuum. Oral on one end and literate on the other. In this view, individuals or even a whole culture are either one or the other, but they may *progress* from oral to literate with time.

Ruth Finnegan is an Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University, and has been debating oral performance and expression. Finnegan says, "there is nothing strange or unusual in the interaction of oral and written forms, and that plentiful examples of this are found in Africa, as elsewhere, both now and in the past" (Finnegan, 2007, p. 147). Ong needs to be challenged. So it is "time to move decisively away from the idea that such interactions are 'transitional,' as if some half-way position between two separate stages" (Finnegan, 2007, p. 147). Orality is not moving towards literacy but the two rather interact in correlations (note the plurality of *correlation*).

Ong may have been a product of his time. 35 years later, Ryan Bush discusses Ong's universal view. Bush is a missionary in the USA, implementing strategies to church planting among immigrants. He earned his Ph.D. in Missiology from Mid-America Baptist Theological

Seminary. Recent discussions on the theme, such as articles by Bush calls for a more nuanced debate, and does not agree that as a society “advances toward textuality it divests itself of orality” (Bush, 2016, p. 3). From Bush’s view point, the pursuit of pure orality is “misguided and quixotic” and, I would add, it does not belong to the era of post-colonialism (2016, p. 6). According to Bush, the universal view may leave us with the unfortunate impression that literacy produces societies that are “democratic”, and thus “civilized” while oral cultures are “barbaric” (2016, p. 4). The literature on this theme draws to a large degree on the binary view. This is a danger to the discussion itself and to practical implications. Articles written on the theme contain tables and diagrams showing the differences between the two. Obviously, Ong has had a tremendous impact and his notions can be seen as presuppositional on the theory and practices among missiologists. His theory deserves to be challenged and disputed.

The answer for a new way forward, according to Bush, is the *contextual* view (2016, p. 5). While the universal view holds that orality is characterized by effects and interactions that are to a large degree always and everywhere static without regard to local human purposes or conditions, the contextual view maintains that orality is context dependent. I will describe this view as it is presented by Bush, which contends that “orality is profoundly and constantly in flux as it is augmented and constricted by local realities” (2016, p. 6). This view sees each culture and each sub-culture as a context in its own right, as a “rich diversification of human expressiveness” rather than as a presumed static and simple construct (2016, p. 7). This requires that we add two words to our vocabulary: ‘oralities’ and ‘affordances’.<sup>15</sup>

It is possible to discuss orality as a phenomenon which has universal features to some degree. While saying that orality is non-existing as a concept, is to violate the whole discussion. However, adding the two terms opens up the concept to provide for a much richer definition, steering away from a simple, static characterization of people and societies. There is not one universal orality but several. Missiologists and Bible translators should try to study and pay attention to the local *affordances*. Each orality - the individual occurrence - is accompanied by specific affordances, certain tendencies. What was being seen as universal attributes may be reframed as *acquired conventions* that are shared by a cultural group. One convention or affordance of a given oral culture - for example the tendency to opt for concrete thought as opposed to abstract thought - can thrive, but only determined by a multitude of local factors. Concrete thought does not preclude abstract thought processes. In this conception of orality

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<sup>15</sup> Ryan Bush borrows the term *affordances* from Grant Lovejoy (1999).

(rather: *oralities*), “the dynamic interaction between affordances and local context is critical” and must be “carefully considered” in each local context (Bush, 2016, p. 8). Bush states that those working in oral societies must shift their *modus operandi* from indiscriminate employment of oral tools to highly contextualized strategies and tools based on careful observation of that local context (2016, pp. 8-9).

The contextual view is “supported by a growing body of empirical evidence” of several case studies (Bush, 2016, p. 6). *Oralities* is a new way of looking at the supposed opponent to literacy. As for literacy and orality, Bush suggest they “exist simultaneously — they coevolve and intimately interact with one another” (2016, p. 6). This dynamic interaction, hence *interrelation*, is thus critical to the way Bible translation is carried out in each given culture, hence, the interrelationship of orality and Bible translation is an important theme. One given culture may very well consist of several sub-cultures where each requires a study on its own. This discussion is crucial in our dealing with the oral and written translations of the Biblical message into Angolar. My analysis of the field work seeks to take this into account.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The orality discussion has evolved over the 35 years since the writings of Ong, and now demands the inclusion of the diversity of oralities, each with its affordances. The debate about orality vs. literary texts is a side-track and should be corrected. It is a misunderstanding that the two compete in the first place. Very much so in Bible translation. The two do not compete but they complete each other. Still, many Bible translation movements work out of the Ong perspectives of a binary division of orality and literacy.

I refer back to the utterance by my Mozambican fellow colleague and friend, Bonifácio Paulo as I talked with him about orality. He has received higher education and he says “But I am still oral!”. Could it be that there is room for both orality and literacy, and they exist simultaneously and in the same place and in the same consciousness without really competing? I have dealt with a theoretical overview above. In the following chapter I will present and describe my field study.

### **3 Field study**

The field study took place in São Tomé, in the heartland of the Angolar people, within a couple of weeks in October of 2017. The initial assessment of the field began ten months earlier on a study trip to the area. On that visit I began sketching out my interview guide to invite two segments of the population for group interviews; elderly people and young students. These groups would be the source of data on how storytelling in general and Bible stories in particular are functioning among the Angolares. There are two oral story translation projects in São Tomé: the Forro and the Angolar. The Angolares live in more rural areas than Forro so my presupposition was that storytelling would be more pronounced in the Angolar culture. I chose the qualitative method of *group interview* as it would give me the opportunity to discuss in an open ended, conversational style. Group interviews could make it possible to observe to what extent a group of Angolares practice traditional storytelling, and how the group responds to a Bible story told in the Angolar language.

I created a list of themes to discuss, a list of specific questions, relevant to the sub questions of my thesis. The list described whom to ask, what themes to cover, the physical setting of the interviews. Questions are asked with a purpose and in a sociocultural context. In this particular field context I aimed at making the interview a relevant strategy and not a threatening situation for the subjects. The interviews were conducted in the form of discussion meetings.

#### **3.1 The Angolar people group and history**

I will only talk briefly about the history of the Angolar people. The Angolar people live mainly in the Caué District with a total area of 267 km<sup>2</sup>. The official population of Caué is 6,031, according to I.N.E., the National Institute of Statistics.<sup>16</sup> There is also a group of a few hundred Angolares in Santa Catarina, on the western coast. The estimation by I.N.E. for the population of 2018 is 7,201 people. In comparison, the major language in São Tomé, Forro, is spoken by 72,400.<sup>17</sup> The Angolar history and origin are debated and very little written material exists, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gerardo A. Lorenzino is a researcher and has compared

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<sup>16</sup> Population in 2012, I.N.E. - Instituto Nacional de Estatística of São Tomé e Príncipe.

<sup>17</sup> [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com) retrieved 28 March 2018.

the two creoles Forro and Angolar sociolinguistically. The origin of the Angolar group is unknown, and “controversial” (Lorenzino, 1998, p. 44). He refers to Angolares as “descendants of maroon slaves who escaped from Portuguese plantations” (1998, p. 1). Lorenzino compares diachronically what sociohistorical factors are likely to have affected the development of these creoles. He says some Angolar oral stories mention Kimbundu speakers from Angola who arrived on this island and formed a community (1998, p. 11). Other stories tell about survivors of a ship wreck in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, who settled on the southern part of the island where the Angolares live today. This hypothesis has its first written source from the 18<sup>th</sup> century so Lorenzino suggests it “might be best regarded as *simply an oral tradition*” (1998, p. 259, my italics). This oral tradition was relevant to my study. The genesis of the Angolares was something I wanted to ask about in the group interviews. Maybe oral tradition would have stories of the shipwreck? The shipwreck scenario was recorded in writing two centuries after the alleged event. There existed no written source of reference until outsiders collected the account. One reason for scholars being suspicious of the historical accuracy of the shipwreck account is that there was a considerable transport of slaves from mainland Africa - Benin and Angola - via São Tomé, over centuries. The initial population of Angolares could come from this slave trade. Still, some oral stories say a ship went down and slaves escaped to establish the Angolar community. The oral tradition may serve more as an internal source of genesis and coherence marker than as an accurate account of historical precision.

As for the language use for this relatively small people group, Lorenzino argues linguistically that the need for an in-group boundary with the outsiders (the Santomense/Forro), led to keeping the original Kimbundu features in Angolar (1998, p. 210), features that divert from the Portuguese language. The “tightly-knit social organization helped to create the Angolares’ separate identity, as a badge of which language played a significant role” (1998, pp. 44-45). The Angolar language functions historically and currently as an identity marker. For Angolares, “language still signals group solidarity” (1998, p. 45). There is not only identity, but the group shows internal solidarity despite being a relatively small and vulnerable group.

Written sources claim the island of São Tomé was uninhabited when it was discovered by the Portuguese, probably around 1470 (Garfield, 1992, referred to by Lorenzino, 1998, p. 34). Since the origin of Angolares is debated, there is room for imagination, and space for myths

to appear as explanations. This controversial origin was something I wanted to use as a tool to observe what stories people have and whether they differ from the elderly to the youth.

### **3.2 Translation project into the Angolar language**

Neither the Forro nor the Angolar language has a Bible translation. In 2015 I worked with the São Tomé registered translation organization A.B.N.N.,<sup>18</sup> to elaborate the proposal to Seed Company for funding of a translation project for the language groups. The proposal suggested that A.B.N.N. should administrate the Angolar and Forro projects. The two projects would follow the same progress plan and be directed by A.B.N.N.. The plan described crafting of 20-30 oral Bible stories in the first phase, and the written Gospel of Luke in the second phase. The written phase was planned to be starting in March 2018. My field study was done while still in the oral phase (October 2017).

### **3.3 Research question and limitations**

I will give a brief repetition of my research questions and reasons for choice of method in this context of São Tomé. In my field study I wanted to collect data on how Angolares perceive and practice orality in their daily life. Next, how would they perceive literacy, that is, written texts and reading?

I chose group interviews over individual interviews, as it may feel more secure for the participants, and meanings can be negotiated between the participants. I wanted to create an atmosphere of conversation and dialogue, an openness in the interview setting so the interviewees could feel relaxed and not be suspicious to my inquiry. The number of interview participants was 24 total, in the two group sessions. The limitation in time and financial resources restricted the field study to these two meetings. I will describe these two interviews in depth as I assume those two selected parts of the population as most relevant to the research question.

As referred to in Drønen above, interview “is the best and easiest way to acquire information” (2006, p. 3). I assumed that interviews in groups would create a setting as authentic as

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<sup>18</sup> A.B.N.N. is an acronym for ‘The Bible in our Language’, in the Forro language of São Tomé.

possible in which the telling of stories would occur naturally. After the session with elders I learned from the translators that a traditional setting for telling stories, is at funerals where people sit in groups in circles, telling stories about the deceased. So the strategy of group interviews seemed appropriate to my research goals.

The Angolar people I interviewed speak Portuguese to various degrees, elders speak less fluent than youth. The working language for my communication with the Gatekeepers (translation team) was Portuguese. The interviewees spoke Angolar in the sessions. The Gatekeepers interpreted for me from Angolar to Portuguese. Discussions were so lively at times that for parts of the discussions there was not time to interpret. However, with the help of the translation team I transcribed these parts into Portuguese after the sessions by listening to the recordings. I later translated the Portuguese and made a written transcription in English.

Translation is always interpretation. This is inevitable. So also with this thesis. Difference in translation may come from the Angolar into Portuguese or from the Portuguese into English. This represents a limitation to the study. Ideally the full interviews and thesis should be written in Angolar by an Angolar speaking researcher, or second best in Portuguese. Neither of these was practical within my constrictions and limitations. The utterances are representative of the individuals only, as part of the group discussions.

### ***3.3.1 Reflexivity***

Reflexivity is a concern in ethnography and qualitative research. This study is no exception. I as a researcher am not a neutral objective observer. As the researcher I have impact on the utterances, the very data produced. Reflexivity in my project may imply that as a foreigner and researcher I could make people afraid to share their thinking. So, those who talk the most are the ones I hear and refer to in this thesis, while other people who talked less in the group, are not heard. All utterances are social actions, all things are said in context. People may answer according to what they think I or others in the group would like to hear. Another aspect of reflexivity is the presence of a sound recorder and my notebook. Though the interview participants seemed to forget the presence of the recorder, they are not used to it on a daily basis. We held the group interviews in the Bible translation office. This may have affected the freedom of participants to respond freely and with no constrains.

### ***3.3.2 Selection of participants***

Below, I will describe two interview sessions, the one with elders and the one with youth. The Angolar people live mainly along the south-eastern coast from Ribeira Afonso to Porto Alegre. I chose to make the interviews in the town São João dos Angolares, which has the largest community of Angolares and people see it as the heartland of the language. The translation office for the Angolar Bible translation project is located in São João dos Angolares. The translation team was my Gatekeeper to the community and for practical reasons this connection was the only way I could have gotten open doors into the community. I arranged my interviews with the help of the translation team. I had suggested we have the sessions in their translation office. The Angolar is a relatively small and closely knit community. I argue that I would not have gotten a closer contact with groups or individuals if I had come as a foreign researcher on my own within my restrictions. I chose to collaborate with the translation team for selection of each participant in advance to my arrival.

The Caué District administration have their head quarter in the town center of São João dos Angolares. The school for primary and secondary education for Caué is also located in São João dos Angolares. The Bible translation project rented a house in a central location of São João dos Angolares. This is where the group interviews were held. I had decided that the number of participants should be 12 at the most. The invitation letter was written by me in Portuguese and sent to the team in advance and was used for inviting the participants. Some of the translators had taken the letter to various locations in the Angolar community to ask people with Angolar origin, if they wanted to participate in interviews.

Selection was made with only a few main criteria: The interviews would use Angolar as the main language so people had to speak Angolar well. Next, I wanted a mixed group of male and female. For the youth group I asked for 18 to 25 year old students. To the group of elders I only asked for people the team thought to be ‘elders’. The team had to choose whom to invite based on this description.

Before the interviews started, I gave the group an explanation of my aims and themes for the research project. This is in compliance with ethical guidelines and builds rapport and confidence in the conversations.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> NESH, Ethical Guideline #8, The obligation to inform research subjects.

In the sessions I used the term *participant* (Portuguese: participante) with the people of the interviews. This seemed to work well for me and for them. The sessions ended with a free lunch for the participants, that I paid for. For the reference below I use ‘P’ for participants in general, ‘E’ for elders and ‘Y’ for youth.

### **3.4 Interview guide**

In my interview guide I had a plan for discussing three major themes in the groups: a) A Bible story told orally so I could observe participants’ reactions and interaction, b) The origin and history of the Angolares, to observe whether people know and tell their history, c) What would they prefer of a written story and an oral story? Is learning and remembering better by reading or by hearing a message?

These interviews serve as data for my sub question of how people among the Angolar perceive and practice orality in their daily life. How would people receive an oral Bible story and interact with it? The use of oral stories in general is indicative to how oral Bible stories could be received and used, by people outside of church as well as by Christians and pastors. The interview guide is part of the Appendixes.

### **3.5 Group interview introduction**

I arrived on the field on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2017. My interview guide suggested two groups of people from the community, for group interviews: Elderly and young. The meeting with the elderly was scheduled for Friday the 20<sup>th</sup>, the meeting with the youth on the following Saturday. The Angolar translation team had prepared their translation office for the group interviews. The room is just large enough for one row of eight chairs along the wall to the right. Three other chairs were placed along the short wall on the far end and one chair along the other short wall one meter from the entrance. The translation team, the interpreter and I were all facing the participants (Ps). I had pulled my chair half a meter out from the wall, with an almost equal distance to each participant (P). The space between us was empty except for a chair with the recorder. There was only tables along the short walls.

### ***3.5.1 Elders and use of Angolar***

I arrived 20 minutes late for the session with the elderly. I had planned to start at 8.30 am. Now at 8.50 am, all the 12 Ps were ready sitting on chairs except one P. The session with the elderly began with a short introduction of myself and I asked for permission to use the sound recorder to remember what was being said. Three of the participants were women. The interpreter (male, age 55-60) asked for their names and place of living. Participant E1 (female, age 50-55) asked in Angolar: “May I speak Angolar?” The interpreter said: “You may speak Angolar. You may speak Angolar as you want, freely.” Then E2 (female, age 35-40) presented her name and place of living. E3 (male, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, age 55-60) started speaking in Portuguese and the interpreter said: “You can speak the Angolar language. Here there is no problem. Do not fear.” Their ages ranged from 30 to 76 years. Among the Ps, nine out of the 12 reported they have no schooling, E3 had 8<sup>th</sup> grade, E7 had 5<sup>th</sup> grade, E11 had 4<sup>th</sup> grade. E9 (male, age 65-70) wished he could read but had difficulty reading because of his eyesight.

### ***3.5.2 Youth and schooling***

The session with youth took place on a day without school, on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> of October. Like the session with the elders I arrived at the office a bit late, at 08.45 am. The room was organized the same way as with the elderly. Some of the Ps reported to being friends from school, most were not known to each other. They come from São João dos Angolares, Monte Mário and Vila Malanza, all towns with Angolar majority populations. There were four women and eight men. The majority of the youth aged 18 to 22 years. There were two between 25 and 30. The ‘young’ participant at 30 was the same age as the youngest lady among the ‘elderly’. I introduced the aim for the session, the time frame and that there would be served a lunch after the group interview.

My first question was if they all go to school. This was an important piece of information to me, to confirm or refute the relevance of the interview data. They reported having finished classes 4<sup>th</sup>, to 12<sup>th</sup>, two were also teachers. I introduced myself and said I am also a student, doing an MA at a university in Norway. Some were surprised that I could be studying at my age – almost 50. Y1 (male, 12<sup>th</sup> grade, age 18-25) is a student and has experience in journalism. He uses Angolar with parents and if the other person also speaks Angolar,

whereas he speaks Portuguese with others who do not speak Angolar. Y1 said: “If he is studying, what is he doing here?” I did not notice this utterance at the time, only after listening to the recording. Y3 (male, teacher, age 25-30) reacted to me being a student by saying: “A student is a person who surveys, who searches innovation, knowledge and such. A student is not only one who is inside the school. Surveying is like being a student.” Y2 (male, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, age 30-35) has interests in fishing but is a teacher since 2009, in French. He has two children. He speaks Angolar with family, friends, while playing football, whereas he speaks Portuguese with teachers and students. He commented on this: “I think it is normal because studies do not have age.” He had seen on TV there was a woman studying at 66 years of age. Y3 and Y2 discussed whether that could be correct. The session overall was lively, with many interceptions and discussions among the Ps. The language of communication was Angolar and no one seemed to feel constrained by using Angolar for expressing their opinions.

### **3.6 Bible storytelling and interaction**

Now we turned to the next part of the program, the telling and retelling of a Bible story in Angolar. I included this in our activities for several reasons: The translation project has crafted oral Bible stories and I wanted to observe the reactions to such a story with various groups. I wanted to observe whether there were different reactions between elders and youth. I wanted to make this story a natural bridge to the discussion about traditional oral stories and their usage. What interest would this Bible story yield for the various groups? Not least, would someone be able to retell the story with ease or with difficulty?

There was yet another reason for asking someone to tell a Bible story in this group interview: The Bible storytelling was followed by the typical OneStory round of questions on what part of the story the listener liked and did not like. I could now observe a Bible story session with questions and answers.

### ***3.6.1 Elders retelling***

The interpreter, one of the Angolar translators, told the Bible story of Judas who sold Jesus, how Jesus and his disciples went to the garden of Gethsemane to pray and Jesus was captured. One of the other Bible translators asked the questions: What in the story did you like, what did you not like. If this was the only story of the Bible people, what would this story teach people? I observed great involvement on the part of the Ps. Half the group reported having a church relation. I wrote "Discussion" over 20 times in my notes here. Half as many with the youth. Then there was time for someone to retell the story. While the Bible translator was still talking, E9 stood up from his chair and stepped forward one meter. He stood self-assured and confident, ready to retell. Right at the moment when the Bible translator finished talking, E9 started retelling. He used hand movements for the more graphical parts of the story: one of the disciples cutting off the ear, Jesus bowing down, putting ear back on to the soldier. The retelling took exactly 2 minutes. The Bible translator asked if someone else would retell the story after E9. E6 (male, age 40-45) told it sitting on his chair. He spent 1 minute and 45 seconds. That original story was at 3 minutes and 30 seconds so there was content that the two did not remember.

### ***3.6.2 Youth retelling***

Among the youth, the majority of the Ps reported they go to the Catholic church, so, many of them had answers to the questions on the Bible story. There was great involvement by the Ps. Y1 compared the soldiers in the oral story with the police of today. The interpreter told the story of Judas again. Now Y2 retold the story and used 2 minutes and 10 seconds. Y2 is one who stood out in the session as having skills in remembering and telling stories orally. He was in general the one who talked the most. Y1 retold the Bible story the second time. He used 2 minutes and 40 seconds. This thesis does not analyze the accuracy of the retelling. I was more interested in observing the overall setting, how the story engaged the participants, and if retelling was possible.

### 3.7 Setting the scene for telling Angolar stories

In the next phase of the interview I wanted to learn more about their culture. I wanted to observe how storytelling works among the Angolares. In order to emulate a storytelling situation, I divided the 12 Ps into two groups of 6 Ps each. They sat in two circles. I gave them this assignment: “Discuss between yourselves so that you present a complete history of the Angolar people.” There were lively discussions in the groups. Many people talked loudly, simultaneously.

I did not know it at the time of the interviews, but as I said above, my interpreter told me in the transcription time that this way of gathering in groups is exactly how elderly do at a funeral. Men tell stories about the deceased, women are quiet. Then men sing and when the men get tired they shout: Coffee! The women get up and serve coffee to the men. Like here in this session one person tells a story, the next would repeat the story and they may all talk at the same time.

#### 3.7.1 *What do you tell to your grandchildren?*

For ten minutes the men were lively discussing and sharing stories, women were quietly listening. As it all calmed down and before I had begun asking, E4 (male, age 60-65) in one group shouted to the other group: “When we tell the story it will be stronger than your story!” (*Stronger* means *better*). All laughed loudly and some repeated the word *stronger*. E6 of the group said: “I will tell the story. The story is like this: A man was called by the name Cebola...” The story was about an Angolar man who was going to meet a girl in Monte Mário, a Portuguese colonial mansion. This Cebola was not welcomed with the white estate owner, he was almost killed, because, as E4 intervened and said, “the girl was the estate owner's daughter.” Including time for clapping and laughter, E6 spent just over 2 minutes on telling. E6 claimed today was the first time he had heard this story. Yet, he told it with ease except the correction by E4 about the girl's family background.

I wanted to hear which stories are transmitted over the generations so I asked: “What do you tell to your grandchildren so that they may get to know the origin?” E4 has over 20 grandchildren, he said: “After we have children and grandchildren we start telling stories to them.” He reported on having the habit of transferring stories about the past. E4 repeated this,

saying: “I tell to my grandchildren how the Angolares came and lived here in São Tomé.” E9 said he had heard from his grandfather that they had no matches but used a dried branch to make fire.

Participant E12 (male, age 65-76) has five sons who are alive, and 23 grandchildren. During the years he had worked mostly in the palm wine industry. E12 had another type of experience than the former, E4: “I have a grandchild. When I talk with my grandchild he turns around and does not have interest in the Angolar language.” Participants laughed. E12 came back to the theme several times, saying he asks his grandchild for a favor and the grandchild pretends like he does not understand Angolar.

I wanted to hear what stories they know of the early history and origin of the Angolares. Are there stories of heroes? E3 spent 1 minute and 20 seconds telling about the King Amador who was an Angolar who fought against the colonists, the Portuguese. “The Rei Amador allegedly came from the Southern area, from the Angolares.” E4 told that the Angolares came in a ship from Angola, the ship went ashore and people began living here, “They lived and there was no one else.” That is, the Angolares came first. Angolar stories suggest they themselves were the first inhabitants of São Tomé. However, the Portuguese records of history say there was no one on the island when the Portuguese came in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Who has the right to truth? The oral or the written source?

What came out of the group discussion was not so much a condensed history of the Angolar people as I had expected. I had anticipated a chronological telling of what came first and next till where the Angolares are today. Ps rather told bits and pieces of how people lived in old days and some stories about the colonial power and how Angolares managed to trick those authorities. Then the Bible translator asked E12 specifically: “Do you have a habit of telling stories to your children? Whatever story that helps in upbringing.” E12 told the story *The turtle and the king*. In this story the turtle lures the king into beating his dog and his wife to see whom of the two likes him better. The dog goes away but soon comes back. The wife flees and does not return. The turtle goes to the king and asks for an amount of food. The turtle carries this on his back and passes by the house where the wife is. He says this food is for the king's wedding, the king is getting married to someone else - which is not true. The wife then returns to her husband. E9 said “the king struggled a lot for the wife to return”. E9 then goes on to tell a slightly different version of what happened when the king realized his wife would not come back. E9 tells that the king blamed the turtle for the loss of his wife:

“Get away from me, away from me, away from me. You made me lose my wife.” This twisting of the story was interesting to me, stories change and develop in people’s minds. Stories are not totally fixed or unchangeable. How had this story been stored? E12 explained: “I have had this story in my memory for a long time. Someone told it to me a long time ago and it is in my memory.” Stories are told and old people store them in their memory. Some stories do not disappear even after a long time. But stories are maybe not automatically told by the elders to the youth.

### ***3.7.2 What do you hear from your grandfather?***

Among the youth, Y2 had heard the history of Angolar told by older people and at school. The Y3 had heard it from parents and grandparents. In what situations? Some parts of the history were acquired at school, in 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade, yet another part of the history was heard in the home and at the beach (where people gather). Y3 explained that “lately I was talking to the father of my father-in-law, he told me the history of the Angolar people in more detail. He is 75 years old.”

The male youth had examples of this, as did the female youth. Y10 (female, age 18-21) is a student in 12<sup>th</sup> grade, living with her parents. Her father is a fisherman and her mother does business with selling fish, and they both speak Angolar. She speaks Angolar when gathered with her family, and with fellow students. Angolar is used in singing in church sometimes. Portuguese is spoken with teachers, with strangers and when writing letters. She once got an assignment at school: “The teacher asked me to search for the history of Rei Amador. So then we went to talk with one elder in the city to teach me about the history and language of the Angolar people. We sat down and the elder told me the history. The man spoke in Angolar and I wrote. He taught me also to speak and to write Angolar.” She said she was about 12 years old and in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Y12 (male, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, age 18-21) had a similar account: “I had a friend, and his grandfather speaks a lot Angolar. So, one day I came to his house because we had to wait for the rains to pass and could not go out. And the grandfather began telling the history and how the Angolares used to live.” Next, he said he also heard from the teacher at school about Rei Amador and the way Angolares used to live in the old days. The Y1 used the expression ‘according to the elderly’, as the main source of information about Rei Amador and their origin.

King Amador is the alleged hero of the Angolares and fought for the people. Y9 (male, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, age 18-21) and Y3 contributed to the knowledge about Rei. Y3 said Rei Amador was the one who did not accept the Angolar people to be turned into slaves. He became a hero. The Rei Amador allegedly came from the Angolares. The question about the origin of Rei is a point of discussion in São Tomé. Did he come from the Angolar or should he be seen as a national symbol? The guide at the Museum of Culture in São Tomé City said he was Angolar.<sup>20</sup> The origin of Amador is debated to this day. He has become a symbol of national independence, and is celebrated on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January, the Day of Rei Amador. His image used to be prominent on the currency bills till recently. Some scholars claim he was not an Angolar but belonged to the larger community of Santomenses, and the discussion is heated.<sup>21</sup> Once again, who has the right to truth? The oral or the written sources?

### **3.8 Telling a story or not telling a story**

So far in the interviews, all Ps claimed that those who remember best the history, those who tell stories and have more knowledge are the old men. How about other groups in society; elderly women, young women, young men?

#### ***3.8.1 Elderly women and stories***

While retelling the Bible story was going on with the elders, the Bible translator asked if someone else would retell the story, after E9 and E6. The Bible translator turned to one of the three ladies, E2, and asked: “You too tell the story, too!” She was about to stand up but changed her mind. She said: “I understood the story but I personally cannot tell it well, well, well.” She pointed at E1 and asked her to tell it instead, E2 pushed E1: “You tell some of the story! The men have told the story. Two men told. Now it is only the women who have not told. Let us tell! It is a shame that we women do not speak. We should engage our strength.” But E1 was also reluctant. There was discussions within the group. None of the three women ended up telling stories. E8 (female, age 30-35) explained, however, how things were before:

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<sup>20</sup> I visited the Museum on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.telanon.info/cultura/2011/01/19/6100/rei-dos-angolares-nunca-existiu-em-sao-tome-e-principe/> Internet journal of São Tomé, retrieved March 27, 2018.

“Women had to sit down at the feet of their mother to learn some things.” Things like how to live with the husband, to cook, to do laundry, and look after the food in the fire. Then she goes on to explain how it is nowadays: “This does not exist now.” The girls leave their mother and go to parties. “They do not care for learning things.” This mother is in her early 30’s. The daughter she referred to is a teenager. Women are to teach their daughters about the house-keeping, they do not have the role of telling stories as such.

### ***3.8.2 Young women and stories***

In my observations, elderly women were not eager to tell stories. How about the youth? The story had been retold by two young men, and now the challenge turned to the young women. This spurred a heated discussion for almost two minutes, to the degree that I could not get it all interpreted. So, I asked: “What are you discussing?” Y1 answered: “We are discussing why women do not want to talk. Equal rights or gender, equality of the genders.” More heated discussions occurred for another 45 seconds. It ended up being Y1 who retold the story and was the third male person to retell. Later on I came back to the theme of women and mothers telling stories, the majority said fathers can tell but mothers do not say anything.

### ***3.8.3 Men and stories***

Do young men have opportunities to tell stories they know? In the group interview I observed that the men Y1 and Y2 were more eager and told stories with more ease than the other youth. Could young men tell something to elderly men? Y1: “It is more difficult.” He had tried to tell stories to older men. “There are days also when I am out walking and I meet the elders sitting, and I pay them a couple of glasses of wine, from there they start telling a little of the history of the Angolar people.” This way he created the relaxed atmosphere and from there the elders started talking. One of the translators wanted to make a dictionary of the Angolar language: He had to pay wine or something else to the elders, to create an environment of telling. Y1 goes on to referring to one day when he was in a conversation at the market. He was together with some older people: “And I tried to tell some story and they said to me: Who is this person who was born a short while ago, to come and tell us stories? What is it that you

know?” Some Ps laughed quietly at this point. He went on to say: “That made me ashamed. I no longer stop in front of those people to talk. Even if I would talk to them, I have to say other things than telling stories to them.”

#### **3.8.4 “We need to speak Angolar”**

We were now half way in the interview with the elders. After the break, the Bible translator stood up and had a speech that was not really planned from my side. He started by saying: “This is our culture and we cannot let it be lost. This program that we are writing here will become a part of the history of the Angolar people.” The Angolar language does not have any written material they can say is the Angolar language. There were never books written in the Angolar, not even in the historical archives. “We who are older in age will all die and the young who are growing up will not be knowing how to speak our own language so therefore we need to advance this project.” He was talking about the translation project they are doing, right there in their office. There was a reaction from one of the participants, E2, who said: “Not even in school can we speak our language Angolar!” She was talking about her children. The Bible translator went on saying that they who have grandchildren must encourage those to speak their language. The discussion continued about Angolar in school and in the community. E2 replied: “When we speak our language in the community, people laugh.” Others had similar examples of people laughing at them. E9 said he once was paid to speak Angolar among a group of men to entertain them.

#### **3.8.5 “Angolar has less value”**

The elderly made commentaries about the young people and their use of Angolar. E3 said: “We need to speak our own language with our children in our community.” E12 had several things to say to this: “When Angolares go out from here to the city, they speak Santomé. For they think Angolar has less value.” He said his children now only want to learn Portuguese and parents are fearful of speaking Angolar with their children.

I asked at what age does this change happen, that they stop speaking Angolar. There was discussion among the participants. E5 said: “When they grow up, they quit speaking

Angolar,” and “when they have got a job and other colleagues outside of the Angolares, they will no longer be linked to here.” I did not hear any mention of mocking, making riddles, and inferiority about Angolar while in the session with the youth, though.

### **3.9 Oral media and written media**

The theme of the discussion was still storytelling. I wanted to steer the discussion into what has to do with the written media. The translation project is about to enter into its next phase and translate the Gospel of Luke in writing. Youth are students and readers. The majority of elders reported they cannot read and have not been to school. What would these two groups have to say about the oral versus the written media? Would elders express the need for stories in oral form and youth prefer the book?

#### ***3.9.1 Elders, stories and the written***

I wanted to know how important telling stories is to the elders. So I asked a question about telling of stories: “Telling stories, is it important or is it not important?” The interpreter translated it into: “Do we like to sit at the feet of our fathers to hear stories, or do we not like it?” E1, a female answered: “Yes, we like to sit at our fathers’ feet to hear stories.” On the question why it is important, E3 answered: “When you are in a place, you have to see that person who commits the error and give him a story identical to that as a comparison. It may be a child or youngster or whoever person.” Stories are received *at the feet of the father*, then saved in the memory, then *transferred* to a person in need of advice, a child or another person.

I still wanted to hear what the participants had to say about the form of Bible stories: The Bible translator helped me explain the question: “What do you like the most, the story told or the story from the Bible? A Bible heard or a Bible written word for word, which do you like the most, which do you want the most?” The answers from E4 and E2 were simultaneous: “Reading!”. E2 explained: “Through reading you understand all that is in the Bible. The person reads and can teach another person.” E2 reported to being not a reader, and having gone to church before but not now. E4 is a member of a church. E12 had a suggestion to how the Bible storyteller had gained knowledge to this story: “He first read the story and heard the

story and then he came and told it. The one who does not know how to read... it is difficult to remember the story.” It is hard to remember a story just by hearing it. The interpreter says about himself that he is not a good reader, but he is clearly a good storyteller. He did not obtain the story from a book but from OneStory strategies on how to craft Bible stories.

E3 said: “Written. I do not have good eyesight, but I may have glasses and read the book of Luke. If you recorded the story, brought it to me... I may have this story in my memory. Another story appears. What I heard from here goes away. The head cannot preserve all. If you do not repeat the story constantly, it will go one year or two years and you forget the story.” I countered the argument by asking: “Is it not any good having oral stories?” E3 replied: “Oral is important, but written is better. What is told orally is good. But what is written in a book or a notebook remains.” E10 had a similar explanation: “It is best to read because if it is heard, spoken mouth to mouth (*boca a boca* in Angolar), today you hear, tomorrow you hear something else”. He said the worries are so constant and he would not remember what he had in his memory. E9 emphasized similarly: “What you hear is what is written in a book. If it is not written in a book, how can you hear? But with the written, someone can read and transmit.” Authority is in the written word.

Most of the elderly had reported they cannot read and I was wondering how they would benefit from having a book: “What will you do with this book?” E4 explained: “Even though I have no eyesight, I have a child who knows to read or someone, and I say ‘Read!’ and he reads for me. I have no good vision. The one who knows how to read, sees what is written.” It is not clear whether E4 was referring to a biblical text or books in general in this context. He answered the question to how a book can be used for a person with bad eyesight. E11 who was one of the three with schooling, promoted the book. He said to the other elders: “Do not ask for recorders, we need books.” He even turned to the translator the Bible translator and said: “You know the Angolares, that everybody needs and like books.”

The interpreter explained this to me during the transcriptions of the interviews: People like to read when they have just received the book. When the book is new. They read it several times, but after one or two months they have no more interest in the book because they have stored it in their memory. So they do not want to read it any more. From there they will tell the story to others freely, from memory. I will come back to this perspective in the chapter on analysis.

### ***3.9.2 Youth, stories and the written***

On remembering information, the youth had differing viewpoints, and were not decisive. Some said reading is better, some said hearing, a few said reading then changed their mind. Y5 said: “Reading is better because I manage to retell because if someone asks me I manage to answer because I know it by heart.” He reads, then retells orally. For Y3, he defended the written source, since it is more complete than the oral, “what we say by word of mouth is more summarized, and many times we can forget.” But “one thing is certain: we Santomenses have difficulties in reading. We do not want to read much.” The claim from Y3 is that people do not like reading. Y10 expressed the same concern saying it is not every day she has the desire to read, but to listen makes her remember better.

Young Angolares have heard more of the history of their people in oral form than what they have read of the history in books. What would be the preferred media of communication among the youth? Y1 said: “I say like this: For history to be history and last longer, it has to be written and also it has to be in an oral form. Some things people talk, and other things people write. And the two things need to go together.” There is oral history and there is written, but the written lasts. The youth reported that they have little experience in writing Angolar. So a written source in Angolar would help them learn how to read and write Angolar. Stories are forgotten, according to Y1, Y2, and Y3. By hearing it is easier to remember, according to Y10, Y11, and Y12. There was no consensus of opinion for one or the other. Y1 had come up with the idea that both oral and written media is good. The Angolar oral and written sources need to go together, is the proposal from the young Y1.

I still had in mind what Y3 had said earlier, that people of São Tomé have difficulties in reading. The session was nearing its end but I wanted to ask a few more things. I asked: “Do you have books at home?” Some said they have many books, Bibles, dictionaries. “Do you use the books? Do you read?” They answered that they read sometimes, when they have nothing to do. Reading and the Bible are closely connected. I had not asked about church attendance yet. This was an important piece of information to how oral storying and church life are connected. So I asked one by one what church they belong to. After the last youth had responded, one other youth said jokingly “That is the best church”. This spurred a long discussion on denominational issues. The Bible translator stepped in and guided the discussion.

After 10 minutes I interrupted and asked: “Think of your church. For you, while in church. Is it better with written or oral for it to enter your memory?” More than four Ps said: “The two together are good.” Others said the need for written material is more acute. Y3 who has a ministry in church, reflected on this, saying: “In church, there is one person who speaks to all, like the pastor. Sometimes the book is important. The pastor can read and transmit. Oral story is important, those who cannot read can listen to the recording.” Those who have the need for an oral medium should have this but it is mainly the pastor who transmits messages.

### **3.10 Summary of group interviews**

The interview with youth was almost done, and it was close to lunch time. They had been gathered for three hours, with a small break only. How had they perceived this session? Y2 said it is a long time, 10 to 20 years, since they had gathered to speak Angolar like this. So I asked what language do they speak between themselves? “Portuguese” was the unified answer, though they all had learned Angolar from birth till school, then they switched to Portuguese. Y12 said he had learned new stories about Rei Amador, Y11 had learned new stories about the turtle.

Elder E3 said after the group interview: it is many years since they had such a time of sitting down sharing stories with friends, having dialogues talking about the language. And they liked it very much. For both young and old, sitting in groups and telling stories in Angolar was something they had not done for many years. That is an interesting piece of information as we move into the analysis of the group interviews.

## 4 Analysis, discussion, and interpretation

From the presentation of the field study, we now move into the analysis and interpretation of the data, in dialogue with the literature. In chapter one, I introduced the theme of orality and how written presentations have been prioritized in the mission history, even among peoples who have had little exposure to reading.

In chapter two, we looked into some theoretical questions on the relationship of orality and literacy, with special attention to Walter Ong and critiques of his theories. In chapter three I presented my field work in the Angolar people group, with interviews and observations of the elders and youth.

I want now to turn to the discussion of the data. But first I find it timely to remind us of the basic assumption underlying this study. My assumption is, that the presence and usage of oral stories in a people group would be a sign of orality in that group. If people tell and retell traditional stories, then oral Bible stories may be an appropriate way to communicate Biblical truths. If people rather have preferences for written texts and literacy, then oral Bible storying may not be the right medium for communicating the Gospel.

The research question of the thesis is as follows: How do people among the Angolares perceive the relationship of orality and literacy?

In order to find answers to the research question, I divided it into two sub questions that informed the interviews and analysis. One is concerned with orality: How do Angolares practice oral storytelling in their daily lives? The other sub question is concerned with literacy: How do people relate to literacy in general, and to the potential of having written material in Angolar? I have chosen to organize my analysis and interpretation according to these two sub questions, looking at them from two perspectives, as if they were opposite viewpoints. I will argue for and against the *literacy* perspective, and then the *orality* perspective.

By the ‘literacy perspective’ I mean: The view point that one should continue the long standing Western practice of Bible translation by producing written Scriptures. If people express that they prefer written material, then one has to critically consider how appropriate oral Bible storying is to the group. The answer to this sub question may guide future decisions

on Bible translation priorities. I will present the analysis and interpretations from the so called *literacy perspective*, in 4.1. I will discuss the elders first, then the youth.

My next sub question, on *orality*, is concerned with the practice of storytelling among the people. I discuss the data from what I have called the *orality perspective*. By the ‘orality perspective’ I mean: The view point that the traditional practice of producing written Biblical texts for oral learners needs to be challenged. If people already have the practice of telling oral traditional stories, then one has to critically consider whether written material is the appropriate means to communicate Biblical truths. In the interviews I did observations of people *hearing* oral stories, of *telling* stories and *retelling* stories. This gave me data to analyze about what role orality has for people. In 4.2 I discuss the orality perspective, I discuss the elders first, then the youth.

After each section of discussion, I give preliminary remarks about the presence of orality and literacy in the two groups of participants.

In 4.3 I discuss the oral and literate minds, then the role of reading then telling.

#### **4.1 Literacy perspective**

I will now discuss the data from the literacy perspective. Bible translation has traditionally produced written texts. This is a problem, as we have seen in chapter 1. Bible translation to Africa historically has been dominated by written texts over oral approaches. Where the language did not have a Bible, Bible translation agencies initiated translation projects and the written Bible was the outcome of those projects. For people to be able to know the Biblical truths, they had to have the ability and a desire to read. Still, looking at it from the *literacy perspective*, people need the Bibles in the form of a book, to read. Traditionally, seeing Bible Translation from a literacy perspective one could argue that by producing texts, people can use them for preaching, discipleship, personal reading, and universally people prefer this form to gain access to Biblical truths. One can claim, then, that people in Africa need a printed version of the written word of God to get knowledge about God. As if, once people learn how to read, they will enjoy it more and get a deeper knowledge about God which they would then share with others.

The Bible in print has been a successful means to spread the Gospel to new people groups and new geographical areas. Establishing of schools has produced readers of the Bible. However, according to Herbert V. Klem, former Professor at Igbaja Seminary in Nigeria, “(a)fter over 100 years of literacy oriented missions, more than 75% of Africa does not read well enough to manage basic Bible passages, and many more who can read, simply do not enjoy the process” (1995, p. 60). On the basis of my data I cannot state whether Angolares are among those three quarters in Africa who do not know reading in Portuguese so well as to acquire the message. Still, in the Angolar sample interviews we see that reading is not very much appreciated, not even among the young. Therefore, let us take a closer look at how elders and youth perceive written material.

#### ***4.1.1 The elderly and literacy***

For the elderly Angolares, reading and writing is not something strange. Some of the participants would like to read. A few of the participants have a school background and could likely re-activate their reading skills if there were material in the Angolar language.

Elders in Angolar like to have a written source. One could assert that they would prefer a *written* Angolar Bible more than oral stories in Angolar. As we saw with elder E11 who promoted the book to the other elders: “Do not ask for recorders, we need books.” To the Bible translator he said: “You know the Angolares, that everybody needs and like books.”

#### ***4.1.2 Desire for written material***

I asked elders what they like the most, “the story told or the story from the [written] Bible?” The Bible translator helped me explain the question: “What do you like the most, the story told or the story from the Bible? A Bible heard or a Bible written word for word, which do you like the most, which do you want the most?” E3 said: “Written. I do not have good eyesight, but I may have glasses”, so others had to help him read. There were several who said: “Reading!” Through reading they would understand all that is in the Bible. Reading comes first, they said, the source of Bible stories is the written text. In my interpretation, their perception is that the Biblical message must come in the form of books.

However, one should carefully consider the local context where elders want material to read in their vernacular. What they want may not be what is most beneficial to them. As we have seen in chapter 2, Bush wants to avoid a simple, static characterization of people and societies (2016, p. 7). He uses the term ‘affordances’, in the sense of *tendencies*, to explain that there are shared acquired conventions in a cultural group. The convention that a written source is preferable is a shared convention, acquired over time. The assumption of the benefits of a book could very well be one of the acquired conventions.

### 4.1.3 *The written confirms*

The desire for books is one argument. Another argument to support the *literacy perspective* is what elderly participants expressed about the authority of writings: Elderly Angolares say they need the written Bible to *confirm the message*. The written word carries with it an authority that an oral story does not have to the same degree. When a story is presented, people will ask *where* the storyteller *read* the story. We saw it with E12 as he said to the storyteller: “He first read the story and heard the story and then he came and told it.” The basis for the story, is a written source. The book is needed to confirm and give authority. The interpreter, who is the eldest on the Angolar translation team, explained the relationship of stories and books:

Hearing, you cannot be certain about what you heard, it is like we did hear it but we cannot confirm it. People hear a story told, like *boca a boca* [*mouth to mouth* in Angolar], but people ask: ‘Is it certain that the person told the whole story? Is it real?’ When they see a book, they say: ‘Aaaa, the story is here!’ From there they start sharing. Basically, that is how the Angolares are.

Without the book there is no reference to the *original source*. That written source is authoritative, above the oral story and the book has a higher status and reliability as source of truth to the elderly Angolares. That image of books as authoritative could devalue people’s own oral stories which in turn leads to loss of valuable traditional insights. This seemingly high status of the written refutes Lovejoy’s claim that oral people trust the oral sources (2012, p. 12). If I use this definition, the elderly Angolares should not be defined as oral people.

#### ***4.1.4 Reading is passive and technical***

One could argue against the benefits of writing, and claim like Ong that the written word is passive, it has no life on its own, reading is passive, separating the word from the living present (2012, pp. 79-81). A written passage cannot answer back if you ask it a question. Oral storying is part of the living world, it is *interaction* between human beings because oral speech is natural and living. Ong places oral language above the written. Writing is only technical, print cultures have changed those cultures' mindset, which is what writing does, according to Ong (2012, p. 131). In societies untouched by literacy, oral storying is the source people trust in. Missiologist who have experienced the benefits of orality tend to say the same. Lovejoy says oral communicators can be distinguished by their "reliance on spoken, rather than written, language for communication" (Lovejoy, 2012, p. 12). The definition of orality is the extent to which people put their trust in oral rather than written communication. I may apply this definition and hold it up against the elders' trust in the written. Then, to what degree are the Angolar elders oral communicators? We will discuss this further below.

#### ***4.1.5 Hero stories are trustworthy***

As we saw above, elders put their trust in the written word rather than in the oral traditional stories. However, I see an inconsistency: Angolar elders referred to the Angolar genesis and the hero stories of their alleged Angolar king, Rei Amador. In these cases, the elders tended to opt for the oral version rather than the written, thus, claiming that Rei Amador was the Angolar king. What they have heard from their grandfathers is what they believe to be the truth. Lorenzino discusses the origin of the Angolar people by referring to the written sources available in Portuguese (1998, p. 34). These were written by the former colonial power, whom we see in the oral stories were in opposition with the Angolar people. The Angolar origin is unknown and debated. Stories about a shipwreck as the origin unite the people and add strength to their identity. I interpret this as a need for common identity, and this common identity is present in the oral stories, not in the written sources.

#### **4.1.6 *Summing up: The elders and the literacy perspective***

In order to assert the *literacy perspective*, one could argue, on the one hand, that elders need books because that is what they desire. One could argue that the elderly Angolares need books because they put more trust in the written form than in the oral communication. On the other hand, elders seem to trust the traditional oral hero stories of Angolar over the written Portuguese sources. Elders render authority to the texts but they may not be able to read them. Moreover, as we have seen, when it involves their identity and origin as a people group, elders give more credence to oral stories. This leaves me weighing one group of arguments against the other: The desire for books and the authority given to them, against the observable trust in oral traditional stories. I will arrive at a conclusion in the next chapter.

#### **4.1.7 *Youth and literacy***

In my studies on orality and literacy, I have discovered a gap in the theories of orality: The relation between educated youth and orality. Proponents of oral storying tend to refer to *oral characteristics* in the population, but the effects of schooling on youth seem to be largely forgotten. The population does not only consist of children, elders, and non-reading adults. Most of the young Angolares go to school or have been to school, in the local community, and some go for further studies in the capital. Youth are used to reading and writing in Portuguese. One could assert that reading, writing, and studying are more important to the youth than are oral stories. They prefer written over oral presentations. I will present arguments to support and to weaken this assertion.

#### **4.1.8 *Youth go to school***

The participants in my study are youth who are used to schooling. One would expect that youth prefer written over oral, using this single argument. In the District of Caué, 87% of children attend the public school.<sup>22</sup> Youth are used to reading and writing, they need to read and write well to function well in the society at large, beyond the geographical area of Caué.

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<sup>22</sup> Statistics from Delegação de Educação, Cultura, Ciência e Comunicação do Distrito de Caué.

Ong says written text has advantages, it represents something durable, and has potential to “being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potentially infinite number of living readers” (2012, p. 80). Youth are familiarized to this context, reading comes natural to most of them, and they live in this environment a great part of their daily lives. Reading and writing is the norm for most youth. This argument is to me the strongest for the use of written media in Bible translation for reaching the young Angolares.

#### ***4.1.9 Youth and the global influence***

The global influence of the Internet and social media has reached the Angolar people, in this generation. Orality and literacy are in opposition, as the elders represent orality and the written media is represented by globality.<sup>23</sup> There was an observable difference between elders and youth in the telling and retelling sessions, in that the elders seemed to *enjoy* the activity more than the youth did. Youth spoke Angolar in the sessions because they were invited as Angolar speakers, but between themselves as youth they speak Portuguese, as they reported at the end of the interview. Portuguese is the language of social media for the youth and to them the global world does not communicate in Angolar.

In the afternoons, I observed dozens of youth with cellular phones in the central square of São João dos Angolares, searching for an internet signal and sending text messages. In my interpretation of orality among the youth, these observations above are signs that orality is less prominent among youth than among elders.

Some of the youth in the interview were surprised that I was still studying at my age. However, several were acquainted with a lifetime attitude to learning. Y3 said “studies do not have age.” Youth regard studies highly, and the benefits of mastering a literate way of life. I have said earlier that reading and the Bible are closely connected. Youth are to a large degree literate and manage to read the Bible, in Portuguese and potentially in Angolar.

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<sup>23</sup> The quality of being global; universality, totality; specifically the quality of having worldwide inclusiveness, reach, or relevance. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/globality>

#### ***4.1.10 The written remains***

That which is written is what remains. Participant Y1 expressed it this way: “For history to be history and last longer, it has to be written.” A story can be told and forgotten. One hears a story and then one forgets it. This is not so strange, as the memory has limitations. Walter Ong claims that writing restructures consciousness (Ong, 2012, p. 77). With literacy one does not have to remember stories anymore as people’s history and traditions are preserved in written form. Preserving history in writing have the negative effect of losing some of the “oral-aural to a new sensory world, that of vision” (Ong, 2012, p. 84). If the people’s history and the Biblical truths are preserved in writing, the loss mentioned by Ong may not be of such great importance. After all, texts are so important in the globalized world and the young Angolares also want to be a part of that communication. For history of Angolar to be known beyond the storytellers, the history has to be preserved in writing. So also with the Bible.

#### ***4.1.11 Oral memory***

Messages can be read or heard but the main thing is: how do people remember it. Youth had differing viewpoints when it came to what is better for memory.

Walter Ong claims that in oral cultures people have certain mnemonic patterns to organize material in order to recall it (2012, pp. 33-34). How about the youth and the memory of oral and written communication? The group was not decisive. Some said reading is better, some said listening. These viewpoints are merely theoretical and it is difficult and not the scope of this study to establish quantitative data. In the interviews I discussed how people remember, to get an idea of how youth perceive oral forms as a means of retaining information. The elders said their memory was fading and they could not rely on it. Some youth said listening is the better way of remembering.

The consensus among the youth was that retaining a story in writing preserves the information. One argument for a written Bible in Angolar is my assumption that having access to written material in Angolar would create more interest in the Angolar language as a written source, among the youth. Youth would likely show interest in the Angolar language and learn it better if the language had written material and not only existed orally.

#### ***4.1.12 Santomenses have difficulty reading***

Can one argue that reading and writing has such a high value for the youth? It may be that the inherent nature of reading, as a passive and lonely activity (Ong, 2012, p. 146), does not appeal to the youth. Young Angolares in the interview do not like to read. Y3 (male, teacher, 25-30) said: “One thing is certain: we Santomenses have difficulties in reading.” When talking about reading, Y3 is referring to Portuguese written material, as Angolar material hardly exists. The youth have difficulties reading Portuguese, potentially, however, Angolar written material could be easier to read for the youth. This is an argument for written translation of the Bible into Angolar.

Besides, young people’s upbringing in an oral environment may have left a mark of orality in their mindset. Schooling and Portuguese do not remove this completely, and the vernacular mark makes youth apply orality in many situations of life, in familiar settings when outside of a school situation.

#### ***4.1.13 Summing up: The youth and the literacy perspective***

I have analyzed and interpreted the interview data of the youth in dialogue with the theoretical framework. Scholarly studies about the extent of orality among African students, however, are scarce. Orality studies seem to describe the whole community as a single unit, forgetting the sub-divisions of children, youth, students, adults, and elders.

Schooling is the single most dominant element which influences Angolar youth towards literacy and away from orality. Global influence arrives in written form and youth communicate through writing. The interviews also revealed that youth do not seem to enjoy reading so much, that is, the reading of Portuguese. Youth could gain from reading Angolar Scriptures, they would learn the language better through reading it.

We have seen how elders and youth perceive literacy and written material. Both groups highly appreciate the written. We are now going to look at the other perspective, that of orality.

## 4.2 Orality perspective

The aim of this thesis is to elaborate on the relationship between orality and literacy. From the orality perspective, Bible translation should not only produce written text, missiologists and Bible translators need to take orality issues into consideration and discuss those. One could claim that oral features in people groups in Africa are so dominant in all aspects of life, it would have implications for all people, on all levels of communication, including the Bible translation approach. My assumption is that, by observing the degree to which people tell stories and interact with them, one could determine to what degree people are oral. The level of orality is, thus, demonstrated in how they practice the telling of oral stories.

Bible translation organizations like OneStory and Seed Company, among others, are initiating storytelling projects among so called *oral learners*. International Orality Network, an affiliation of agencies and organizations, join efforts towards making God's word available to oral learners.<sup>24</sup> These initiatives take the missiological issues of oral learners seriously so that *they may hear* the Gospel (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005, p. 3).

Proponents of oral Bible storying could possibly claim that orality is a dominant feature of the Angolar people group. People would typically trust oral stories told in Angolar when it comes to their history as a people, more than they trust books written on their history, written in Portuguese. If we analyze the phenomenon of orality according to the Ong model, by some called the universal view, people would be either oral or literate. We will see how orality as an analytical category is represented among the old and young Angolares.

### 4.2.1 Orality and the elderly Angolares

From the orality perspective, elders in Angolar could be defined as oral communicators. Most elderly speak practically only Angolar in their daily life. They are people who '*can't, don't or won't read*' as they do not have much written material in their language. Most elders have not been to school, and they also do not practice the reading of Portuguese books.

From the orality perspective, one can assert that a non-reading Angolar, in this case the elders, are primary oral communicators. One could assert that, for the elders, oral Bible storying in

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<sup>24</sup> <https://orality.net> retrieved 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

itself is the primary and also sufficient medium of communication for the message of the Gospel.

#### ***4.2.2 Angolar identity in the oral language***

To support this assertion from the orality perspective, one could argue that Angolar is the spoken language for the elders so it is an identity marker for the elders. Lorenzino studied the identity and solidarity among the Angolares, looking at the linguistic data (Lorenzino, 1998, p. 2). The fact that Angolar is still practically an oral language only, and group identity is still maintained up to this day, proves that written presentation of language is not a prerequisite to maintain unity as a people group. As Ong says, “(o)ral communication unites people in groups” (2012, p. 68). One could say this group unity in Angolar is represented by the elders and their orality.

Elders want their children and grandchildren to learn and speak Angolar. The relatively small number of Angolar speakers have maintained their use of the vernacular. Angolar as a spoken language is maintained despite pressure from the larger language communities, i.e. Forro. So, Bible translation in form of oral stories would be appropriate and sufficient to the elders.

#### ***4.2.3 Angolar storytelling is natural***

To support the assertion one could also argue that storytelling is a natural activity for the elderly Angolares. Men in particular, enjoy telling stories. After hearing an oral story told, it required little effort for some men in the group interview to retell most of the story more or less accurately. Retelling was accompanied by gestures. This is supported by Ong, who claims in oral cultures “speech is more performance-oriented, more a way of doing something to someone” (Ong, 2012, pp. 173-174). Performance through storytelling is a culturally relevant way of communication for the elderly Angolares, at least for the men. Society does not encourage women to have this function. Storytelling performances appear naturally to the elders. The interview sessions created a setting where storytelling could occur. In this setting, the engagement was very evident, people spoke loudly and were emotionally involved. Storytelling and listening were joyful activities for the elders. There seemed to be a form of

competition to craft the best story, as I observed with the male elder E4: “When we tell the story it will be stronger than your story!” ‘*Stronger*’ in the sense of ‘*better*’. I interpret this as storytelling having a bit of status among the elderly men. I concur with Ong and I will use the expression ‘performance-oriented’ to describe the Angolar storytelling men (2012, p. 173). These arguments support the assertion that elders are primarily oral.

#### ***4.2.4 Reading is irrelevant***

Another argument to support that elders are primary oral communicators, has to do with reading. Reading and writing for the elders remain largely irrelevant to their daily lives. They may have a child or grandchild who can read for them if they have books. Oral stories are not like written entities, they are not fixed but flexible and situational. Oral communicators enjoy the flexibility of stories. We saw that in the way the *turtle story* was told and twisted along the story session. This argument is strengthened by the theoretical framework of Ong, where he says that oral communication unites people whereas “reading (is) solitary” (2012, p. 68). When a story is shared, the sense of group creation is enhanced. Translation of parts of the Bible in the form of stories would serve the double purpose of group identity and be a means to spreading the Gospel.

#### ***4.2.5 Pure orality is misleading***

Bush warns us that the Ong model of pure orality is misguided (Bush, 2016, p. 6). When proponents of storytelling refer to orality, they refer too much to the binary view, where people are either one or the other, according to Bush. Angolar elders cannot be classified as *primary oral* because they are not untouched by writing. They even want to have *more* written material. In particular the Bible. As we have seen, the elders were asked: “What do you like the most, a Bible heard or a Bible written?” Two elders answered at the same time: “Reading!” A little while later I asked if oral stories are not any good. E3 immediately said: “Oral is important, but written is better.” The desire among some of the elders for written material in Angolar may be a sign of sense of subordination to the majority language group in the country. With written material in the language follows higher status for that language and

ethnic group. In my interpretation, Angolar elders wish for a sense of higher status for their language and that may be achieved if they had printed books in Angolar. Elders perceive literacy as more beneficial than orality.

#### **4.2.6 *Elders are not oral only***

Ong seems to convey a so-called *universal view* on orality and literacy, wherein individuals or a society are either oral on one end or literate on the other and they have the potential to *progress* from oral to literate with time. I would argue that individuals or a society cannot be placed on a line of continuum, from oral on one end to literate on the other. The reason is that, societies cannot be described in this dichotomized manner, as being either *oral* or *literate*, according to Bush (2016), deVries (2000), and Madinger (2010) because it is a too simplistic model which could be seen as belonging to the colonist era. This, to me, is a strong argument against classification of elderly Angolares as oral only.

#### **4.2.7 *Summing up: Elders and orality***

In this paragraph I have strengthened the assertion of the elders as being oral communicators by pointing out that the Angolar language is an identity marker, and the observation of elders' seemingly ease and enjoyment of performing stories. Besides, reading seems largely irrelevant to the participants' daily lives. These three speak for a strong presence of orality among the elders, and thus, that literacy is not a necessary component for communication.

I have tried to weaken the assertion that elders are primary oral learners by use of two arguments: Firstly, Ong's model of pure orality is misleading, according to Bush (2016, p. 6). Even Ong himself says *primary orality* hardly exists (Ong, 2012, p. 11). Secondly, Ong's universal view is binary, divisive, and does not belong to the post-colonial era.

To conclude this section on elders and orality, several scholars claim that there is an interplay of orality with literacy, (Bush, 2016, p. 5; Finnegan, 2007, p. 147; Hill, 2010, p. 217; Madinger, 2010, p. 211). Primary orality as a definition does not apply to the elderly Angolares. We need to look for a better definition of orality. In my interpretation, the

contextual view presented by Bush, is viable, where “orality (...) is constantly in flux (...) constricted by local realities” (2016, p. 6). The local reality for the elders is that the society has changed over the past generations. Trademarks of a primary oral culture were likely more prominent before, we must assume, but is not so clear-cut anymore.

After the group interviews, some elders said stories are not told so often in groups like this. It is not a daily activity, although they like it. This is a sign to me, that the activity of telling and performing is largely becoming lost. Elders do not seem to have a functional system of maintaining stories even among themselves except at funerals, where the elderly men share stories about the deceased. The narratives about their history, may disappear when the elders die, as those are the ones who maintain the memory of the Angolar oral history.

We have discussed the elders from the orality perspective and tried to find how they perceive orality. Now I will look at the youth and let the orality perspective talk and make an assertion that I will then discuss.

#### ***4.2.8 Orality and young Angolares***

Young Angolares say they used to hear stories from their childhood, told by their grandparents and parents. Grandparents, and also parents to some degree, used oral stories in the upbringing of the youth to teach them important concepts of life. So the concept of orality was surely present up until school age, and, one could claim, is still an important feature of their mindset. They still maintain contact with parents, and to a certain degree with grandparents.

So, from the orality perspective the assertion is that young Angolares grew up in an oral setting, are still connected to that setting, and, despite their ability to read and write, in their mindset they are still oral communicators. Oral Bible storying in Angolar, thus, represents a culturally appropriate form and the most efficient way of communicating the message of the Gospel.

#### ***4.2.9 Angolar language as inherited identity***

Portuguese is the language of wider communication for youth, it is the language of education, for facts and information. However, as Lorenzino states, the Angolar “language still signals group solidarity” (1998, p. 45). This could also be said to apply to the youth. Angolar is the familiar language, also in the literal sense of the word. Youth report of using Angolar with family members and close friends. What identifies them as Angolares, is the Angolar language. Since the language practically only appears in oral form, and little is written, one could argue that Angolar speaking youth practice orality every time they communicate with family and friends. So, with that analysis, I can interpret youth to be basically oral, but restricted to their identity as Angolares. In the Portuguese speaking environment, at school and in the workplace, their identity is strongly influenced by literacy. Angolar youth seem to live, thus, in two separate and separated realities.

#### ***4.2.10 Angolar inherited stories***

Oral stories told by elders about history and origin, touch upon the youth’s identity as Angolares. One can say storytelling is not a new thing for the youth, they have got a rich inheritance. As shown in this example: When Y10 was at the age of 12, her teacher asked her to search out the history of their alleged king, Rei Amador: “So we went to talk with one elder.” She sought out the history of the Angolar people, through the stories told by the elder. Running along the same line, is the observation that some young men could do retelling of stories with the same ease as did the elders. In my observation, two of the young men in the interview, Y1 and Y2, were gifted storytellers. They captured the audience by sharing stories about Angolar history with passion and dedication. The two men also retold the oral Bible story with relatively little effort. I interpret this as a sign of orality being profound to the youth.

If I apply another interpretation to this observation, I could argue that *only two* of the 12 youth stepped forward as storytellers and were oral performers. This shows me the majority did not have a storytelling mindset or aptitude. So, an interesting question would be this: Is the desire to tell stories the norm or the exception among youth?

#### ***4.2.11 Transfer of stories***

Yet another aspect of storytelling, is the culture of transferring stories. According to the elder E4, he reported on having the habit of *telling stories to children and grandchildren*. There seems, however, to be a missing transmission of stories from elders to youth: Y12 reported that the stories about Rei Amador were new to him, and Y11 had not heard the stories about the turtle before. So the transmission seems to be inconsistent in that only a few youth were familiar with the stories. Although we do not have a statistical reference to how many stories are transferred from old to young, I interpret these observations as a sign that the transfer of oral stories from old to young is largely missing.

Could this habit of telling stories to one another, be restored by the use of Biblical oral stories? Or is it lost and cannot be restored? We have seen above, that elders have a cultural setting where stories are shared, namely in funerals. Men will tell stories about the deceased. I can only assume that this natural setting for storytelling is not prominent among the youth. Youth report they are not used to sitting in groups and tell oral stories. One youth said he had not done this for a long time, reportedly 10 to 20 years. That meant they must have been in their early school years when it happened last time. This reference to number of years is not very reliable, memory can slip as to when storytelling in a group happened last time. Still, if there is no natural events that produce stories perhaps oral Bible storytelling could have an opportunity to create a space for such a new setting.

#### ***4.2.12 Reading is difficult***

Reading in Portuguese is not so easy. The claim from Y3 is that he appreciates written material but he realizes people do not read much. Y10 (female 12<sup>th</sup> grade) expressed the same concern: It is not every day she has the desire to read, but listening makes her remember better. A typical definition of orality is for people who *'can't, don't or won't read'*. In the case of the Angolar youth, they *can* read (they know how to read), they *will* read (or they *may* if they prioritize it), but in actual life they *don't* read so much.

How should practices of oral Bible storytelling reflect this reality that the youth presented? The majority of youth *can* read but they do not *enjoy* reading so much. The Ghanaian linguist Gilbert Ansre talks about Christians' practice of reading the Bible and says, "effective

Christian readership is extremely scarce in many parts of the world, (...) (it seems to be most evident in the African continent” (Ansre, 1995, p. 66). He says the needs for Scriptures to the “‘literate but non-reader’ needs to be met” (1995, p. 66). The youth of Angolar is an example of this, as I see it. Ansre argues that Bible stories in audio would have a much larger impact than the written texts (1995, p. 68). I support his argument when it comes to the practice of Bible reading in particular, so this would have consequences for the choice of forms of communicating the Gospel. The low desire to read, makes oral Bible storying a potentially more effective means of communication.

The reportedly low interest in reading could also be related to the fact that Portuguese is the secondary language, while reading in Angolar could possibly be more profitable and enjoyable.

#### ***4.2.13 Schooling promotes writing***

Most youth have been or are going to school. My argument in support of the *literacy perspective*, can also be applied to weaken the *orality perspective*. The growth in education certainly must have an impact on society and individuals. This is worth more studying. I would argue that education is strengthening the role of written forms of communication and weakens orality, also for the society at large.

The argument is that, reading and writing are such prominent parts of the youth’s lives at school, to the degree that they do not give great priority to oral forms. We saw above, the example where the girl went to listen to an elderly man with the motive to hear stories about Rei Amador. Still, this was an activity encouraged by the school, not a deliberate act initiated by the youth. The outcome of the orally told story was even a *written* presentation. As an argument against the prominence of orality, modern technological media and the Internet are the most prominent sources of knowledge, not the traditional stories. The exception may be the history of the origin of the Angolar people where some youth approach elders and listen to them.

#### ***4.2.14 Summing up: Youth and orality***

How oral or how literate are the Angolar youth? Before I draw a conclusion, we have to consider the methodological approach I used in my research. I need to qualify the conditions to which I undertook this study. In the first place, the selection of participants for the study is relatively small, and the number of people who gave valuable input was only a handful. The participants had a clear understanding of the role and importance of school, and that using Portuguese and learn it well is important for their future occupation.

Next, there was not a great variety within the selection of young participants because I wanted to invite *students* purposely for the sake of having a contrastive group to the elders. If I were to interview other groups of Angolares, like non-reading youth, youth who are not students, or youth who do not speak Portuguese, I would likely have reached other conclusions.

I also see it appropriate to consider the reflexivity of my presence in the interview. In the first minutes of the group interview, the theme was *schooling* and *studies*. It is not unlikely that what opened the conversation might have influenced the rest of the discussions. The youth may have been influenced to present themselves as more *literate* than *oral* in this setting.

On these premises, I have tried to apply the nine trademarks of Ong on the Angolar youth, and I can find only *one* of the characteristics which seems to describe the youth in the selection: ‘Expression is conservative’, in that “society regards highly those wise old men and women who specialize in conserving it [knowledge]” (Ong, 2012, p. 41). I cannot see strong signs of neither of the other eight characteristics presented by Ong (2012, pp. 37-57). A more thorough study of psychodynamics of the youth could reveal oral features but from my limitations and interpretation of what youth said, I did not observe that. The orality features among the youth are not prominent.

Given the arguments above, I find it difficult, then, to define these participants selected among young Angolares as basically oral communicators. In order for oral Bible stories to be an effective method, it will have to gain ground among the youth. And it may have the ability to gain ground, considering that parents and grandparents impacted the young people’s first years of life to appreciate oral communication.

### 4.3 Oral and literate mindsets

The perception people have of orality and literacy, comes from their mindsets. The expression ‘mindset’ in this context originates from Ong (1982, pp. 131&167). The orality or literacy mindset is formed by people’s past and present experiences. Youth seem to perceive orality as having less value than literacy. They prioritize literate means at the expense of oral means, by choice or by the demands and realities of life. The elders see this and are dissatisfied, like E5 said about the youth: “When they grow up, they quit speaking Angolar.”

For the sake of this discussion on mindset, I find it appropriate to use two contrasts. I want to apply the theories of Ong about the *oral mind* and the *literate mind* on the Angolar elders and youth respectively. If we were to let Ong’s theory inform the discussion, on which side would we place the young Angolares? Youth would, with Ong’s theory have experienced a *shift* in mindset as they became literate. As a consequence, they would now have *completely different ways* of restructuring thinking and of rationalizing, different from the oral mindset. As I have said before, the theory of *shifting mindset* is debated. Still, what I observed among the youth could give me the impression that some kind of shift has taken place over the generation, and exposure to reading and writing would likely be the greatest influencer. According to Ong, the elders would have an *oral mind*.

For the young Angolares as for the elders, Bush’s approach, where “orality (...) is constantly in flux (...) constricted by local realities” seems to be a more relevant description (2016, p. 6). The local reality is that, (a) Youth know how to read but they don’t read much, (b) They acknowledge the authority of the elderly storytellers but they don’t approach the elders much, (c) Finally, storytelling is a joyful activity to some young storytellers but youth typically do not gather with storytelling as their main goal. In contrast to the elders, I would claim the young participants tend to lean towards the written more than to the oral. Trademarks of orality among the youth are not prominent. Still, they can take advantage of the oral medium, for instance in oral Bible storytelling, and some report they remember best what is heard than what is written.

### **4.3.1 “Both together is a good thing”**

So far, we have discussed the either-or perspectives of oral and written forms of communication. There are valid arguments for one and the other. It seems to me that Ong’s *primary orality* does not exist within the Angolar society, neither with the elders. Primary orality must have existed at a time in the past, before schooling was introduced but it is no longer *primary*, not even in the older generation. Books now have a high status and are given authority as a source of truth.

Still, youth have been exposed to their history by elders in the oral form, more than they have read books about their history. However, they see the need for both forms, as expressed by Y1 this way: “For history to be history and last longer it has to be written”, and he continued “and also it has to be in an oral form because someone will talk.” There are oral stories in circulation, and there is written information. The oral and the written serve different purposes but they are also interrelated. I argue that one could transpose this to the Gospel: Written presentation in a book and oral storying are both valid forms and are both needed.

### **4.3.2 From reading to telling**

Oral and written forms are both valid, and important, and needed, say the two groups. Another crucial argument I would propose for *the two things together*, is the way books are used in Angolar. According to the interpreter, as we saw in 4.1.3, people seem to use a written source as the starting point, and then base the oral presentation on that. The argument of interrelationship is supported by the other explanation the interpreter gave me, that *people like to read when the book is new*, as we saw in 3.9.1. After a while, *when they know the story by heart they tell it from memory*. Orality is based on literacy and people are not only oral or only literate. The book is needed to give credibility to the oral, but the book is interesting to people only so long as they need it to create the oral story and internalize it. Finnegan asserts, “there is nothing strange or unusual in the interaction of oral and written forms, and that plentiful examples of this are found in Africa, as elsewhere, both now and in the past” (Finnegan, 2007, p. 147). For the Angolares, both old and young, I would claim they can handle both forms, they even prefer having both available.

Bush affirms that literacy and orality “exist simultaneously — they coevolve and intimately interact with one another” (2016, p. 6). In my observations, I see the same with the Angolares. There is no either-or, elders do not discount written forms, and youth do not reject the oral. I had expected the youth to be consequently more literate, and the elders to have a stronger tradition of oral storying. These two groups, however, seem to overlap to a certain degree in that viewpoints on orality and literacy co-exist. Reading and telling are closely related. This interaction should be reflected in the practice of Bible translation for the Angolares.

In chapter five we go to the conclusion. So far, I have asserted that elders are largely oral in their communication. Youth can read and write and use it in their academic life, but in their familiar situations they are also to a large degree like Bonifácio, who said: “Education does not pull me out of what I am. Having degrees as an oral person does not mean I am no more an oral person. *I am still oral!*”

## **5 Conclusion and outlook**

In this study I have looked at orality and literacy in the context of the Angolar people group of São Tomé and Príncipe, as it relates to the larger context of Bible translation. This study on orality and literacy has been intriguing to me personally. I was fascinated by the discovery of the diversity and extent of this theme, and how it relates to Bible translation.

Orality and oral storytelling are closely connected. Missiologists and Bible translation agencies are becoming more aware of the importance of orality in Africa and elsewhere, where oral Bible storytelling can be a means to reach oral learners. The way a people use traditional oral stories could help us understand how that people might use and receive oral Bible stories.

For this context study in the larger context of Angolar Bible translation, I chose to use qualitative research methods, in-depth interviews and observations to collect field data. I chose to invite participants for group interviews, and I presented the interviews of elders and youth. In my theoretical reflections I presented what literature I used for the analysis of the field data.

### **5.1 Answer to the research question**

I searched for an answer to this research question: How do people among the Angolares perceive the relationship of orality and literacy?

The ‘people among the Angolares’ was specified in two sub-groups, namely the elders and the youth. I analyzed the question from two perspectives, the literacy and the orality perspectives, and I looked at data from the two groups of participants.

After the analysis and interpretation of the data I conclude that elders and youth perceive the relationship of orality and literacy as complementary. Written and oral expressions are interdependent, the oral is based on the written source, and both are necessary.

## 5.2 Main results

One main result of my analyses is that elders seem to esteem literacy higher than the oral communication. Written material has a higher status than oral stories. The written is perceived to be the source for stories, and the book confirms the message. However, when it involves their identity and origin as a people group, elders give more credence to oral stories. There is a tension here. Through my analysis I have concluded that orality weighs more, because elderly Angolares have strong oral tendencies. They are, however, not statically situated in orality, they take advantage of the written where it serves to their advantage.

Another result of my analyses, is that youth seem to esteem orality positively and they say they need both literate and oral forms. Youth perceive written material to be of greater importance and use than do oral stories. However, despite the youth being greatly influenced by literacy, the youth still have what I would call the *mark of orality* in their mindset. Orality is related to their identity as Angolares, while literacy concerns their function in the society at large. Youth perceive the two as if they belong to two separate realities of life, the familiar and the exterior, each with their own function. The results are important for current and future Bible translation strategies.

As we have seen, I concluded that elders are basically oral, but literacy is sometimes more advantageous to them. Elders may express that they want written Angolar material due to their reverence for the written word. However, what they desire and what they need may differ. In my interpretation, they benefit the most from the oral due to the performance character of stories.

I concluded that youth are more literate than oral, but they use orality in the form of spoken language in familiar settings. Youth are part of the greater world of communication, and use Portuguese, which represents a separate way of life from the Angolar. They could use Angolar written text to learn and maintain more interest in their vernacular. Still, Portuguese and Angolar languages fulfill separate functions according to the needs of the life situations. They still have a mark of orality from childhood, so oral storytelling is not strange to them.

### **5.3 Possible outlooks**

We have seen that both groups of participants prefer having both oral stories and written material in Angolar. They want the two forms to coexist; they need the written to give credence to the oral stories. I support the viewpoint of Lovejoy, that both oral and written can coexist and benefit from one another:

In the contemporary missions, Bible translation, and Scripture engagement movements there is a growing recognition that many people in newly-evangelized locations may have both literate aspirations and strong oral preferences. We can affirm both realities. Orality and literacy are not a zero-sum game. One is not inevitably at the expense of the other. Each can benefit the other (Lovejoy, 2009, p.10).

Angolar preferences and needs go along both paths, and Bible translation practices can benefit from applying both forms.

My study shows that a single form approach to spreading of the Gospel, may have as a consequence that only parts of the population gain access to the message. Based on the conclusion that orality and literacy are perceived as complimentary, I would propose a dual approach to translation: Translating the Gospel of Luke in print as planned, and supplement the texts by crafting 35 to 40 selected oral stories based on the Gospel of Luke. The full written Gospel of Luke can become available after the whole book is completed, while oral stories could be distributed as they become consultant checked.

#### **5.3.1 *Written Luke only***

The ideal would be both of the forms. Bible translator Dr. Christine Kilham argues that the ideal is to have a variety of ways for the Gospel to be communicated but the ultimate goal is the written Scripture (Kilham, 1987, pp. 45-46). One may not, however, have the opportunity to get the two forms together. What would be positive and negative effects of having only one or the other? What if one, hypothetically, had to choose between Angolar written Bible texts and Angolar oral Bible stories?

Having only the written Luke would give youth an exposure to the Angolar writing system. It would most likely bring higher status to the Angolar language. The book is needed to confirm the message, as people want to know where the storyteller read the story. I observed this both with the elders and the young. The book contains the full story, and is needed as a reference point for storing the accurate content. Elders and youth would likely appreciate having the written Gospel of Luke in Angolar. It would help preserving the language as a written as well as an oral language (Wendland, 2004, p. 95). Young Angolares would learn how to read and write the Angolar language. So, a printed book could preserve the Angolar language better than at the present, and help youth to be exposed to writing Angolar. However, the written would exclude elders, children, and non-reading adults from having primary contact with the Gospel message.

Realistically, translating the Gospel of Luke could take several years, and getting the whole Bible into the Angolar language would possibly take decades. Wafler says, “(a) multi-decade project like completing a New Testament might bypass the actual needs of the people in a language group” (2006, p. 7). In the meantime, churches already have and use the Bible in Portuguese. Besides, translators could craft oral stories based on Portuguese written sources. Consultant checked oral stories may be distributed almost instantly through recording devices or by way of mouth to ear, *boca a boca* (*mouth to mouth* in Angolar).

### ***5.3.2 Oral stories based on Luke***

How about aiming for impact through oral Bible storytelling? The missiological aim will always be: impacting the lives of people (Wafler, 2006, p. 7). A story in a book does not guarantee impact. As we have seen, people may not have a desire to read it. However, a story in the mind of a person is much more likely to impact that person. The Gospel of Luke alone can be divided into 35 to 40 oral stories, as we saw above. Having a number of oral stories based on Luke in Angolar, would give access to Biblical truths for the whole Angolar community, and missiologically the church would have a culturally appropriate tool for sharing the Gospel. Elders would retain their status as storytellers and tell stories to children and non-reading adults. Youth may be hindered from telling stories to elders but there seems to be no hindrances for youth telling stories to youth. Women could tell to women without barriers.

Angolares lend great authority to written sources. I assert that the potential lack of authority by not having the Gospel of Luke in writing in Angolar, would be outweighed by the authority people lend to the Bible in Portuguese. Youth already have access to various versions of the Bible in Portuguese. Portuguese bibles are already in use by churches and it is the source of theological authority.

#### **5.4 Further studies**

This thesis is primarily a context analysis of orality and literacy in the Angolar people, in the larger context of Bible Translation. For further studies, though, there are themes I would consider relevant to the Angolar situation: a) As mentioned before, how young educated Angolares relate to orality, b) How Portuguese and schooling influence Angolar orality. The Portuguese language seems to be one of the major ‘threats’ to the continued existence of traditional oral stories, c) The situation of Portuguese creoles, and to what extent Angolar adopts Portuguese loan words and other linguistic features, d) Effects of future Angolar written Bible translation of Luke on the traditional oral stories. e) Other themes: How well do people remember and retell Bible stories? To what extent do people shape or change the original Bible story after several retellings? How far does the contextualization of stories need to go in order to achieve good comprehension with the listeners?

My studies have opened my understanding more towards the role and life of *the story*, whether I read or hear it, in particular the greatest story told: The story of Jesus, the story most precious, sweetest that ever was heard.

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## Appendixes

### **Request for participation in research project:**

*Thesis title: The Interrelationship of Orality and Bible Translation for the Angolar People*

#### **Background and purpose**

My name is (...) and I am writing a thesis in the “Master Program of Global Studies” at VID Specialized University, Stavanger, Norway.

The aim of the thesis is to develop knowledge about orality and Bible translation. To achieve this aim, I want to make interviews with participants in the Angolar society. I hope this study, with your help, will allow me to gain an increased understanding of this subject.

#### **What will happen during the interview?**

The interview will take place in a group of around 12 people. The interview will have a conversation style. This interview is one of the two I will hold. One group will consist of young people (age 18 to 25), the other will be with elderly people (age 60 and up).

Each group will meet at different days. The group will listen to an oral presentation of a story based on a Biblical narrative. Next, we will comment on the story and I will ask more questions.

Listening to the story and the following group interview will last two to three hours. All participants will be given time to talk.

#### **What happens to your information?**

All personal information will be treated confidentially. Only I and my supervisor will have access to what you have said. What comes up during the interview will not be traced back to you.

Sound recordings and written data will be kept locked in. Sound data and notes will be erased when the study is over. I plan to submit my thesis in December of 2018 at the latest. In the thesis, everything you have said will be made anonymous and you will not be recognized.

#### **Voluntary participation**

It is voluntary to participate in the study, and you can at any time withdraw your consent without giving any reason.

If you withdraw, all that you have said will be deleted and not used in the study.

#### **Contact information**

Researcher: (...)

Supervisor: Professor (...)

#### **Your consent for participation in this study**

This study is reported to the Data Protection Official for Research for all the Norwegian universities: Norwegian Centre for Research Data,  
<http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>

Please check the box if you give your consent, and sign with the date.

- I am 18 years or older
- I have received the information in this document in oral form
- I want to participate in this study and can withdraw any time without giving any reason

-----  
(Place and date, name with signature)

## Interview guide

Place: The Angolar translation office, São João dos Angolares, São Tomé

Dates: within 18-30 October 2017

Method: Group interviews

Participants: Elders, youth (students)

### English

Introduction of the researcher.

Introduction of the participants.

Aim for this study. Recording the sessions

### 1 - Bible story in oral

Story told by one Bible translator

Questions and discussion of the story

Telling story second time

Retelling by participants two or three times

### 2A - The Angolar history

Aim: Engage the participants.

Observe whether there exists oral traditional stories. What are the stories about?

Is the history of Angolar different between the groups?

### 2B - Heroes

Aim: Could the stories of heroes tell me

what the heroes mean to the people?

Are there patterns in how hero stories are told?

Idea: Rei Amador, the alleged Angolar king.

### Portuguese

### 1 - Conto bíblico

### 2A - A história dos angolares

### 2B - Heróis

### **3 - Language use**

### **3 - Línguas usadas, uso das línguas**

Aim: Find the various uses of Angolar and Portuguese

Usage with children, family, friends.

What language do youth speak?

What language do elders speak?

### **4 - History of Angolar**

### **4 - História dos angolares**

Telling the history of Angolar

Examples of stories

Telling to whom?

Telling stories when?

What does the listener learn?

Why do you tell the story?

How are stories important?

Can youth tell to elders?

### **5 - Learning**

### **5 - Aprendizagem**

How do you learn new things?

Who teaches whom?

Learning by reading?

Other ways of learning?

### **6 - Remembering**

### **6 - Lembrança**

How do you remember best?

Do you remember after reading?

Do you remember after hearing?

### **7 - Reading**

Do you have books?

What do you do with books?

Do you read often?

Do children read?

Do parents read for children?

### **8 - Respect for elders**

Do elders have stories for the youth?

Do youth and children listen to stories?

Do youth have stories to tell?

### **9 - Form of the Bible**

What do you want, oral stories or written Bible?

What is best for your group?

What reasons do you have for the choice?

What is best for your children/grandchildren?

What is best for the church?

### **10 - Portuguese vs Angolar**

What importance does Portuguese have?

Why is speaking Portuguese important?

Angolar Bible in written form?

Angolar oral Bible stories?

### **7 - Leitura**

### **8 - Respeito aos velhos**

### **9 - Forma da Bíblia**

### **10 - Português contra angolar**

