

Summary of the Thesis

This study investigated how the exorcism stories might have functioned as oral stories told to make meaning of traumatic violence. The study differs from previous approaches by developing presumptions from Gerd Theissen and Wire, who suggested that the demon stories presupposed a context of violence, antagonism, and destruction and that the exorcism stories circulated as oral stories. However, they did not explain the context of violence during the first century and how the audiences might have heard the stories. The research developed a theoretical perspective that during the first century, orality was the predominant way of communication, intertwined with the audiences' social identity and built upon the hypothesis that the exorcism stories reflected a possible context of violence during the first century.

Methodologically, the approach taken by the study was not to make an exegesis of the text in order to find Mark's intentions. Instead, I used an analogical approach, building upon the views of Bruce Malina and Milton Moreland. The analogical approach assumes that modern peasant communities can offer analogies that can be used to offer insight concerning life in the past. I used Chikore village in Zimbabwe, a peasant community, as a village that can offer analogies to understand how the exorcism stories could have functioned as oral stories within a context of violence. This offers possible insights into how the exorcism stories might have circulated as oral stories. I used the theory of psychological trauma to discuss how people who have been affected by violence retell their experiences. Using the theory of psychological trauma, I observed that the people of Chikore village were traumatised by violence. As a sign of trauma, I observed that people used the stories as a reminder of their own situation. They discover in the exorcism stories a corresponding collective narrative that describes what had happened to them. Besides reminding them of the past, the exorcism stories also provided the people with hope, in that they were able to retell their experiences.

The study suggested that the exorcism stories might have functioned as meaning-making oral stories told by the Markan audience within a context of violence. Using insights from Chikore village as analogies, I asked: 1) what was the plausible social situation of Markan audiences? 2) How might they have heard the exorcism stories? I used the theory of cultural trauma to argue that demon stories might have functioned as oral stories that represented the collective negative experiences of the Markan community. The experience of land displacement, challenges of tenancy, taxation and landlessness are possible contexts within which the audience

of Mark heard the demon stories. In terms of cultural trauma, I argued that the man who was possessed by a demon may have been heard as a reference to Mark's audience under social and imperial oppression. The crying and convulsion may have referred to the shared pain of living under foreign domination. The power of the demon in controlling its host through breaking chains, living in the mountains, and bruising with stones may have conjured up images of the ruthless and destructive power of the empire. In representing the evils of the Empire, the audiences may have used the exorcism stories to project the Empire as demonic and evil. They may have seen the Empire as similar to a demon that attacks and kills its host. The audiences might have represented the empire as filthy and contaminating, like pigs that are ritually unclean. The presence of the Roman Empire might have been represented as an evil that contaminated the community's identity. Presenting the empire as demons and pigs may have been a strategy for creating collective fear and distancing the community from the empire. Through telling the demon stories, the audience may have presented themselves as victims who had been attacked by a filthy external power. The audience may have heard the rebuking and exorcising of the demons as a distancing strategy whereby the empire was seen as an entity that must be dislodged.