This is a study of receptor audience engagement with the Gospel of Mark that investigates how the text could function as a script for speaking persuasively to matters of import in local groupings of people. The study examines the environments of early groupings of Jesus devotees in the Græco–Roman region and argues for the plausibility that Mark could have been designed to function as such a text-script. Parallel to this, actual local Lovangai environments are studied to see how such a function might be similar in groupings of church members. Selected people from three church congregations participated in this study.\textsuperscript{1}

The dissertation draws a connection between the speech practice in Græco-Roman social groupings and Lovangai social groupings that is aimed at reception of Mark. It is argued that there is a coherence between these two in the potential function of the text-script, as a tool for persuasive speaking. The study is concerned more with what people do with a text than with formulating a target text. The study does not make general claims or predictions about the Lovangai people as audience but seeks to gain understanding about reception in a few actual, local environments. Claims regarding the source text are likewise modest, restricted to the Gospel of Mark and the presentation of a plausible reading of its projected function in Græco-Roman, local groupings. A major emphasis is placed on persuasive speaking practised by Lovangai research participants and on their estimation of the matters of import in their own groupings. Extensive and varied examples of speech practice are provided and discussed. The culmination of the study is a presentation of selected persuasive speeches by research participants.

\textsuperscript{1}The Lovangai area lies in north-east Papua New Guinea, comprising Lovangai Island with its outlying islands and the Tingwon group. The church members in focus live in three home places in the west-Lovangai area (see the maps in Appendix A).
participants as they interpret a Markan episode in order to address a matter of concern in a social grouping.

Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation as a Bible translation study focused on the Gospel of Mark and a group of Lovangai research participants. After a brief sketch of the historical beginnings of the church in the west-Lovangai area - with a focus on expectations of text use and persuasive speaking - the chapter explains the two main areas of investigation that form the framework of the study: Mark as text-script for speaking in local Graeco-Roman environments; and, Lovangai persuasive speech practice that addresses important matters via interpretively enacting Markan episodes.

Chapter 2 provides an explanation of the theory and methods underlying the main body of the study, making room for the research question: How can the characteristics of Graeco-Roman persuasive speaking and the implied Markan audience on the one hand and the phenomenon of speaking to effect practice in Lovangai groupings of people on the other hand be understood as coherent and as informing a translation that is to be realized as an enactment of the Markan text?

The chapter first examines certain assumptions held in mission-motivated communicative Bible translation theory and pedagogy and in Gospel and Markan scholarship and explains how these are problematic for a reading of Mark as text script. From missiological and theological perspectives, it has usually been assumed that Mark is to function as informative text, a short description of what Jesus said and did. It is also assumed that a great gulf of ‘cultural’ knowledge lies between a particular, original audience and readers of translations and that this means that the original audience understood everything clearly whereas interpretation and translation is needed to bridge that gulf for new readers. Redaction-critical theories of particular Gospel audiences coincide with and influence the assumptions about ease of communication in an original setting. Further, assumptions are examined that hold reception to consist primarily in comprehension by individual information-processing minds and that both original and receptor audience are assumed to be monolithic in their possession of cultural knowledge. The chapter pays special attention to certain recent communicative translation studies to illustrate how these theories tend to assume the characters portrayed in the narrative as the original audience and neglect the phenomenon of practice integrated with speaking in groupings of people as well as the likelihood of early audience groupings being removed in time from the depicted narrative, diversely situated geographically and heterogeneous in their internal, social constitution.

The second part of the chapter explains a model of translational activity that is oriented to speech practice in actual local groupings. Speaking for effect is done in a local, unique environment that is constituted by the group members, their
physical setting and their relationships to one another. Competent text interpreters and orators - in this study called reader-speakers - interpret the script of Mark and enact its persuasive purposes as speech directed at local groupings. Knowing that important matters will likely be sensitive, especially in distinctly stratified groupings, reader-speakers can use the text as figuration and thus make their speaking covert so as to let more powerful group members retain their respect while still making their point. A reader-speaker interpreting a Markan episode can speak in ways similar to how home place affairs are debated, while at the same time seeking to be faithful to matters predicted by the text-script and remaining alert to how it can model ways to speak.

Thirdly, the chapter introduces and explains the methods used in the study. The environments of the source text are studied with the help of certain Gospel scholarship that suggests the plausibility of Mark having been designed as script and, more particularly, that the text’s persuasive purposes differentiate leaders and low-status people in the early Christian movement. An independent analysis is made of the Markan episodes as figured text for use by reader-speakers to address leadership issues in audience groupings. Lovangai environments and speech practice are investigated through observing and participating in events where persuasive speaking takes place, collecting unsolicited examples of speaking and writing; interviewing church members; and, working with research participants in a focused way in a seminar which was run over a period of one evening (session A) and the following two full days (sessions B and C). Session A was introductory. Session B focused on local social groupings and matters of import; Session C focused on episodes of Mark and how to interpret them for speaking to matters of import in social groupings. Sessions B and C generated examples of composed speeches which were recorded, a selection of which are presented in Chapters 4 and 5 of the dissertation.

Chapter 3 explains the source Mark as a text in its Graeco-Roman setting. The chapter argues that it is reasonable to understand the source as a script for Christian orators/emissaries - in this study called “reader-speakers” - who were to point attention to and persuade people regarding matters of import in local audience groupings that were stratified along lines of power and prestige. By using this tool reader-speakers could identify what the matters were that they were to address and they could interpretively find ways to speak effectively yet safely to such audience groupings. This reading of Mark is contrasted with two common readings of Mark: as a story whose plot and characters work together to invite any and all readers equally to be affected towards following Jesus (narrative criticism); or, as a script for performing that story dramatically for emotive and aesthetic effect (recent performance studies).

Relying heavily upon certain existing scholarly work on the Gospels and Mark, it is argued that Mark, as any Graeco-Roman text, would have been conceived of
as rhetorical in that it was to function as a tool by which trained and competent reader-speakers were to convince audiences about matters of import. The early Jesus movement consisted of geographically diverse groupings that were heterogeneous in ethno-religious background among whom Mark was to be uniquely enacted in any and every local environment. Further, and more particularly, reader-speakers could assume that early Christian groupings - like other groupings - were divided along lines of elite leader-types and low-status people. A selection of episodes is analysed to show how the text predicts such a differentiated audience. It is heavily loaded with speaking and demonstrative action that points the attention of the disciples to desired practice and, on the other hand, affirms the true devotion of suppliants.

It is further argued, relying on certain rhetorical studies, that Græco-Roman orators considered carefully the challenges of addressing sensitive matters aimed at higher-status audience members in the presence of the rest of the audience. A known oratorical practice was to speak to sensitive matters in covert ways with schematised speech (Greek: \textit{logos eschēmatismenos}) and thus making a point indirectly and safely. This schematised speaking - a social phenomenon - is contrasted in the chapter with usual ways in which Bible translation theory understands ‘rhetorical’ to be about isolatable textual features, often called figures of speech, like rhetorical question, parallelism or chiasm.

The chapter moves on to claim that the narrative episodes of Mark can be read as such schematised speaking or figuration. Whereas ostensibly the narrative settings and events form a story, as figuration the episodes can be made by competent reader-speakers to point to issues which are bound to exist in groupings of the Jesus movement. The main persuasive purpose is thus predicted by the text which addresses actual or would-be leaders towards a certain leadership stance. Secondarily, the episodes argue in affirmation of the personal devotion to Jesus of ordinary, lower-status group members (Henderson, 2009). Taking this reading of the text, the chapter presents a survey of the episodes and discerns four inter-related aspects of leadership style. The figured text-script challenges leaders as to whether 1) they are exemplifying servant leadership by not competing for prestige, 2) they are prepared to face sacrificial death, 3) they understand and can handle legal matters and scripture interpretation in favour of low-status people, and 4) they have an attitude of reception towards low-status people and are competent to aid them. Thus, it is argued, the reader-speaker in - or sent to - the local audience grouping has the rhetorical task of interpreting the text of Mark - though narrative in its broad literary form - as addressing these actual, local matters.

Taking that plausible picture of the function of Mark in early environments - using the text as tool for persuasive speaking to local matters of import -, this
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Chapter undergirds the proposal that a similar function is reasonable for receptor environments in Lovangai social groupings.

Chapter 4 engages the question of how an invited group of Lovangai research participants - all competent reader-speakers in their own right - speak persuasively to effect (change of) practice in others. The chapter first introduces Lovangai social groupings and actual matters of import. Secondly, a selection of unsolicited speech enactments is presented which illustrate a variety of matters of concern and various social groupings. One example is that of a middle-aged man attempting to persuade a church congregation that a certain ruling about raising and donating poultry for a celebratory meal is not being interpreted correctly. These examples are snap-shots, showing actual people attempting to effect change of practice within social groupings. The fact that they are unsolicited provides further credibility for the examples of speaking generated in interviews and seminar sessions. Thirdly, a selection of sketches taken from extended interviews, show research participants recalling or envisioning persuasive speaking and providing some of their own analysis of the effect of their speaking. The sketches show speaking in a range of social groupings, from nuclear family to clan and extended family groupings through to a large meeting of several homeplaces. Sixteen sketches are presented, illustrating serious engagement with a variety of issues. Finally, the group discussion and reflections in session B of the seminars yielded examples of speakers carefully addressing matters of import, seven of which are selected and presented in some detail.2 They show how reader-speakers analyse and assess groups and issues and then compose speech to decisively address them. One of the speeches presented, for example, is that of a middle-aged woman, addressing a large group of parents of the church congregation. In light of recent acts of vandalism which she analyses for them, she makes an urgent plea for training and disciplining younger children lest they grow up to follow similar ways.

Within the argument of the dissertation, the variated persuasive speaking illustrated in this chapter illuminates the question of how Markan episodes might be treated as text-script by these Lovangai reader-speakers (taken up in Chapter 5). It is reasonable to expect coherence between the function proposed for early environments (Græco-Roman) and the speaking in social groupings as practised by these research participants. With a Markan text as script they should be competent to interpret matters of import in the script and, by interpreting a particular social grouping, speak to address the matter. Such speech practice would be similar to - coherent with - the speaking for effect common to Lovangai social groupings as exemplified extensively in this chapter.

2 A list of the speeches of all the research participants in session B is given in Appendix C. The ones selected for presentation are marked with an asterisk.
Chapter 5 makes the central point of this dissertation; with extensive examples, it shows Lovangai reader-speakers interpretively enacting episodes of Mark to address matters of import in their own social groupings. The term “interpretive enactment” refers to the speaking out loud which the research participants did in the seminar group and includes the reflection and planning leading up to it. It is interpretive activity in that the reader-speaker says things in an integrated way with the voice of the script. It is an enactment in that the reader-speaker embodies - within an environment that includes other actors - the interpretation of the script and his or her own persuasive purpose. An enactment is local, time-bound and is not simply a cognitive transfer of information.

In a major introductory section the method of seminar C is explained in more detail, setting it in the context of the whole dissertation and especially the closely related preparatory work done in seminar B. The twenty-five interpretive enactments that were collected engaged eight episodes: Mk 2:23-28; 3:31-35; 9:38-50; 10:13-16; 10:28-31; 12:1-11; 12:41-44; 14:3-9. The section also discusses how interpretive enactments are understood as different from performance as dramatic acting, why the study was conducted orally rather than with written texts and the rationale for preparing the text-script with no special effort to make it Lovangai-sounding except to make a minimally pronounceable text. The seminar session did not include any exegetical discussion. Explication of information gaps or differences between ‘the world’ of Mark and Lovangai ‘culture’ were not planned, nor did any questions of that nature arise. Rather, the session was planned as an opportunity for reader-speakers to approach Markan episodes seeking in the text not an informative intent but a pointing of attention to matters of import and to ways of speaking with sensitivity to stratified groupings.

In the body of the chapter, seven selected interpretive enactments are presented. These comprise five episodes interpreted by six research participants: Mk 2:23 - 28 by two participants; Mk 9:38 - 50 twice by the same participant; Mk 10:13 - 16; Mk 10:28 - 31; and, Mk 12:1 - 11. These enactments were selected with an eye for getting a variety of ages, both men and women, and people from each of the three congregations. The enactments illustrate a range of competence in handling matters of import and how reader-speakers choose an audience grouping deemed appropriate for him or her to address. Each presentation has the following constituents: a title of the enactment (using formulations from the enactment); the text-script in full in Lovangai, with a parallel English retro-version; an introduction of the reader-speaker, the social grouping and the matter of import addressed; the enactment text (in English from a transcription and translation of the audio recording made in the seminar session); a discussion of the enactment that provides clarification, makes an analysis of the actual mat-
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ter of import, audience stratification and sensitivity of the issue and discusses
speaker motivation and style choices.

A concluding section discusses further considerations on the findings of this
chapter. Research participants show that negotiation is required vis à vis their
social grouping as to how directly it is appropriate to speak. Confidence in ad-
dressing matters of import varies from person to person and is relative to what
group is being addressed. Reader-speakers depend on others to help them - over
time - to realize or strengthen their persuasive attempts. Some reader-speakers
engaged the seminar group itself in the real issue they were addressing, thus
illustrating that their enactments were not staged, ‘performed’ or otherwise in-
authentic. Interpretations of the same enactment vary between speakers and
chosen audience groupings. An approach to Markan episodes as script for ad-
dressing real matters of concern requires that the reader-speaker interpretations
be taken seriously, since it is only through embodiment by the reader-speaker
that persuasive purposes become reality for hearers.

Chapter 6 provides a short summary and further reflection on the main points
that this study seeks to show. The following main points are listed: the plausible
make-up of the projected Graeco-Roman audience of Mark is diverse, local and
stratified; the episodes as figured text point especially to leadership practice;
Lovangai reader-speakers are willing and competent in addressing matters in
their own social groupings; they are also willing and competent to interpret
and to speak from Markan episodes, thus attempting to persuade social group
members towards change of practice; and, there is a relationship of coherence
between early reception and Lovangai reception in regards to persuasive speech
practice and function of the text as script.

The chapter further provides a reflective review of the dissertation with atten-
tion given to post-colonial concerns, language as practice, communication and
translation and figuration in texts and speech. The chapter closes with a pro-
posal that translating Mark in Lovangai be carried out not only by making a
script but that translational activity itself be understood as including assessment
and interpretation of both the script as well as local social groupings and, sig-
nificantly, as culminating in speech aimed at persuading local audience group-
ings towards change of practice. The chapter invites further consideration by
Lovangai translators and church workers as well as by other theorists and ped-
agogues working in (missionary) Bible translation more generally.

Five appendices are attached to the study. Appendix A provides maps that lo-
cate the Lovangai area in Papua New Guinea and show the location of the three
congregations in focus. Appendix B lists the research participants by age bracket

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1Appendix D gives an overview of all the enactments of session C with a short statement of the
persuasive goals of the reader-speakers. The seven enactments selected for presentation are
marked with an asterisk.
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and home place congregation. Appendix C gives an overview of the attempts at speaking for effect performed in session B of the seminar. Appendix D gives an overview of the interpretive enactments based on Markan episodes which were composed and performed in Session C. Finally, Appendix E reflects upon four potential consequences of this dissertation for Bible translation pedagogy and practice.