

**INVESTIGATING CULTURE- SPECIFIC CONCEPTS FROM GOOD
NEWS BIBLE TO GIKUYU TRANSLATION OF PSALM 23 AND HOW IT
INFLUENCES THE PERCEPTION OF GOD’S PROVISION**

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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree at the University of Nairobi or any other university

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my dear wife Catherine Wanjiru Mwangi for your love, support and encouragement in my academic journey.

To my children Melody and John Ngure; and Michelle Wanjiku, to my grand children Liam and Tania Ngure, you have been a source of inspiration to me.

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to describe the culture-specific concepts found in the book of Psalm 23 in the Holy Bible, using the Good News Bible (GNB), and its translation in the Gikuyu Bible, to discuss the various explanations that are given to these concepts by the members of the Gikuyu Christian community; and to discuss findings on how this translation influences the perception of God's provision, affluence and the less fortunate. This study was driven by the desire to correct the wrong interpretation of culture-specific concepts and to appreciate how they distort the message of the Bible. This study was guided by the theory of Hermeneutics. It was initiated by providing the portion of Psalm 23 to respondents and filling of questionnaires. We deduced from the data that the meaning of translated culture-specific concepts in Psalm 23 was altered by the new cultural context in which they were being applied. The existence of culture-specific concepts in Psalms 23 and the alteration of the original message, and the existence of a relationship between the translated message of culture-specific concepts in Psalms 23 and the perception of God's provision. We also found out that there exists a disconnect between the perception of God's provision and the relationship between hard work and faith.

ABBREVIATIONS

BSK	Bible Society of Kenya
GNB	Good News Bible
KJV	King James Version
NIV	New International Version
SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language
UBS	United Bible Societies

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

The presence of Christianity in Africa was followed by many attempts to translate the Bible in various local languages. Missionaries from Europe and Northern America who brought the Bible to Africa felt the need to translate the Bible as well as other Christian documents like the hymnals in local languages. In Kenya, the Bible has been translated in various local languages including Gikuyu.

According to Waruta (1975:8,9), the translation of Scriptures in Kenya is explained by the following reasons: the need to explain the Gospel story in the languages of the people; the need to promote literacy and Christian knowledge; the desire by the pioneer missionaries to master language and the need for extra support from the Bible Societies at home as well as interested persons and groups.

Like any normal translation, the translation of scriptures has many challenges. Bible translators have to grapple with all the complex problems arising out of the need to express the ancient and eternal message of the Bible in their own language. They face the challenge of how to translate Biblical concepts, ideas, practices, festivals, rituals, spiritual beings, cultural artifacts, metaphors, beliefs, etc. in terms that make sense in the local vernacular (Mojola, 2002:202).

Among these challenges is the problem of culture related concepts. The Scriptures were written in a particular Jewish cultural context therefore, culture related concepts are part of the Bible content and contain a meaningful message that Jewish can easily identify with.

Culture-specific concepts are words and phrases that are so heavily grounded in one culture that they are almost impossible to translate into the terms –verbal or otherwise – of another. They

pose a serious problem to translators (Braçaj, 2015). However, thanks to cultural awareness, many trained translators have been able to overcome the challenge of culture-specific concepts.

Bible translators are trained in such a way to have a grounded Jewish cultural awareness to understand the context in which the Scriptures they translate were written. They use various strategies to translate Culture- specific concepts contained in the Scriptures. Furthermore, the Bible is written in a very rigid register and contains a principle according to which no one should add or remove any content because the Scriptures are Holy and Sacred, inspired by the Holy Spirit (Rev. 22:18-19; 2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, to avoid falling in the trap, removing, or adding something to the Holy Spirit, some biblical culture-specific concepts have been translated in such a way to maintain their original meaning.

When translating Bible Culture- specific concepts, translators have to make choices. They may choose between translating the words the way they appear in the original text and communicating something that the local may fail to understand or identifying different expressions that can be used to communicate the message to the locals even if it is not necessarily what was literally written in the original Bible text. Whatever the case, the translation is a deliberate choice that is justified by legitimate reasons.

However, the translation of the concept can have a great impact on the way the local community that uses the translated version will perceive, not only the message but also the person the message is talking about and shape their behavior or their culture. A discrepancy between the original message and the translated message can affect the Christian culture of a particular community.

In this study we shall be using *The Good News Bible* (GNB), also called the *Good News Translation* (GNT) in the United States. This is an English translation of the Bible by the American Bible Society. It was first published as the New Testament under the name Good News for Modern Man in 1966. It was anglicized into British English by the British and Foreign Bible Society with the use of metric measurements for the Commonwealth market. It was formerly known as Today's English Version (TEV). It is a multi-denominational translation, with editions used by many Christian denominations. The GNB is written in a simple, everyday language, with the intention that everyone can appreciate it, and so is often considered particularly suitable for children and for those learning English.

Let us compare the English (Good News Bible) and the Gikuyu (Ibuku Ria *Uhoru Uria Mwega*) versions of Psalm 23. In GNB Bible, Psalm 23 says:

The LORD is my shepherd;

I have everything I need.

² He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

³ He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths,

as he has promised.

⁴ Even if I go through the deepest darkness,

I will not be afraid, LORD,

for you are with me.

Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

⁵ You prepare a banquet for me,
where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honored guest
and fill my cup to the brim.

⁶ I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.

In the Gikuyu Bible it is says:

*1 MWATHANI nĩ we mũrĩithi wakwa,
ndirĩ kĩndũ ingĩaga.*

*2 Anjarahagia kũndũ kũrĩa kwĩ nyeki nduru,
na akandwaraga ngurumo cia maaĩ marĩa mahehu wega.*

*3 Aheaga ngoro yakwa hinya mwerũ,
akandongoria na njĩra cia ũthingu o ta ũrĩa eeranĩire.*

*4 O na ingĩtuĩka ndĩrahungura mũkuru wĩ nduma ndumanu mũno,
ndirĩ ũgwati ingĩtigĩra, nĩ gũkorwo wĩ hamwe na niĩ;
thiarĩ waku na mũthĩgi nĩcio imenyagĩrĩra.*

*5 Ũthondekeire iruga thũ ciakwa ciothe ikĩonaga,
ũkanyamũkĩra gwaku na gĩtĩo kĩnene mũno,
na ũkaiyũria gĩkombe gĩakwa o bebe.*

*6 Wendo na ũtugi nocio igũtũũra irũmanagĩrĩra na niĩ matukũ moothe ma muoyo wakwa,
na ngũtũũra nyũmba ya MWATHANI
matukũ moothe marĩa ngũtũũra muoyo.*

Two culture- specific concepts emerge in this chapter of the Bible: “fields of green grass” and “quiet pools of fresh water”. In other version of the Bible, it is written “green pasture” and “still water”. What does King David refer to as “fields of green grass”?

and “quiet pools of fresh water”?

Let’s look at the Gikuyu translation of the two concepts:

'nyeki nduru'

'ngurumo cia maaĩ marĩa mahehu wega'

Psalm 23 is one of the most preached Psalm and its message is used to demonstrate what God does for his people. The understanding of the message in Psalm 23 has an impact of the way Christians understand God’s provision and the discourse surrounding faith and material things.

The literature has explored Bible translation problems but the aspect of Culture-Specific concepts in the Bible that can have an impact on the Christian culture and behavior within communities has not yet been expanded. We would like to explore the translation of Culture-Specific in Psalm 23 and the impact it has on the perception of God’s provision among the Kikuyu.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The two culture-specific concepts: “fields of green grass” and “quiet pools of fresh water” in Psalm 23 seem very easy to understand and to explain, yet they carry a specific meaning. Someone who does not know the geographical context of the Jews of the time when this part of the Psalms was written, will have a simplistic understanding according to which “still water”

refers to any water body when there is no wind and storm and that green pasture is any pasture that is green, therefore good for feeding the cattle.

In the Gikuyu Bible, the two concepts are translated as '*nyeki nduru*' and

'ngurumo cia maaĩ marĩa mahehu wega', which mean 'green grass' and 'in valleys that have cool water'

The context of scarcity and the assurance to receive not abundant but enough for the day's needs is lost. For the Jewish shepherds "still water" and "green pasture" refer to a specific context of scarcity whereby they have to make a laborious endeavor to find small sprigs of grass and small pools of quiet water to feed and provide a drink to the cattle.

In the Gikuyu translation of the concepts of still water and green pasture, God is presented as a Shepherd who provides tranquility and guidance when we are in need. However, in the original explanation of the two concepts, the Psalmist talks about a God, who, like the Jewish shepherd in the desert, will make sure his people, have something to sustain them even in a context of a serious starvation threat. This message goes beyond guidance and tranquility; it is about care and relief. At the same time, this message does not apply to the concept of abundance.

The Gikuyu translation of these two culture-specific concepts is interesting and challenging because this Psalm carries a strong message that can be determinant in the way a Christian community establishes the relationship between faith in God and material things therefore altering the biblical message about wealth, success and the perception we have on Christians who are not in material affluence.

The normal explanation that is always given to these two Bible culture-specific concepts leaves aside the core of the original message by offering an easy to understand message that is quite

different but adapted to the local culture. Definitely, there is a clear interpretation problem of Bible culture-specific concepts in the Gikuyu Bible.

In this research, we try to find out what explains this interpretation problem of Psalm 23 in the Gikuyu Bible and the impact it has on the perception of God's provision and wealth within the Gikuyu Christian community.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To describe the culture-specific concepts in Psalm 23 and its translation in the Gikuyu Bible;
2. To discuss the various explanations that are given to these concepts by the members of the Gikuyu Christian community;
3. To demonstrate how this translation influences the perception of God's provision, affluence and the less fortunate.

1.4. Hypotheses

This study is based on the assumption that the translation of Bible culture-specific concepts in Psalm 23 in Gikuyu does not convey the original message, therefore alters the understanding of the message on God's provision.

The following are the hypothesis drawn from the study:

1. Interpreting culture specific concepts poses a challenge to interpreters and translators

2. In-depth knowledge of culture improves the quality of interpretation and translation. Interpreting culture-specific concepts pose a challenge to interpreters, translators and the target audience and this impacts on effective understanding of the Christian doctrine
3. The challenge posed by culture specific concepts during interpretation impacts on effective interpretation.

1.5. Scope and Limitations

The study analyses the translation problems of Bible culture-specific concepts in Psalm 23 from English language using the *GNB* Bible for English and *Ibuku Ria Uhoru Uria Mweka* Bible in Gikuyu version. Other culture-specific concepts that are not part of Psalm 23 and will not be covered by the study. In addition, the study will not take into account translation problems of Bible Culture-specific concepts in Psalm 23 in other local languages.

1.6. Rationale of the Study

The message in Psalm 23 is powerful and widely shared. Any misinterpretation or misunderstanding of this message can have a huge impact on Christians perception of God, Wealth and the less fortunate because it captures the aspects of God's provision and people's needs. The result of this study can help solving problems that arise because of the materialistic gospel whereby on a hand some believe that those who are not affluent have no faith and on another hand those who sit to wait for miracles, thinking that God will always provide for those who do not work.

In addition, this study will contribute to the theoretical understanding of the translation of Culture-Specific concepts in the Bible. It can be replicated to other local languages or other parts

of the Bible and other documents in order to propose lasting solution to translation and social problems that may result from the translation of culture-specific concepts.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

We have chosen the Hermeneutics theory of translation to guide our analysis.

It consists of the interpretation of biblical texts, wisdom and literature. Hermeneutics is the art of interpretation. (Abulad, 2007). Biblical Hermeneutics was developed in the nineteenth century by philosophers and Christian theologians led by Rudolf Bultmann, when it became increasingly common to read scripture just like any other writing.

Hermeneutics is not about interpreting from a language to another, it is about how people understand and explain objects and subjects around them. Hermeneutic philosophy as a theory of interpretation emphasizes how we cope in the world and come to understand objects and subjects. While its origins focus on the study of biblical texts and later ancient and classical cultures, hermeneutics as a philosophy offers a way of understanding the process of interpretation. Its influence today extends to organization studies, where scholars studying culture, identity, sense making, and learning draw on the philosophical tenets of hermeneutics to explain human action, intentionality, and meaning in the context of organizations.

Originally, hermeneutics was associated with the interpretation of sacred texts. It has gone beyond this acceptance. (Barrett, Frank & Powley, Edward & Pearce, Barnett, 2011).

We choose this theory because of the possibility it offers to explore, analyze and understand biblical texts beyond the written words. It includes the element of cultural context in the understanding and the implication element in the interpretation of biblical texts.

We will use the theory by comparing the message drawn from the Gikuyu translation of Psalm 23 with the GNB English version and the explanations that readers give to both versions.

1.8. Literature Review

In 1989, Gitau Samson did a research on the impact of scripture translations on missionary churches focusing on a case study of the Church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a district, 1903-1988. He tackled a fundamental problem of the theological implication of the biblical message to those Africans who had got and read the Bible in their local language. According to him, by that time, for most African Christians, the theological implications of the scriptures remained hidden in spite of the scriptures being made available to them in a language that they could understand.

His study reached two fundamental conclusions: first, his findings showed that, so long as the Bible is not interpreted within the context of African or indigenous cultural values, it will take long before it is fully appreciated and incorporated by African Christians. Second, although the Bible has been translated into various local languages, the task of interpreting and applying that message within the African indigenous framework is yet to be achieved. However, the study does not purport to have made a conclusive statement on the impact of scripture translations on missionary churches even though this was its original aim.

Gitau's study laid a foundation of the problematic of the impact of scripture translation on local churches. However, it left aside the issue of translating Bible culture-specific concepts and its impact on the understanding of the biblical message by the reader of the translated Bible. Even though his study was conducted in Murang'a, we cannot confirm that Gikuyu was the main language he investigated.

In his publication "Bible translation in Africa. What implications does the new United Bible Societies (UBS) perspective have for Africa? An overview in the light of the emerging new UBS

translation initiative”, Mojola (2002) explored the Bible translation in Africa from a historical point of view to find out what guides the UBS from a theoretical perspective. At the end of his study, he reached the conclusion according to which the UBS perspective on translation is inextricably linked to the contexts in which the Bible Societies operate and to the policy directives and guidelines that provide the framework for both their local and international work. Any translation theory or approach developed for use within the UBS fellowship that does not take account of these directives and guidelines or address itself to the needs of the intended audiences served by the local Bible Society or fellowship would certainly be doomed to failure right from the outset.

He mentioned the fact that Bible translators have to grapple with all the complex problems arising out of the need to express the ancient and eternal message of the Bible in their own language. They face the challenge of how to translate Biblical concepts, ideas, practices, festivals, rituals, spiritual beings, cultural artifacts, metaphors, beliefs, etc. in terms that make sense in the local vernacular.

The context in which the Bible is translated into a given African language, the policy directives and guidelines given to translators apply to the translation of the Bible into Gikuyu. However, this explanation does not suffice to explain the impact that culture-specific concepts translated in an African language like Gikuyu can have on the perception of the intended message by the users of the translated Bible. On this point, our research goes a step further without contradicting the fact that translation of these culture-specific concepts, like other parts of the Bible, was guided by the context in which this Bible was translated and the directives and guidelines given to the Bible Translators involved.

Braçaj (2015) in his publication on “Procedures of Translating Culture-Specific Concepts” (CSC) concentrated mainly on the procedures of translating CSCs in general so that they can help translators to solve problems during the process of translating. His research answered two specific question: What are some strategies that a translator should know in order to translate concepts in a specific culture? How can translators cope with cultural concepts and how can they make use of these strategies in different situations?

This publication explored different approaches to translating Culture-Specific concepts like the one in the Bible and helps us understand how translators cope with the challenge of translating them. However, the study remained silent about the alteration of the message and the implication of the translation on its understanding by the target audience.

In an analytical study entitled “Analysis of Culture-Specific Items and Translation Strategies Applied in Translating Jalal Al-Ahmad’s by the Pen”, Daghighi and Hashemian reached interesting findings: their results showed that the translator has applied functional equivalent more than other strategies in translating Culture-Specific items. They showed that the translator has intended to make the source language (SL) text more comprehensible to the readers of the target language (TL). In addition, in many cases he has applied transference, which indicates his respect to the SL culture. Another point of discussion about the results of this research is that due to the translator’s respect for SL culture, he has added some extra information for 60 words at the end of his translation to explain them, so that he could make them understandable for the readers of the TL.

This study goes a step further by demonstrating that in this particular instance, the translator made sovereign decisions in translating culture-specific items to make the text easily understandable by the target audience.

The existing literature on translating the Bible into African local languages emphasized the reasons behind the translation task. It did not focus on Bible culture-specific items as they were considered part of general challenges that arise when the Scriptures are being translated into local languages. The literature on the translation of culture-specific concepts, also called culture-specific items focused on the strategies applied and the choices made by the translator in this particular context. Both literatures left aside the implication of the strategies and choices on the intended message and on the target audience perceptions.

In this study, we are building on the ground of this literature by pushing the boundaries towards what is the impact of the translation of culture-specific concepts on the perception of the target audience. We will no longer discuss the work of the translator and his strategies because this is already covered, but we will focus on the product; the translation and the impact it has on the interpretation of the intended message by the reader. We made a choice of Psalm 23 translated in Gikuyu so that we can compare what it means vis-à-vis the same in GNT Bible and analyze the impact of the translated culture-related concepts translation on the reader understanding of the intended message.

1.9. Methodology

1.9.1 The Population of Study and Sampling

The population of study is composed by of the readers of the Gikuyu Bible who are the members of the Kikuyu Christian community. This is a qualitative research to collect and analyze data and we cannot reach out to all the members. Therefore, had a sample of 10 respondents, comprising of males, females of 18 to 65 years, across the literacy spectrum, who reside in Kikuyu town and its environs. It also comprised of the lay people as well as the clergy.

1.9.2 Data Collection

For data collection, we used interviews. We asked our interviewees to read Psalm 23 in the Gikuyu Bible and asked understanding questions about this chapter of the Bible. We extended the questions to their perceptions of God's provision, faith and affluence and Christianity and poverty. We did the same by giving a control group of 10 people from the same community the same Psalm 23 in English Bible using the GNB version. We asked them the same questions in order to tell if the translated message had an impact on people's perceptions of God's provision.

1.9.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

For data analysis and interpretation, we discussed the results of the interviews using the Hermeneutics theory. We maintained the original use of the Hermeneutics theory to compare the content of the original biblical message contained in Psalm 23 of the GNB version with the content of the translated message and the explanation given to the translated message by the readers of the Gikuyu Bible.

CHAPTER TWO: CULTURE-SPECIFIC CONCEPTS IN PSALM 23

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we defined and explained culture-specific concepts as they are seen in GNB while showing how they pose challenges in translation. The first section was dedicated to the definition of the concept. The second explored the theoretical discourse on Culture-Specific concepts, the third analyzed some Culture-Specific concepts in the Bible, the fourth focused on Culture-Specific concepts in Psalms 23 and the last one shells the idea of God's provision in Psalm 23:5.

2.2 Understanding Culture-Specific Concepts in The Bible

For us to explain Culture-Specific concepts we begun by explaining the term "culture" as a concept. We looked at the meaning of the term "culture" and then expounded on is a "Culture-Specific concept"?

2.2.1 Culture

The term culture is very broad in sense and meaning. As a concept as well as a reality, culture is very dynamic and may encompass a broad range of facts from lifestyle to traditional norms, from language to expression of beliefs, from the definition of supernatural power to styles of worship within a particular community. Culture refers to the way of life in a given community and how it is transferred from generation to generation. That is the general understanding we commonly share. We understand culture through codes of manners, dress, religion, language, rituals, arts, norms of behavior, and systems of belief.

The anthropologist Taylor (1871:1) considers culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. From his definition, culture can be interpreted as a set of visible and invisible characteristics shared within a society and that distinguish this specific society from others. Taylor definition of culture means that the society is a whole and cultural values are shared through human interactions.

For Kluckkohn (1951), these values are inherited because they are attached to traditional ideas, the essential core of culture. Therefore, according to him, culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts.

Lee (2006) insists on this inherited and shared aspect of cultural values that determine our belonging to a given society. For him, culture is a set of values and beliefs, or a cluster of learned behaviors that we share with others in a particular society, giving us a sense of belongingness and identity. This means that the “I” is connected to the “US” through culture.

For example, Jews in Egypt and other foreign lands used to circumcise their children to make a sign of inherited alliance with God and of belonging to the Jewish people. For young people, that sign was enough to understand that they belong to a Jewish people since children from other communities were not circumcised.

Bodley (1999) quoted by Lebron (2013, p.127) adds three basic components of culture: what people think, what they do and the material products they produce. All forms of culture exhibit unique ways and value systems that aid and affect individuals in their perception and reaction to different life circumstances.

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) quoted by Kuriackova (2018, p.5) divide the concept of culture into a 'Big C' (achievement culture) and a 'Little c' (behavior culture). The 'Big C' culture consists of features that have been achieved by a given culture, e.g. art, literature, music, etc., while the 'little c' culture contains culturally influenced behaviors. The achievement culture is all those things that are taught in the foreign language classes; but the hidden part of the culture is the symbols, meanings and values. However, non-members of the society will not recognize and understand the hidden part of a specific culture even if they learn this culture. This is because cultural patterns are learned by socialization and this learning process is unconscious and influenced by the closest people around us including family members, friends and the media.

Scholars are divided on the language aspect of culture. However, irrespective of their positions, they acknowledge the fact that culture is a set of symbols, norms, and values in a social organization (Walsham, 2002). They are acquired through spoken and unspoken processes. Language carries meaning and the understanding of meaning depends on what is generally accepted as knowledge. Language communicates things, values, symbols and norms; and culture influences our perception of the meaning. For example, members of a monotheist culture and those from a polytheist culture do not understand the concept of "God" the same way.

When we learn a language, we automatically acquire some cultural elements linked to values and symbols shared by the users of that language. The debate may vary depending on languages. Some are cross-cultural while others are not but still, they both share a cultural connotation of communication. For example, English has become a cross-cultural language since people belonging to the community of English speakers do not share the same cultural background. However, all English speakers share some cultural values irrespective of where they come from. These include work ethics, formal education practices and expressions of politeness that make a

clear distinction between English speakers and their French speakers or Spanish speakers. Therefore, when we learn English, we automatically acquire some cultural practices that were originally English.

When we use the language, we may refer to things, ideas, symbols, values and norms that only those who share the same cultural background with us will understand the way we understand them. They may still make sense for those who do not share the same cultural background with us but will not mean the same. These are culture-specific concepts discussed in the following paragraph.

2.2.2 Culture-Specific Concepts in The Bible

The term Culture-Specific concept refers to any concept in a language that is heavily linked to a specific culture that its understanding is determined by the understanding of the underpinning cultural context. These words and phrases are so “heavily grounded in one culture that they are almost impossible to translate into the terms –verbal or otherwise – of another” (Bracaj, 2015).

For example, the term “Yahweh” in Hebrew refers to a specific God, God is Israel. Even if you belong to monotheistic religion, you cannot call your God Yahweh unless you refer to the God of Abraham, the God of Israel, the God of the Jews. A mere equivalence in English is not enough to explain the essence of the term and one needs to understand the Jewish cultural history in order to understand this concept. The same applies to specific terms that identify some meals in various cultures. The Bible talks about the bread that Jesus shared with his disciple. For those who do not belong to the Jewish or Christian culture may think it is any bread you buy in the supermarket. However, it is not the case. Historically, in the eve of Easter, Jews used to remember their liberation from Egypt and they could take bread prepared without yeast. The

bread that is referred to in religious ceremonies is different from the normal bread in terms of cultural importance. One needs to be introduced to the Jewish or Christian culture to understand this concept.

Kuriackova (2001, p.5) states that Culture-Specific words are part of a language of the individuals sharing the same cultural background. Words create different conceptual and emotional resonances in individuals belonging to different cultural groups. Culture words have a connotative meaning that evokes the same or similar associations in individuals of the appropriate cultural group. This particular group is then aware of the extra background information. Indeed, culture-specific concepts are found in every culture and are mediators of these cultures: their staple food, their beliefs, their customs. Therefore, people who share the same cultural background understand better these concepts and terms that identify them. Those who do not share this cultural background may understand the concept but will not understand the connotative and emotional meaning linked to these words.

Example: “Christmas tree” This is a concept that everyone seems to understand and can be easily translated in many languages. However, it has a cultural connotation that only those in Western Europe and Northern America can emotionally relate to. The equivalent in French for example is “Sapin de Noel” which can be literally translated in English as “Christmas fir tree” a type of conifer that is not known in Africa. For those in Europe and America, a Christmas tree reminds so many things: gifts, storytelling, winter and family. There is no Christmas without a Christmas tree and its implication that is why it is so important, which is not the case in other cultures where Christmas is celebrated without Christmas tree even if all belong to the Christian community.

Some terms are used in specific contexts to explain and localize universal or generally known concepts. These are dialect words because they are local variations of a well-known concept. For example, the *shepherd's rod* and staff in Psalm 23. The terms rod and staff even though generally known, were mostly used in Israel and referred to a particular shape of tools that shepherds use to control and protect the cattle. These terms are part of mainstream language, though they have a very specific meaning in Hebrew. That is why Newmark (1998) considers that dialect words are not Culture-Specific words even if they are related to a specific culture and evoke some emotional meaning among people with the same cultural background. The debate on culture-specific concepts came to prominence because of translation problems. In the following paragraph, we look at culture-specific concepts in translation.

2.3 Classification of Culture-Specific Concepts in The Bible

According to Peter Newmark, there are 5 types of culture words: Ecology which includes flora, fauna, hills, winds, plain; Material Culture which comprises food, clothes, houses and towns, transport; Social Culture which includes work and leisure organizations customs, activities, procedures; concepts which contain political and administrative, religious, artistic concepts and gestures and habits.(Braçaj, 2015: 479). Even if Newmark is among those scholars who do not consider language as a component of culture, his classification of culture words is useful to make a distinction between different culture-specific concepts. Every type of Culture-Specific concept here can be found in the Bible.

Ecological culture-specific concepts are culture-bound concepts that describe things and ideas according to particular components of the natural environment in which involves a society.

Example: the expression “as white as snow” used several times in the Bible is related to a geographical environment where it snows. Which means that people in the desert will not understand what it means to be “as white as snow” and may probably not refer to something purely white as “white as snow”.

Material culture-specific concepts refer to ideas and things that are directly related to the material way of life in a particular society. For example, a tassel in the Jewish culture are not mere garments. They have a specific connotation even though they are material things. In number 15:38-39 it is said: Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. So, only those who have encountered the Jewish clothing style will understand this concept and its meaning.

Social culture-specific concepts refer to ideas and things that are related to work and leisure in a particular culture. For example, the term “donkey work” that means hard and less interesting work is well understood in the English culture where they used to use donkeys. In other cultures, it may not make sense and probably, depending on the way they organize work they may have another term or concept since they cannot visualize working like a donkey.

Organizational culture-specific concepts are related to customs, activities, procedures and cover ideas and things that describe specific aspects of the political, religious and artistic lives in a given culture. The Bible talks about Prophets, Rabbi and Priests. These concepts refer to a particular hierarchy in the Jewish culture. They were not only religious; they were political as

well. For example, Prophets had the power to choose kings in the name of God, what Samuel did to choose David. They also had the responsibility to advocate for change in policies.

Gestures and Habits culture-specific concepts concern human gestures and habits that have a specific meaning in a given culture. For example, bowing down was an expression of adoration in the Jewish culture whereas it means expressing respect in other cultures. That is why a Jew will not accept to bow down before a man without spiritual authority because they only do that for God.

2.3 Translatability of Culture-Specific Concepts in the Bible

According to Andreas (2007), one of the most obvious criteria for defining whether a concept is culture-specific is to look at its translatability, which then refers to a complete translation of a term incorporating both its denotative as well as its connotative meaning. If translatability can be the most important criteria to define culture-specific concepts, the reason is that they are not directly translatable in another language since they relate to a specific language and carry meaning of a notion that does not exist in other cultures.

These concepts and their terms do not have direct equivalences in other languages simply because they do not exist in other cultures. They create what Newmark calls cultural gaps in translation and the biggest challenge therefore is how to translate these culture-specific terms in another language and convey the meaning. Newmark introduced strategies to deal with cultural gaps in translation and these are the strategies used to translate culture-specific concepts (Bracaj, 2015:479).

Naturalization aims at transferring a word in the Source Language (SL) into the Target Language (TL) the way it was in the original form. You use the same word “safari” in Kiswahili and in

English; Couplet or triplet and quadruplet is used when the translator wants to use a combination of two or three translation strategies to cover the cultural gap when translating. Neutralization is a kind of a paraphrase at the level of word. A neutral word that is culture free is used in the target language to give the general meaning. Descriptive and functional equivalent is a strategy used when the translator explains a Culture-Specific concept by describing and explaining the purpose of the thing or the idea that the term identifies. There are two elements that make the overall equivalence; the descriptive and the functional elements. The descriptive element will talk about size, color and composition whereas the functional equivalent talks about the purpose of the SL cultural-specific word.

Example: the Swahili word “bread” in the Jewish Easter can be translated as a type of bread prepared without yeast that was used during Easter’s religious ceremonies in Jewish families. Explanation as footnote: the translator might have used another translation strategy for the culture-specific term but still put a footnote either at the end of the page or the text to give some additional explanation so that the TL reader understands the concept from its original cultural background. It is useful especially when the translator uses the same word in the TL. Cultural equivalent: The SL cultural word is translated by TL cultural word, for example, when translating from English to another language where they are culturally blind on “working like a donkey” but they have “working like a slave”, I will use one expression as equivalence for the other. Compensation: This is a translation technique used to compensate in the TL the loss of meaning, sound effect, pragmatic effect or metaphor in the SL.

2.4 Examples of Culture-Specific Concepts in the Bible and their Translation in Gikuyu

The scriptures in the Bible were written at different times but generally in the Jewish cultural context. The geographical as well as the social and historical environments are part of the Jewish culture, except some books in the new testament that are a collection of letters written by the Apostle Paul to churches outside the Jewish cultural context.

As explained by Mkole (2019, p.170), every translation, including a Bible translation, is an intercultural mediation. An intercultural Bible translation is closely related to intercultural biblical exegesis and intercultural biblical canonicity. An intercultural translation refers to a constructive narrative involving the creation of a contemporary target text from a source culture text, as understood in its own original cultures, its intermediate cultures and in the current target cultures. Let us take some examples of culture-specific concepts in the Bible with their translations in Gikuyu.

2.4.1 The Mustard Tree

In Matthew 13:31-32 it is written:

“³¹ Jesus told them another parable: The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A man takes a mustard seed and sows it in his field. ³² It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it grows up, it is the biggest of all plants. It becomes a tree, so that birds come and make their nests in its branches.” GNB.

In the Gikuyu Bible it is written *31 Ningĩ Jesũ akĩmahe ngerekano ãngĩ akĩmeera atĩrĩ, “Ũthamaki wa igũrũ ãngĩhaanania na mbegũ ya mũtĩ wa karatarĩ ãrĩa mũndũ oire akĩmĩhanda mũgũnda gwake. \v 32 Mbegũ ya karatarĩ nĩ yo niini kũrĩ mbegũ ciothe, no yakũra ãnenehaga*

gũkĩra mĩmera ĩrĩa ĩngĩ yothe, ĩrĩ mũgũnda, nacio nyoni cigagũkaga gwaka itara hongeiĩ ciaguo.”

The English as well as other translations from the English Bible mention that the Mustad seed grows and becomes a tree. However, when you put the verse in its original geographic context you realize that this “tree” is what would have been called a plant because in the Kenyan context you cannot call a plant that rarely grows beyond one meter like the Mustad a tree.

2.4.2 Jordan

This is another ecological Culture-Specific term.

The Bible talks about both Jordan the river and Jordan the region. The most important “Jordan” known in the New Testament is the river because that is where Jesus was baptized.

In Matthew 3:13-16 it is written: *“13 At that time Jesus arrived from Galilee and came to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14But John tried to make him change his mind. “I ought to be baptized by you,” John said, “and yet you have come to me!”*

15But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so for now. For in this way we shall do all that God requires.” So, John agreed.

16As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and alighting on him. 17Then a voice said from heaven, “This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased.”

Verse 13 talks about Jordan the region but the following verses do not mention the River but the water. However, because the region takes its name from the River, implicitly the baptism took

place in the river. The religious debate on “Jordan” is not about this implication but about what Jordan means for Christians outside the Middle East, particularly in Africa. “Jordan” as a concept is at the center of “baptism” as another concept and what the quantity of water means in the baptism process. We do not want to extend the debate on the theological implications of the debate but we are trying to explain that this culture-specific concept linked to the ecological environment of the time when the Bible was written has participated in the shaping of modern churches where “baptism” plays an important role to show the difference between congregations.

2.4.3 Circumcision

This is a social Culture-Specific term since it refers to an activity with both social and spiritual impact in terms of belonging.

It may sound to be something well known and universal but it is different in the Jewish culture. In the modern time, men’s circumcision is used for hygienic and comfort purposes. In recent studies, it has also been established that it mitigates the risk of HIV contamination. In some African cultures, including the Gikuyu culture, circumcision was and is still a ritual practice that introduces a young man to adulthood.

However, this is not the case in the Jewish culture. At the time when the Bible was written, circumcision was a religious practice performed as a sign of God’s covenant with his people, the Jews. In Genesis 17:10-14 it is written : “ *10You and your descendants must all agree to circumcise every male among you. 11-12From now on you must circumcise every baby boy when he is eight days old, including slaves born in your homes and slaves bought from foreigners. This will show that there is a covenant between you and me. 13Each one must be circumcised and this will be a physical sign to show that my covenant with you is everlasting. 14Any male who has not*

been circumcised will no longer be considered one of my people, because he has not kept the covenant with me.” GNB.

Therefore, circumcision in the Jewish culture does not mean the same in other cultures. For the Gikuyu and other African communities, it is an initiation rite of adulthood. In the western culture, it is a hygienic and health-related practice. For the Jews, it is a sign of an everlasting covenant between the circumcised with God; it is therefore a religious practice.

2.5 The example of Culture-Specific concepts in Psalm 23

Psalm 23 is a short chapter with only 6 verses that talk about God as a shepherd for his people.

The following is the entire text as it is written in the Good News Bible:

The LORD is my shepherd;

I have everything I need.

*² He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.*

³ He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths,

as he has promised.

⁴ Even if I go through the deepest darkness,

I will not be afraid, LORD,

for you are with me.

Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

*⁵ You prepare a banquet for me,
where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honored guest
and fill my cup to the brim.*

*⁶ I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.*

This Psalm written by David reflects in some regards David's life and experience. He was a shepherd himself when he grew up and has seen God shepherding him until he became the King of Israel and after. However, what does he mean in this chapter? The message seems to be clear because there is no ambiguity in the words used. However, when put in their ecological context, the message becomes less clear as one thought it should be.

In fact, sheep-grazing areas in Israel are mostly dry, rocky, semi-desert areas. The sheep are often taken far away from the agricultural land near town, especially in the spring and summer. Some parts of the areas are dangerous cliffs and canyons they can even be deadly for some sheep; therefore, the Shepherd has an important role not only to ensure that every sheep has gotten some water, is fed and is safe. In verse four David says: "Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord for you are with me." "Deepest darkness" and some versions of the Bible talk about *walking in the valley of the shadow of death* is a metaphoric language that reflects the possibility of danger in this sheep-grazing environment.

However, because of the ecological culture, the same Psalm in Gikuyu may sound the same but mean something different.

1 *MWATHANI nĩ we mũrĩithi wakwa,
ndirĩ kĩndũ ingĩaga.*

2 *Anjarahagia kũndũ kũrĩa kwĩ nyeki nduru,
na akandwaraga ngurumo cia maaĩ marĩa mahehu wega.*

3 *Aheaga ngoro yakwa hinya mwerũ,
akandongoria na njĩra cia ũthingu o ta ũrĩa eeranĩire.*

4 *O na ingĩtuĩka ndĩrahungura mũkuru wĩ nduma ndumanu mũno,
ndirĩ ũgwati ingĩtigĩra, nĩ gũkorwo wĩ hamwe na niĩ;
thiarĩ waku na mũthĩgi nĩcio imenyagĩrĩra.*

5 *Ũthondekeire iruga thũ ciakwa ciothe ikĩonaga,
ũkanyamũkĩra gwaku na gĩtĩo kĩnene mũno,
na ũkaiyũria gĩkombe gĩakwa o bebe.*

6 *Wendo na ũtugi nocio igũtũũra irũmanagĩrĩra na niĩ matukũ mootho ma muoyo wakwa,
na ngũtũũra nyũmba ya MWATHANI
matukũ mootho marĩa ngũtũũra muoyo.*

The difference is found in the translation of two culture-specific terms: “fields of green grass” and “quiet pools of fresh water” that are translated as '*nyeki nduru*' and '*ngurumo cia maaĩ marĩa mahehu wega*' respectively.

2.5.1 Fields of Green Grass

The New King James Version says “green pastures” and this is the most commonly known term used. Let us explore the original meaning of this term. In the areas around Jerusalem, the hillsides, where the shepherds take the sheep, are mainly dirt and sand. There is not a lot of lush,

green grass. There are just a bunch of rocks and maybe a sprig of grass popping up in different places. However, in a video, Vander Laan (2017) explains that the west wind blows its humidity against the hillsides where it condenses on the cool rocks at night. That little bit of moisture is just enough to grow those little sprigs of grass. That is what David calls “field of green grass”.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2x8MwiTs0hM>)

2.5.2 Quiet Pools of Fresh Water

The New King James Version says “still waters”. This concept also refers to those quiet small pools of fresh water in the countryside of Jerusalem where the shepherd takes the sheep. This is a desert, and the Bible says the wilderness. But in this wilderness, there are some small pools of fresh water that remain after the season of rain (which is not abundant either) and the shepherd use them to water the sheep.

The two concepts express the idea of opportunities in scarcity and the paramount importance of the leadership of the shepherd that is why David compares God to this shepherd. What are the implications of this comparison on the concept of God’s provision at the center of Psalm 23?

2.6 Psalm 23 and the concept of God’s Provision

God’s provision is a theological concept that can simply be understood as “what God can do for those who rely on Him.” This simplistic approach to God’s provision comprises three characteristics of God: a God who protects his people, a God who supplies all his people’s needs and a God who cares. Taken that way, the concept of God’s provision therefore has three dimensions. The first one is the psychological dimension whereby God’s people should be free from worries because there is a God who cares (Nahum 1:7). The second one is the physical dimension whereby God’s people should fear not for their safety and security because they have

a God who protects (Isaiah 41: 10-12). The third one is an economic dimension whereby God's people should be free from want because there is a God who supplies all their needs (Philippians 4:19).

Psalms 23 contains this concept of God's provision in its three dimensions. In the first three verses, David talks about a God who supplies his most existential physical needs, in verses four and five he talks about God who protects his life from death and from enemies and in verse six he talks about God who cares and love him, which means He caters for his psychological needs.

From the above perspective, the concept is easy to understand and explain. However, the explanation of the concept will determine the responsibility of the humankind in this provision. When we put God's provision discourse in the social context of the Christian faith, a controversial debate arises about faith and works, that is why it becomes a social concern and the responsibility of preachers evoked. This debate opposes two divisive preaching approaches. On one hand, there are those who preach God's provision as a way for God to control our destiny whereby every saved person should not struggle because God will provide (Matthew 6:24-34); on the other hand, there are those who preach human responsibility in his destiny and that it's up for humans to make God's provision a reality. Another implicit debate on the same opposes believers and non-believers whereby there is on a side those who think that only hard work and human intelligence will take the humankind where he wants to be and on another side those who consider that there is nothing a man can do better, no matter how intelligent, without God's intervention. In short, this debate opposes two ideas: faith and work.

We do not need to be part of this theological debate but we are trying in this study, to establish the relationship between the translation of this concept in Psalm 23 and the perception people have of God's provision.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the data collected according to the methodology developed in chapter one. We first presented a questionnaire that was filled by 10 respondents.

3.2 Demographics

The following tables present the data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The first section is all about demographic information of the interviewees and the second section is about their responses to questions on Culture-Specific concepts in Psalms 23.

3.2.1 Demographic Details of the Interviewees

Table 1: Statistical Representation of the Respondents

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	10	4.00	5.00	4.6000	.51640
Sex	10	1.00	2.00	1.1000	.31623
Marital status	10	1.00	4.00	2.1000	.87560
Religion	10	2.00	3.00	2.7000	.48305
Literacy	10	1.00	6.00	2.8000	1.54919
Profession	10	2.00	6.00	5.6000	1.26491
Residence	10	1.00	3.00	1.9000	.87560
Valid N (list wise)	10				

The table above is a statistical description of demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid]35-50]	4	40.0	40.0	40.0
]50-65]	6	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

We had a total number of 10 respondent whose age varies between 18 and 80 years. 6 out of 10 were 50 years and above while 4 out 10 were between 35 and 50 years.

3.2.2 Responses of the Interviewees

To the question on the language used by respondents, 40 percent said they used the English Bible, 10 percent said they use the Gikuyu version, 40 percent use English and Gikuyu Bible and 10 percent use Gikuyu and Kiswahili Bible. We observed that those who use two language versions at the same time are either preachers or pastors and they have some theological background. We than wanted to know what is their understanding of Psalm 23.

Table 3: Respondents' Understanding of Psalm 23

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	God takes care of us	5	50.0	50.0	50.0
	God provides for our needs	3	30.0	30.0	80.0
	God controls everything we do	1	10.0	10.0	90.0
	More than one answer	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

50 percent of the respondents said Psalm 23 means, “God takes care of us”. 30 percent of the respondents said that Psalm 23 means that “God provides for our needs”, 10 percent said Psalm 23 means that “God controls everything we do” and 10 percent of the respondents have more than one interpretation of Psalm 23.

Table 4: Respondents’ Interpretation of ‘Fields of Green Grass’ in Psalm 23

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid A vast and bushy green field	4	40.0	40.0	40.0
A green place good for farming	3	30.0	30.0	70.0
Any place where one can feed cattle	2	20.0	20.0	90.0
Small portions of green grass	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

For 40 percent of the respondents, fields of green grass mean a vast bushy green field. 30 percent think fields of green grass means a green area good for farming, 20 percent said fields of green grass means any place where one can feed cattle and only 10 percent said fields of green grass means small portions of green grass.

We wanted to know what they also think and understand pools of fresh water.

Table 5: Respondents' interpretation of 'Pools of Fresh Water' in Psalm 23

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A lake	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
	A river	1	10.0	10.0	20.0
	Small pools of rainy waters	5	50.0	50.0	70.0
	Oasis	3	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Fifty percent of the respondents interpreted fields of fresh water by small pools of rainy waters, 30 percent of the respondents said they are oasis, 10 percent said they are lakes and 10 percent said it is a river.

We also wanted to know what their interpretation of culture-specific concepts in Psalm 23 is.

Table 6: Respondents' Message Drawn from Psalms 23

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	God will always provide for our needs if we pray	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
	God will reward the work of our hands	1	10.0	10.0	20.0
	God will always watch over us and protect us from danger	4	40.0	40.0	60.0
	God gives in abundance to those who trust him	3	30.0	30.0	90.0
	More than one answer	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

On the question about the key message drawn from Psalms 23 and ,40 percent of the respondents said the key message is that “God will always watch over us and protect us from danger”. 30 percent of the respondents said that the key message is that “God gives in abundance to those who trust him”, 10 percent said the key message is that “God will always provide for our needs if we pray”. 10 percent said the key message is that “God will reward the work of our hands” and 10 percent gave more than one message.

We wanted to know if, according to their interpretation of the Psalms, it is important to have faith even when you are working hard.

Table 7: Respondents’ Views on the Importance of Faith for Hard Working People

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	90.0	90.0	90.0
	No response	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

On the question, “Do you think faith is important for those who work hard?” 90 percent of the respondent said “Yes”, faith is equally important for hardworking people. 10 percent of the respondent did not answer that particular question but no one said no.

We wanted to know what would be their message if they were to preach Psalm 23 and to other people.

Table 8: Respondents' Message if they were to Preach Psalms 23

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Work hard and trust God	2	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Pray and God will provide	1	10.0	10.0	30.0
	Obey God and you will receive in abundance	3	30.0	30.0	60.0
	You are gods, work hard and you will never want	1	10.0	10.0	70.0
	More than one answer is correct	3	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

On the question “If you were to preach the message in these Psalms to other people, what would you tell them? Thirty percent of the respondent said they would have said “Obey God and you will receive in abundance”, 30 percent of the respondents had more than one message. 20 percent of the respondents said they would have said “work hard and trust God”, 10 percent would have said “Pray and Go will provide” and 10 percent said “you are gods, work hard and you will never want”.

It was important to know if the respondents preach in their real life. They provided some additional information of the questionnaire.

Table 9: Respondents' Additional Comments

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	70.0	70.0	70.0
	No	3	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

On the question, “do you have something else to say about Psalm 23? Seventy percent of the respondents said yes and added their own comments of the Psalms.

For them Psalm 23 is about trusting God as the source, the provider and the protector. God will always provide. For them goodness and mercy shall follow those who believe in God and people have to surrender to God and let Him lead them.

Others said they appreciate the grace, goodness and mercy that God bestows to those who love him and walk in his ways. For them God cares, saves and protects us from both known and unknown dangers. God is omnipotent and he provides and protects in any circumstance effectively.

One comment was phrase was particularly present in the comments “the word of God is food for our souls”. Even though it had no direct connection with the Psalms, it can be interpreted as a spiritual perspective of their understanding of Psalms 23.

In the following chapter, we will do the analysis of the data in light with the research objectives and the scientific theory.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we analyze the data in order to draw important conclusions vis-a-vis the main assumption of the study. The purpose is to analyze the findings in order to deduce the connection between Bible culture-specific concepts in Psalm 23 and the perception of God's provision among members of the Gikuyu Christian community. This chapter has two sections: the first section is a recap of the analysis theoretical approach and the second one is about data analysis and findings of the study.

4.2 The Theoretical Approach of the Study

This study used two different techniques for data collection: a questionnaire and interviews. 10 people participated in the study and all of them answered the questionnaire, which means that we had a response rate of 100 percent. The interview was used to complement and explain further the information provided through the questionnaire. Five respondents out of 10 were available for the interview and responded, which means a response rate of 50 percent.

To analyze their responses, we used the Hermeneutics theory of translation.

The theory consists of the interpretation of biblical texts, wisdom and literature. Hermeneutics is the art of interpretation (Abulad, 2007). It is not about interpreting from a language to another, it is about how people understand and explain objects and subjects around them. Hermeneutic philosophy as a theory of interpretation emphasizes how we cope in the world and come to understand objects and subjects.

Practically, we were confronting various responses or interpretation of different Culture-Specific concepts in Psalms 23 to the original meaning of terms. We compared explanations by the

members of the Gikuyu Christian community who read English Bibles and those who read Gikuyu Bible in order to find out if the gap in meanings was explained by the translation or the Gikuyu culture itself that is different from the Jewish culture in which these concepts were written.

We went beyond explanations of meaning and tried to find out if these explanations had an impact of the perception of God's provision among the Gikuyu Christian community. The following are the findings of our analysis.

Our analysis covers three important aspects:

- a) the knowledge of Bible Culture-Specific concepts, the explanation of these Bible Culture-Specific terms from the perspective of the Gikuyu Christian Community
- b) concepts and translation and
- c) the impact this knowledge has on their perception of God's provision, affluence and the less fortunate.

4.2.1 Knowledge of Culture-Specific Concepts in Psalm 23

In these two Psalms, three Culture-Specific concepts were identified for the purpose of the study: "fields of green grass", "pools of fresh water" and "heavenly beings".

4.2.1.1 Fields of Green Grass

The Bible in Psalm 23 talks about fields of green grass. In the King James (KJV), Revised Standard (RSV) and New International (NIV) versions, fields of green grass are referred to as "green pastures" and the latter is the most commonly known term used. What does it mean? In the areas around Jerusalem, the hillsides, where the shepherds took the sheep, were mainly dirt

and sand. There was not a lot of lush, green grass. There were just rocks and maybe a sprig of grass popping up in different places. Therefore, when the west wind blew its humidity against the hillsides, it would condense on the cool rocks at night, that little bit of moisture helped to grow those little sprigs of grass and shepherds would take their animals to graze on those little springs of grass. That is what David calls “field of green grass”. (Vander Laan, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2x8MwiTs0hM>).

David, in Psalm 23 does not refer to these places as areas of abundance because that is not what they are. Biblical texts confirm that David, the Writer of Psalms 23 was a shepherd, which means that he understood very well the meaning and the context of fields of green grass. They are considered as places of subsistence for animals not abundance, which means that the Shepherd makes an extra effort to make sure the cattle has just enough to live on, not more.

How do members of the Gikuyu Christian community interpret this concept?

Table 10: Meanings of Psalm 23 According to the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
God takes care of us	5	50.0	50.0	50.0
God provides for our needs	3	30.0	30.0	80.0
God controls everything we do	1	10.0	10.0	90.0
More than one answer	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

From the table above we understand that 50 percent of the respondents consider what the Bible says in Psalm 23 that God, referred to as the Shepherd, and takes care of his people when Psalm

says He takes them to fields of green grass and pools of fresh water. 30 percent of the respondent say that this means that God provides for his people. The two statements are clear explanations of God's provision in terms of security and protection for the first one and means of subsistence for the second one.

We wanted to understand what respondents meant by “taking care” and “providing for needs” therefore collected their opinions during the interview. The majority of reactions emphasized the fact that God provides for and protects his people in all circumstances; he guides, he comforts and provides. The responses combined physiological and psychological needs. However, we observed that 87.5 percent of the people who supported the two statements were readers of the English Bible (50%) or had a Bible with English and Gikuyu version (37.5%). The typical readers of only Gikuyu Bible said that Psalm 23 means that God controls everything we do. See the table below.

Table 11: Meaning of the Psalm from different Bible versions used

		God takes care of us	God provides for our needs	God controls everything we do	More than one answer	Total
Bible version	English Bible	3	1	0	0	4
	Gikuyu Bible	0	0	1	0	1
	English Gikuyu	1	2	0	1	4
	Gikuyu Swahili	1	0	0	0	1
Total		5	3	1	1	10

We were curious to know what the interpretation of “fields of green grass” by the readers of the Bible in various languages was.

Table 12: Meaning of ‘Fields of Green Grass’ from different Bible versions used

		A vast and bushy green field	A green place good for farming	Any place where one can feed cattle	Small portions of green grass	Total
Bible version	English Bible	4	0	0	0	4
	Gikuyu Bible	0	0	1	0	1
	English Gikuyu	0	2	1	1	4
	Gikuyu Swahili	0	1	0	0	1
Total		4	3	2	1	10

The table above leads to another observation. Only readers of the English version think that a *field of green grass* refers to a vast and bushy green field. The reader of Gikuyu Bible and Gikuyu and English said that *fields of green grass* meant places that are good for farming or good to feed cattle or small portions of green grass. In a hierarchy, answers are on a scale of 1 to 4, the answer number one being the least close to the original meaning and the answer number four being the closest to the original meaning.

What we observed is that readers of the Gikuyu Bible were the closest to the original meaning of green grass in Psalm 23. It was then important to know if the concept “green grass in the Gikuyu Bible” meant the same in the English Bible.

During the interview, we asked the respondents if *kundu kuria kwi nyeki nduru* and *fields of green grass* had the same meaning. Eighty percent of the respondent said yes, only 20 percent explained that Gikuyu seems to limit these fields, while English talks of many places where one can find green grass. We are not able to confirm that the English meaning was lost in the

translation, neither can we confirm that the Gikuyu interpretation is closer to the original meaning.

The reader of the Gikuyu Bible and those who had both the Gikuyu and the English Bible had a theological background that gives them an added advantage in interpreting biblical text. The table below confirms this statement.

Table 13: Bible Version used and Theological Background

		Theological background		Total
		Yes	No	
Bible version	English Bible	2	2	4
	Gikuyu Bible	1	0	1
	English Gikuyu	3	1	4
	Gikuyu Swahili	0	1	1
Total		6	4	10

This implies, though not confirmed by our data, that the meaning of the Culture-Specific concept “fields of green grass” was lost in the translation from the original biblical text language to English and the new meaning was carried to other languages in translations from English.

4.2.1.2 Pools of Fresh Water

The Bible, in Psalm 23 talks about “pools of fresh water”. Other versions of the Bible such as KJV, NIV and RSV, refer to these as “still waters”. This concept also refers to those quiet small pools of fresh water in the countryside of Jerusalem where the shepherd would take the sheep. This is a desert, which the Bible refers to as the wilderness. But in this wilderness, there are

some small pools of fresh water that remain after the season of rain (which is not abundant either) and the shepherd would use them to water the sheep.

How do members of the Gikuyu Christian community interpret this concept of “pools of fresh water”?

Table 14: Meaning of ‘Pools of Fresh Water’ according to Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid A lake	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
A river	1	10.0	10.0	20.0
Small pools of rainy waters	5	50.0	50.0	70.0
Oasis	3	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

From the table above, we observe that 50 percent of the respondents got the right meaning of the concept and 30 percent of the respondents were closer to the meaning even if they did not get it right. Only 20 percent were too far from the meaning.

We then wanted to know if the meaning differed depending on the language version that they use to read the Bible.

Table 15: Meaning of ‘Pools of Fresh Water’ and Bible versions used

		A lake	A river	Small pools of rainy waters	Oasis	Total
Bible version	English Bible	0	1	2	1	4
	Gikuyu Bible	0	0	0	1	1
	English	0	0	3	1	4
	Gikuyu					
	Gikuyu	1	0	0	0	1
	Swahili					
Total		1	1	5	3	10

Again, the language factor does not say much about the choice for the correct answer. However, we noticed that most of those who use the English and Gikuyu Bible got the concept right. The fact that they can use two languages to read the Bible gives them an opportunity to compare and think more about the concept. In fact, during the interview, all the participants considered that “*ngurumo cia maai maria mahehu wega*” and “pools of fresh water” had the same meaning? Did the theological background influence their choice of meaning?

But it was important to check if, like for the first concept, it is not due to their theological background.

Table 16: Meaning of ‘Pools of Fresh Water’ and Theological Background

		A lake	A river	Small pools of rainy waters	Oasis	Total
Theological background	Yes	0	1	2	3	6
	No	1	0	3	0	4
Total		1	1	5	3	10

The theological background of the respondents does not add any significant meaning to the understanding of this concept since the majority of those who got it right do not have any theological background.

In the interview with the respondents, most of the participants considered that the concept “pool of fresh water” carries a message according to which God takes his people to a place of calmness where they will be free from harm and need. Again, this interpretation recalls the first and second meaning of God’s provision that include physiological satisfaction and safety.

4.2.2 Culture-Specific Concepts and Translation

We have failed to say that the misunderstanding of Culture-Specific concepts analyzed is the translation since the Gikuyu version is faithful to the English version. The issue resides in the knowledge of the concepts in both languages. Readers of English, Gikuyu and Swahili had the same problem of understanding the original meaning of these concepts, except the concept “pools of fresh water” whereby the Gikuyu meaning is closer to the GNB English version and the original text whereas the Swahili term “*maji matulivu*” seems more confusing. In other instances, the problem is the knowledge of the concept itself. Concepts like *fields of green grass and heavenly beings* simply do not exist in the Gikuyu culture and mythology. They only know

angels thanks to Christianity, which is why, in the explanation of heavenly beings, participants in the study explained that they are just like those angels who, during the birth of Jesus, visited the shepherds and gave them the good news. Only those who have some theological background, like the respondent who proposed an alternative explanation, have a broad understanding of heavenly beings. This particular participant explained that heavenly beings are angels and all other beings that are in heaven, like the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in Revelations 4: 4-11.

Did our participants know these concepts were Culture-Specific? From the above analysis, it is clear that they did not know that these concepts have or may have a different meaning. The Gikuyu translation is faithful to the English content and the English content does not capture the cultural aspect of the concept. That is why only those who had some theological background and most of them had two versions of the Bible-English and Gikuyu-could tell that the cultural meaning is not the same.

4.3. How Culture-Specific Concepts Influence the Perception of Gods Provision, Affluence and the Less Fortunate

One of the assumptions of this study was that the understanding of Bible Culture-Specific concepts, especially those in Psalm 23 has an impact on the perception of God's provision. We assumed at the beginning of the study that if the members of the Gikuyu Christian community consider fields of green grass and pools of fresh water as areas of abundance, they would then consider that God provides in abundance and poverty implies lack of faith or good relation with God the provider.

What did the data say?

Table 17: Meaning and Message of Psalm 23

		Psalm23				
		God takes care of us	God provides for our needs	God controls everything we do	More than one answer	Total
Message Psalms 23	God will always provide for our needs if we pray	1	0	0	0	1
	God will reward the work of our hands	0	1	0	0	1
	God will always watch over us and protect us from danger	3	0	1	0	4
	God gives in abundance to those who trust him	1	2	0	0	3
	More than one answer	0	0	0	1	1
Total		5	3	1	1	10

We asked the participants what would have been the message to preach if they were to preach Psalm 23 and confronted their message to the meaning they extracted from Psalm 23. The table above confirms part of our assumption because those who thought the two Culture-Specific concepts in Psalm 23 meant God takes care of us had a message according to which God will always watch over us and protect us from danger. Those who thought the two concepts were about a God who provides for our needs had a message according to which God gives in abundance to those who trust him.

Another assumption was that if they consider the Culture-Specific concepts in Psalm as an expression of God’s provision in abundance, they would fail to connect faith and hard work. We therefore ask them a question about importance of faith for those who work hard.

Table 18: The Message drawn from Psalm 23 in relation to Faith and Hard Work

		Faith important than hard work		Total
		Yes	No response	
Message Psalm 23	God will always provide for our needs if we pray	1	0	1
	God will reward the work of our hands	1	0	1
	God will always watch over us and protect us from danger	3	1	4
	God gives in abundance to those who trust him	3	0	3
	More than one answer	1	0	1
Total		9	1	10

Irrespective of the message they drawn from Psalm 23, 90 percent of the respondents said faith is important for those who work hard. This means that even if they interpret Culture-Specific concepts in Psalm 23 in terms of God’s protection and Provision and consider preaching messages of God’s protection and provision in abundance, they still consider the importance of hard work.

We pushed the debate further in the interview to know what they thought about believers who were poor.

They acknowledge that all must work hard for God to bless the work of their hands. However, they explained lack among the believers by various factors, including God's purposeful delay of blessings, God teaching his people through suffering, lack of trust in God observed in some believers and lack of education, poor planning and inadequate strategy among the believers.

From these explanations, it was clear that irrespective of how they perceived God's provision, they acknowledge human responsibility in the process of providing for human needs. That is why we cannot say that their perception of God's provision has an impact on how they perceive the less fortunate.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMANDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study was an attempt to participate in the debate on Culture-Specific concepts in Translation. It focused on those culture-specific concepts in the Bible, in particular in Psalm 23 and tried to establish the relationship between these concepts and the perception of God's provision among the Gikuyu Christians or Christians who read and understand Gikuyu. This chapter presents the main conclusions of the study and the recommendations.

5.2 Summary

This study set out to describe the culture-specific concepts in Psalm 23 and its translation in the Gikuyu Bible, to discuss the various explanations that are given to these concepts by the members of the Gikuyu Christian community and to discuss findings on how this translation influences the perception of God's provision, affluence and the less fortunate.

Two culture specific concepts from Psalm 23 were identified in the Good News Bible.

Indeed, we deducted from the data that the meaning of translated Culture-Specific concepts in Psalm 23 was altered by the new cultural context in which they were being applied. We were working with two languages: English, Gikuyu, and we used the Good News Bible for English and the Gikuyu Bible for Gikuyu. We worked with members of the Gikuyu Christian community who use the English Bible or the Gikuyu Bible or both. There were also users of the Swahili Bible; however, they did not influence our results since they were only 10 percent of the respondents.

5.3 Conclusions

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To describe the culture-specific concepts in Psalm 23 and its translation in the Gikuyu Bible;
2. To discuss the various explanations that are given to these concepts by the members of the Gikuyu Christian community;
3. To demonstrate how this translation influences the perception of God's provision, affluence and the less fortunate.

In this study we have established the existence of culture-specific concepts in Psalms 23 and we have demonstrated how they alter the original message.

We observed that the Gikuyu translation, as explained by our respondents did not convey the original meaning of Psalm 23. This is a message about an almighty God who provides for his people. However, it is not about abundance of provision to humans needs rather it is about subsistence. This is because of the cultural context in which it was written. It talks about a Shepherd who provides for the needs of the sheep in areas of scarcity where pasture and water are not abundant but just enough and there must be a deliberate effort from the shepherd to get the sheep to where they can get just enough to eat and to drink.

There was no difference in understanding between English and Gikuyu readers of the Bible, which means that the problem was not the translation from English to Gikuyu but the translation from the original text to English. Only those who read the two versions of the Bible, Gikuyu and English, were able to get the meaning of culture-specific concepts, particularly "fields of green grass". Their understanding was not derived from the comparison of the two versions that, in

reality convey the same meaning of the message, but from the theological background they had, which gives them an understanding of the concept in which these Psalms were written.

This conclusion confirms not only our hypothesis but also one of the conclusions of a previous study by Gitau (1989) who observed that even if the Bible has been translated into various local languages, the task of interpreting and applying that message within the African indigenous framework is yet to be achieved.

The existence of a relationship between the translated message of Culture-Specific concepts in Psalms 23 and the perception of God's provision

There were two major trends or perceptions of God's Provision among the respondents. The first group of respondents perceive God's provision in terms of basic needs while the second group of respondents perceives God's provision in terms of safety and protection. We observed a relationship between the interpretation of the message and the perception of God's provision by the respondents. Those who thought the two Culture-Specific concepts in Psalm 23 meant God takes care of us had a message according to which God will always watch over us and protect us from danger. Those who thought the two concepts were about a God who provides for our needs had a message according to which God gives in abundance to those who trust him. This shows that their understanding of the concepts and the message determined their definition of God's provision.

The disconnection between the perception of God's provision and the relationship between hard work and faith.

At the beginning of the study we assumed there was a connection between the message in Psalms 23, the perception of God's provision and the relationship between this perception, faith and hard work. We thought that those who think God provides for people's needs would overlook hard work and give priority to faith and those who perceive God's provision in terms of safety and protection would overlook faith and give priority to hard work. However, our data shown that irrespective of the interpretation of the message and the perception of God's provision, 90 percent of the respondents said faith is important for those who work hard. This means that even if they interpret Culture-Specific concepts in Psalm 23 in terms of God's protection and Provision and consider preaching messages of God's protection and provision in abundance, they still consider the importance of hard work.

The constant message of members of respondents on affluence and the less fortunate

As for faith and hard work, our respondents shown in their responses a particular trend: they considered affluence as a blessing from God for those who work hard. They explained that everyone must work hard for God to bless the work of their hands. This was a general trend from all the respondents irrespective of their messages on Psalms 23. At the same time, they did not explain misfortune in terms of lack of faith. In fact, during interviews, we asked them how they explain lack among believers whereas Psalm 23 says, "*the Lord is my shepherd I shall never want*". In their responses, they explained lack among the believers by various factors, including God's purposeful delay of blessings, God teaching his people through suffering, lack of trust in God observed in some believers and lack of education, poor planning and inadequate strategy among the believers.

These explanations did not follow a particular trend. It was clear that irrespective of how they perceived God's provision, they acknowledge human responsibility in the process of providing

for human needs. Therefore, we did not conclude that their perception of God's provision has an impact on how they perceive the less fortunate.

5.4 Recommendations

There is need to do further research in other languages in the other chapters of the book of Psalms and indeed the whole Bible.

We understood from this study that translation of the Bible from English to Gikuyu carried along all the gaps in conveying the message about culture-specific concepts in the Bible. The English version did not take into account the particular meaning conveyed by Culture-Specific concepts that apply to the original context in which the Bible was written. Even if the Gikuyu translator was accurate and faithful to the message in English, the message conveyed was lost from the first level translation and did not appear in the second level translation. We therefore suggest that the translations of the Bible into local languages be actualized, in such a way that they translate the Bible from the original text not English into the local languages.

Secondly, the translation strategy used when the Bible was translated into both English and Gikuyu did not capture the essence of culture-specific concepts and the message they convey. We therefore suggest that for the revision of the translations they change the strategy and adopt a strategy that accommodates culture-specific concepts.

We noticed that respondents who had some theological background were able to understand the meaning of culture-specific concepts because they were already given the context in which the Bible was written. We therefore suggest that Christian congregations that only use translated Bible versions focus on training their preachers in theology so that they can overcome the gaps in translation and explain the biblical message from its original context.

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APPENDIX 1
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Dedan Mwangi Kamau, a Master's student at the University of Nairobi. I am doing research on Culture-Specific Concepts used in the Bible. I humbly request you to fill the following questionnaire. Select the right answer when required to make a choice. Your answers will be used for research purposes only.

PART ONE: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENT.

1. Age:
 - 18 and below
 - Between 19 and 25
 - Between 25 and 35
 - Between 35 and 50
 - Above 50
2. Sex:
 - Male
 - Female
3. Marital status:
 - Single
 - Married
 - Divorced
 - Widow(er)
4. Denomination:
 - Catholic
 - Protestant
 - Pentecostal
 - Revival churches
 - Other Christian denominations
5. Education level:
 - Primary
 - Secondary
 - Undergraduate
 - Postgraduate
6. Profession:
7. Area of residence:
 - In Nairobi
 - Outside Nairobi

PART TWO: QUESTIONS ON CULTURE-SPECIFIC CONCEPTS

1. Which Bible version do you use for personal reading?
 - The English Bible
 - The Kiswahili Bible
 - The Gikuyu Bible
 - I do not have a Bible

2. What is your understanding of Psalm 23?
 - God takes care of us
 - God provides for our needs
 - Gods controls everything we do
 - God gives to those who obey him
 - Other (to specify)
.....
.....

3. What is your understanding of Psalm 29?
 - That God is mightier than other gods are
 - That other gods obey God
 - That human are also other gods
 - That angles are also called gods
 - Other to specify.....

4. According to you, what do they mean by “fields of green grass” in Psalm 23?
 - A vast and bushy green field
 - A green place that is good for farming
 - Any place where one can feed cattle
 - Small portions of green grass

5. What is your understanding of “pools of fresh water” in Psalm 23?
 - Big water bodies
 - A lake
 - A river
 - Small pools of rainy waters
 - Oasis

6. According to you, what do they mean by “heavenly beings” in Psalm 29:1?

Gods of other nations

- Angels
- Men
- Kings
- Other creatures

7. What is the key message you draw from this Psalms 23 and 29?
 - That God will always provide for our needs if we pray
 - That God will reward the work of our hands
 - That God will always watch over us and protect us from danger
 - That God gives in abundance to those who trust him
8. Do you think faith is important for those who work hard?
 - Yes
 - No
9. If you were to preach the message in this psalm to other people, what would you tell them?
 - Work hard and trust God
 - Pray and God will provide
 - Obey God and you shall will receive in abundance
 - Whoever trust God cannot be poor.
 - You are gods, work hard and you will never want
10. Are you a pastor or a preacher?
 - Yes
 - No
11. Do you have some background in theology?
 - Yes
 - No
12. Do have something else to say about Psalm 23 and Psalm 29? If yes, kindly write your comment in the space bellow.

.....

.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX 2
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Do you think *kundu kuria kwi nyeki nduru* and *fields of green grass* have the same meaning?
2. What is your understanding of this concept?
3. Do you think *ngurumo cia maai maria mahehu wega* and *pools of fresh water* have the same meaning?
4. What is your understanding of this concept?
5. Do you think *Ciumbe cia iguru* and *heavenly beings* have the same meaning?
6. What is your understanding of this concept?
7. If ... (their answers to questions B2 and B3); is it important to emphasize hard work when preaching to believers?
8. When the Bible says God is our provider, does it mean we do not have to work?
9. How can people who trust God lack whereas the Bible says the Lord is my shepherd I shall never want
10. According to you, what is the message that Psalms 23 and 29 are trying to convey?