

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

TITLE: ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL BARRIERS TO PLANTING SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES AMONG THE LUO COMMUNITY IN SIAYA COUNTY: A CASE STUDY OF UKWALA SUB-LOCATION

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The Luo community residing in Siaya County, Ugenya Sub-County of Ukwala Sub-Location has remained inaccessible to the Adventist message despite the concerted efforts to reach them. The assumption that their unique social, cultural practices hinder the witnessing ministry has not been demonstrated.

This study explored social, cultural factors hindering the work of reaching the Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location. After carrying out a community survey and analyzing the data, four social, cultural barriers emerged as follows: 1) the struggle for the preservation of their identity; 2) the institution of polygamy; 3) ancestral veneration, and 4) the region in Ukwala Sub- Location has been isolated to Adventists for some time.

This study proposed four solutions of equal measure to mitigate the said obstacles. The first is the analysis of the strategies used formerly by Adventists in

planting churches in Kisumu County. Second, are the cultural barriers that hinder Adventists in the planting of churches. Third, are the strategies used by the non-Adventists in planting churches in Ukwala Sub-Location within Ugenya Sub-County of Siaya County, and finally, the fourth one is the future approach purposely to level the ground for the missionaries to reach out and plant churches in Ukwala Sub-Location, also other people groups with similar features.

I conducted a two-week evangelistic campaign at Ohagre in Ukwala Sub-Location where 24 persons were baptized, and a new Seventh-day Adventist congregation started at Ohagre village. The study includes the suggestion to enhance cross-cultural communication; promotion of formal education; application of beneficial Luo cultural customs; the total transformation of the Luo worldview and finally, developing accessibility avenues in future church planting in the Ukwala Sub-Location.

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A project

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of the requirements for the degree

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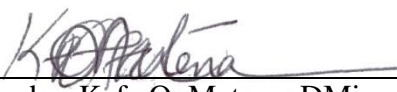
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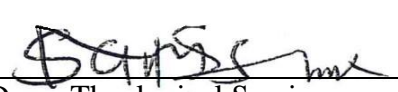
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To my dear wife Beatrice and to the three children God has blessed us with, Isaiah,
Mercy, and MaryAnne, who are a special blessing from God in my life.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The world population today is about 6 billion. By December 31, 2015, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had 18, 296,127 members around the world. The world population is growing faster than our membership.¹ Some countries are still un-entered. What a challenge! In nearly every conference there are vast areas without a Seventh-day Adventist Church or a single believer. The church needs to follow Jesus' example in going into the cities and villages, and His instruction, "lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35 NIV).

The SDA Church has been deeply concerned on how to plant churches, but the social-cultural aspects of the target communities are rarely considered. There are many challenges to the work of God especially spreading the gospel to the un-entered territories. One of these difficulties is the culture² of a target community. "The researcher acknowledges the understanding of cultural differences helps to increase one's level of tolerance, acceptance, and appreciation. The Spirit of Prophecy gives advice to those engaged in the gospel ministry thus: "Let every worker in the Master's vineyard, study, and plan, devise methods, to reach the people where they are."³

¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Office of Archives and Statistics. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2015 (SDA Yearbook 2015)* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2015), 75.

² Culture is said to be nothing more than the characteristic features and behaviour of a group of people and the ideas and values that they espouse. It is the sum total of their language, dialects, thoughts, actions, and behaviour that has been learned and transmitted through the years." It becomes their badge of identity.

³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 122.

The target community that will be explored in this study is the Luo community in Ugenya Sub-County found in Ukwala Sub-Location which is still un-entered compared to other counties in Nyanza. Members of this community in Ukwala Sub-Location still upholds traditional cultural practices which makes them inaccessible to the propagation of Adventism in the vast territory. According to a census conducted in Kenya in 2005, Ugenya Sub-County had 113,848 people. These statistics indicate that there is a large group of individuals yet to be reached with the Adventist message and churches planted for the gospel to reach every nation, language and tongue in the world so that Christ will come again.

Statement of the Problem

For the last 100 years, evangelism strategies employed by the SDA Church have not yielded significant results in Ukwala Sub-Location within Ugenya Sub-County of Siaya County. The Sub-Location has a population of 5,765 with SDA Church membership of 10, a ratio of 1 to 577. This indicates a very low Adventist presence in the region. Gospel Ministers, assume that it is because of the unique, social, cultural practices but no evidence can ascertain this assertion. This study identified the Luo social, cultural barriers hindering the work of planting Adventist churches. The SDA Church is among the growing Protestant denominations in Kenya. The SDA Church has managed to plant churches among the people of different cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, it has failed to convert and plant churches among a significant proportion of the Luos of Ukwala Sub-Location within Ugenya Sub-County of Siaya County.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to develop strategies to enable the missionaries to gain more access as they witness to the Luos and other communities with similar cultural traits.

This study sought to find the ways to plant churches in un-entered Sub-Location in Ugenya Sub-County, particular in Ukwala, where social, cultural factors are hindering the work of reaching the Luos. The barriers indicate a struggle for the preservation of Luo identity and include such things as, polygamy and ancestral veneration. The region has also been isolated by the Adventist Church.

Significance of the Study

This study shall assist the church to evangelize all the un-entered territory with the same problem. Secondly, the church pastors will have a tool in their hands to improve the ways of entering the un-entered sub-locations in Ukwala in Siaya County. Thirdly, the leadership of Central Nyanza Conference under the supervision of the Office of Adventist Mission Department could use this study as a tool for educating pastors and layperson to help them reach the un-entered Sub-Locations with the same social, cultural barriers.

Delimitation of the Study

While the problem of un-entered sub-locations is vast in Central Nyanza Field particularly in Siaya County, this study will only consider the social, cultural barriers in planting churches in un-entered Sub-Location in Ukwala. This is due to time constraints and wide geographical coverage of the region.

Limitation of the Study

This study does not intend to come up with an approach which can work in all un-entered sub-locations rather; it is to be applied to the Luos in Siaya County. Also, the geographical coverage of the study area is limited to Ukwala Sub- location of Ugenya Sub-County, as it is impossible to undertake the study in the whole Ugenya

region of Siaya County. More importantly, the study area is strategic in relation to researcher's location.

Methodology

The nature of the study necessitated the use of case-study research paradigm with qualitative approach whereby themes were drawn from grounded theory. The qualitative research can be utilized as to improve planting churches to un-entered sub-locations where social, cultural issues are practiced among the Luos. Literature and other academic materials will be consulted to see the way evangelism and ministry are conducted in other un-entered areas. The last part of the research dealt with what the different arms of the church could do as a matter of urgency to make sure that not only the urban will be reached by the gospel but also the un-entered locations in Ukwala Sub-Location.

The study will also look at planting churches to un-entered territories carried out in the past, especially within the last twenty-five years of the existence of the Central Nyanza Field. Chapter two will address theoretical Biblical foundation exploring the Old and New Testaments for mission to un-entered territories. The chapter will also address the contextual approach to mission challenge. Chapter three will address historical background of the Luos, description of the study area and cultural barriers in planting an Adventist church.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been used in this study in a specialized manner to have a different meaning from the usual usage:

Ker: refers to President of the group.”

Obongo Nyakalaga: God as the Luo call Him.

Ramogi: is a powerful individual vested with power.

Un-entered: sub-location-refers to where there is no Seventh-day Adventist Church.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Biblical Foundation for Mission to Un-entered Territories

This chapter intends to explore the Old and New Testaments views on reaching the un-entered regions. It also investigates the Spirit of Prophecy and the works of the other scholars on the subject. This section also deals with the works on addressing cultural barriers to the gospel. This is with the purpose of establishing the biblical foundation for reaching the un-entered sub-location of Ukwala within Ugenya Sub-County of Siaya County.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament contains series of inspiring stories of how lasting relationship was established through friendship. Ruth became a friend with her mother-in-law, and they became a family looking after one another in their association throughout their lives. This friendship was cross-cultural. While it is true that one cannot choose all their relatives, one has a leeway in choosing friends. It seems inevitable that for beings that social creatures are, essentially, one will in contact with those whom he or she deems fit to be their friend. Not all friendships are alike Centuries ago the Greek philosopher Aristotle categorized various kinds of friendships based on the motives that established the relationship between the parties. Since that time many writers have expounded on this fascinating and, at times, complex phenomenon of friendship.

The prayer of Solomon when dedicating the temple in Jerusalem implies that Solomon understood that the mission of God was not limited to the nation of Israel. In the case of the Great Commission, what they do is to spread the good news to the world.

Probably one of the greatest barriers to people's involvement in church mission is that they misapprehend what it entails. Church mission is moving out with the good news to reach others who have not received the message. This process bears much fruit when the church members or the individual evangelist puts some fundamental factors into consideration. It is no coincidence that three of the world's major faiths. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are sometimes called the "Abrahamic faiths" That is because of all three, in one way or another, trace their roots back to this great man of God. Though Abraham is admired as the defining example of faithfulness, he is viewed as a blessing to all nations. God called him to separate himself from familiar social and spiritual context and migrate to an unfamiliar country. Abraham became a prototype missionary to several people groups a respected leader who witnessed to his faith in God.

The patriarch was called to leave his past behind him, to step out in faith, to believe what seemed unbelievable, to do what God had called him to do. Moreover, as a result of his faithfulness, all the nations of the world would be blessed.

The New Testament

It is important to mention here that in recent times witnessing to un-entered sub-locations has become a thing of paramount concern among Seventh-day Adventist Church Christians. Why is it so important? Was not Jesus concern only for the lost sheep of Israel?

William J. Saal gives reasons why Christians should reach the un-entered sub-locations with the gospel of Christ. He argues that “un-entered locations are the object of God’s love. In no way are un-entered Sub-Locations under special condemnation that places them beyond the reach of that love.”¹ He buttressed his argument with words of John, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Phil Parshall asserts that “God’s love constrained Him to send His Son to bridge the gap between divinity and humanity. God Himself built the bridge to humanity ... just as Christ Himself became the bridge between God and man and the channel through which the divine blessings flow.”² Phil, therefore, admonished Christians to become bridges to our fellow men here to the un-entered territories for Christ. He remarks that the expanse and depth of Christ’s love for un-entered territories must find its expression in us.³

Agape love is our compelling motivation for witnessing. Witnessing encompasses the many different actions, conversations, and activities which all can move people closer to Knowing Christ and receiving Him as Lord and Savior. This ranges from the work of evangelism (Public and Personal) to the exemplary living of the individual as well as corporate believers in their regular habitation. The gospel workers must feel the weighty obligation of warning a world of its coming doom. Both the church and consecrated individuals are to carry the message devotedly to the

¹ William J. Saal, *Reaching the Un-entered Territories for Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 18.

² Phil Parshall, *Entering the Un-entered Territories: A Contemporary Approach to Contextualization* (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel Publishing, 2003), 144.

³ Ibid. 144.

world. The task of witnessing is supreme for it contains the message of life and death. The work of witnessing or evangelism cannot be outmoded; instead, it is of increasing importance and of intensifying need the nearer we come to the end. This calls for the right content, effective approach and aptness in analyzing the target audience as it will be in the subsequent sections. The target audience can be an individual, a group of people or communities with diverse cultures.

Apostle Paul's approach to mission was also cross-cultural based. He testifies this in the book of 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, to Jews I became as a Jew to win the Jews... I have become all things to all men that I might, by all means, save some.

The Lord called Paul to take the gospel to the Gentiles after He had given a chance to the disciples of Jesus who became reluctant. They were so given over to the Jewish worldview to the extent that they had demonized all the Gentile cultural practices. This led to a point where for a gentile who converted to Christianity had to follow the Jewish culture which was based on the Mosaic Laws as they were regarded as necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1f). This judgmental attitude of the disciples became a great stumbling block to the growth of God's church during the early part of the first century. It is this scenario that led God to appear to Paul in a special way and led him to his conversion. With the wisdom that God gave him, Paul learned to mingle with people from all walks of life with the focus of wanting to build bridges of understanding.

There are many occasions where Paul upheld the cultural practices of those he was reaching out when that particular culture was not against the gospel truth. One of them was the circumcision. The Jewish Christian who converted from Judaism had based their faith both on the Jewish practices and the Christian faith. According to them, circumcision was one of the practices which they equated with the Bible truth

of salvation. Meaning that for anyone to be saved he must be circumcised, be it a Jew or a Gentile. They had based this belief on what is written in the book of Genesis Chapter 17:1ff, where God instructed Abraham to circumcise his sons as a sign of the covenant He made with him. In his effort to reach the Gentile, Paul contextualized this Jewish worldview into a spiritual meaning.

The statements clearly indicate that Paul was not subscribing to the Jewish school of thought that all Gentiles must be circumcised the moment they receive Christ as their savior for them to be counted righteous. It could be possible that Paul did not emphasize on circumcision to the Gentiles because many communities may not have been practicing and that could greatly hinder the spread of the gospel truth. However he did not just shelve the idea, but rather he contextualized it to bring a general spiritual meaning which was relevant to both, the Jewish and Gentiles Christian of his time. The circumcision which is being referred by Paul here is the spiritual experience of true conversion of a believer through the manifestation of the Holy Spirit who leads to righteous living as stated in Romans 2: 25- 29.

These few Biblical references give us a bird's eye view on how God led his servants in the interpretation of His will according to the worldview of the people they were reaching. Thus it could be observed that God directed His servants to contextualize the divine truth to fit the mind-set of the receptors.

There can be no true witnessing without a sound message that comes from a solid theological base. The gospel is relevant to all ages and perhaps is needed more now than ever given the conscious depravity of our culture. The message of God's love for his creation is more relevant than the messages communicated in today's most popular songs and movies, more relevant than the major political issues debated today. George Barna contends "whether a need exists today for evangelism is not a

real issue. Whether we will be committed to a continual and relevant presentation of the gospel to those who are not followers of Christ is the real challenge for us to accept.”⁴

Jesus Himself becomes the Good News of the hope of salvation to the hopeless humanity. This then becomes the content of the message to be witnessed because as he says everything in our salvation either in this world or the world to come is based on the finished work of our Lord Jesus. This should be shared with a lot of passion and love to the people who will feel they are marginalized politically, socially, economically and even those alienated with their cultural practices. “He was starting a plan to save them.”⁵In the society in which Jesus lived and worked, women were largely kept out of public life. In public, men were restricted in how much they could talk to a woman. Jesus took a different approach. Women were His beloved children, just as much as men.

Although rabbis of the time were not permitted to teach women, Jesus happily did. On one occasion, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, sat at His feet like a pupil. Prejudice against women entered every aspect of life. Men were allowed to divorce women, even for the most trivial offenses, but women were not permitted to divorce men, even for the most serious of offenses. Jesus had strong words to say about the current practice of divorce, which treated women as though they were objects owned by men. While He was on earth, Jesus broke down earthly, human barriers. As the apostle, Paul said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

⁴ George, Barna, *Evangelism that Works* (CA: Regal Books, 1995), 31.

⁵Ibid. 120.

The division between Jews and Samaritans was long and bitter with its historical roots (2 Kings 17:24-41). When the exiles returned from Babylon and attempted to rebuild Jerusalem's temple and the walls, the Samaritans tried to stop their work (Ezra 4:7-22). Incidents such as this, as well as the dispute over the correct site for the temple, fueled hatred between both groups.

The most direct and quickest route between Jerusalem in the south and Galilee in the north was through Samaria. However, when making this trip, people would often take a detour around Samaria-despite the inconvenient longer distance to avoid their long and bitter enemies.

Appropriate for a man, even a religious teacher, to be seen talking to a woman in public- especially, of all people, a Samaritan woman. Though many lessons could be taken from this account, one important one is that by doing what He did, Jesus clearly broke with the traditions of His time, witnessing to not only a woman but a Samaritan woman but then using this woman to be a messenger and evangelist for the gospel. On more than one occasion the Gospel writers show Jesus traveling directly through Samaria. One time on His way from Judea to Galilee, He stopped at the Samaritan town of Sychar- the site of Jacob's well and near Mount Gerizim, the Holy place for the Samaritans, the site of their temple. It was here that He had His famous exchange, not just with a Samaritan but a Samaritan woman. As Jesus speaks to this woman, He breaks several cultural taboos.

The Apostle John says that when he and the other disciples returned, they "were surprised to find him talking with a woman" (John 4:27). It was not considered

Spirit of Prophecy on Mission to Different Cultures

Ellen G. White stresses the need to reach the un-entered territories with the gospel friendship relationship. She emphasized the need to follow the method of Jesus

Christ in reaching the world.⁶ She states that “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, Follow Me.”⁷

An effective approach to sharing one's faith is, to begin with, a thorough understanding of those individuals or group of people targeted. A careful study of the anticipated audience will minimize the obstacles that one may encounter as a witness. Because people come from different socio-cultural background, preliminary assessment is imperative. Different cultures require different approaches. Ellen G. White says, “During His earthly ministry Christ began to break down the wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles and to preach salvation to all humanity. Though He was a Jew, He mingled with the Samaritans, setting at naught the Pharisaic customs of the Jews with regard to this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, and taught in their streets.”⁸

The church of God on earth is to be a light to the world. The Pharisees for whatever reason failed to recognize this sacred duty hence did not carry out their responsibility to the surrounding nations. Thus Ellen G. White stressed the fact that, “His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth.”⁹ When, members understands the importance of sharing the content of the gospel, while the methods they use do not effectively connect with the people with whom they share. We must realize that God cares about our methods as

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Faith I Live By* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 233.6, 1958.

⁷ White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 281.

⁸ White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 19.

⁹ *Ibid.* 25.

well as our message. However, a person can hardly focus on the evangelistic audience without first consulting the New Testament Scriptures, where we can learn the Master's methods of reaching people.

We need to follow Jesus' example in going into the cities and villages, and His instruction, "lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).

Jesus admonished His disciples to "have faith in God," and in reaching out to these new un-entered areas, we need to formulate large, aggressive plans expressive of our faith in God. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, methods have been developed that are reaching large numbers in these areas. No one plan is comprehensive and efficient, but a combination of various plans will reach many thousands of people with the truth of the third angel's message. The project will offer a few suggestions for extending the gospel light into dark territories. Based on plans successfully in operation, and may be adapted to the needs of the individual field and varied to meet local circumstances.

In expressing her point of mission to the foreign fields, that is, outside America, Sister White emphasized the importance of starting right.¹⁰ She gave this guideline as a response to the mission work in England where the missionaries were applying traditional methods to reach out to the British. She meant that ministers should be sensitive to the practices of the communities. That they "avoid anything that might be considered "uncouth" in any attitude or deportment, that would "strike the beholder with disgust."¹¹ She further posed a challenge to the ministers by reflecting Jesus' way of doing mission by asserts that, "He sought access to the people by the

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 9:188.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 145.

pathway of their most familiar associations.”¹² Hence, calling the ministers to be culturally sensitive when communicating the divine truth to unbelievers in various set ups.

One of the issues she strongly discouraged was creating controversy in the mission field. To achieve this, she advised the missionaries to meet people where they were.¹³ Fausto E. Nunues in his article ‘Introducing Adventist Distinctive in new Fields: A Literary and Historical Analysis of selected counsel by E. G. White,’ while commenting on this phrase claims that the phrase may have meant that Adventist evangelists were to meet their audiences where they were, geographically, doctrinally and spiritually. All this just as Paul did when he approached a Jewish audience.¹⁴

In her acknowledgment on the dynamics of mission, E.G. White further ascertains that the success of missionary work in a new field will be determined by the methods employed. She asserts that “As field after field is entered, new methods and new plans will spring from new circumstances. New thought will come with the new workers who give themselves to the work. As they seek the Lord for help, He will communicate with them. They will receive plans devised by the Lord Himself.”¹⁵

She encourages the use of reason, judgment, and creativity under the divine influence of the Holy Spirit rather than following conventional ways which may not be effective in a particular context when carrying out mission.¹⁶

¹² Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1905), 23.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald), 152.

¹⁴ Bruce L. Bauer, ed. *Faith Development in Context; Presenting Christ in Creative Ways* (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 74.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 6:476.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 468.

Selected Missiologists on Mission to Un-entered Territories

As Mathema observes “the traditional African religion has a shaping power on the African in the sense that it unifies the African’s thought and life, it defines the good life which must be pursued, preserved, protected in some way, and it guides the thinking, choices, and actions.”¹⁷ The Africans believe in the existence of hierarchies and entities of supernatural power.

According to this belief, life is orderly and structured and that each person lives under the specific entities of power. Moreover, because they have a strong sense of community life, therefore harmonious relations are central to the formation of people and togetherness is pertinent in understanding that what ‘fall on one, falls on all’. “Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual.”¹⁸ This automatically affects how an individual decides and does things. There is also a strong orientation to power and to live the good life. The main quest in ancestor worship could be that of power, that is, how to acquire and retain it for protection and prevention against evil, from some persons, and other invisible entities. In this background, therefore, the customary way of doing mission is inadequate. It has not sufficiently addressed the religious impulse of the traditional Africans.

Some Missiologists have dealt with the aspect cross-cultural communication from the Biblical point of view. The Bible is an inspired book although written under the background of the cultures behind the various writers. The deeper meaning could

¹⁷ Zacchaeus Mathema, “Towards an Understanding of the African Worldview,” in *The Church and Spirits: Adventism in Africa*, Kwabena Donkor, ed (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2011), 37.

¹⁸ John, S. Mbithi, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi, Kenya: Heinemann, 1969), 108-109.

be understood and proper application made if serious study is undertaken to unearth its original meaning.

Contextual Approach as Response to Challenges of Mission

The term culture may mean different things to different people, at various places and diverse times. However, for the purpose of this research, culture is defined as an integrated system of beliefs (about God, or reality or ultimate meaning), values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative) and customs. Also including institutions that express these beliefs, values, and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, families, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs.), that binds a society together and give it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity.¹⁹ The term culture has a close relationship with contextualization which is defined below.

Forms of Contextualization

In essence, contextualization is in agreement with the Holy Scripture. There are different opinions concerning the issue of contextualization. For example, Doss, have argued that contextualization should not be practiced in any sense. They claim that one approach fits in all cultural contexts and that one style of Christianity can be applied to any cultural context. The advocates of non-contextualization approach condemn all aspects of culture. However, what they fail to understand is that Christianity is always wrapped in a particular culture which has its own cultural specificities. In the same vein, Doss asserts that “there are multicultural Christians but

¹⁹ Borge Schantz, “One Message Many Cultures,” <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1992/June/one-message-many-cultures> (10 August 2015).

not culturally neutral Christians. Neither is there a Christian culture that exists as such apart from regular human culture.”²⁰

Non-contextualization. Non-contextualization can put the mission of the church in jeopardy. Reflecting on non-contextualization approach in propagating salvation message Doss states “it places converts in a religious-cultural vacuum. In this vacuum, they are associated with an alien culture and religion where are set apart from their own people.”²¹ This situation creates severe enmity between converts and their own people. Thus, the relationship between converts and their relatives, breaks and the door for more evangelism closes. Sometimes the converts may be cast into confusion about their own cultural identity and may completely lose their witnessing potential.

Other risks of non-contextualization include: first, some customs that need to be abandoned are retained. This is usually partly because of fear of being removed from the church. As a result of this, Christians end up with what is called “split-level” that is a tendency of a Christians having dual allegiances to Christ and to the powers of their traditional religion.²² Because of that, Church becomes religious police who attempts to eradicate underground un-Christian customs.

Christians, who absorb non-contextualized Christianity, are denied the privilege to engage their cultural knowledge into contextualization process. They lack ownership of their own calling, trying to be carbon copies of their counterparts who converted them into Christianity faith. Doss contends that “non-contextualization does

²⁰ Gordon R. Doss, “Too Far or not Far Enough: Reaching Out to Muslim People,” <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2005/too-far-or-not-far-enough> (12 August 2015).

²¹ Ibid. 45.

²² Zacchaeus Mathema, “Towards an understanding of the African worldview” in *The Church Culture and Spirit: Adventism in Africa*, ed. Kwabena Donkor (Silver Spring: Biblical research, 2011), 38.

not go far enough and the gospel never penetrates the world because the church never really begins the journey”²³

Uncritical contextualization. This is another form of contextualization. If non-contextualization is extreme in one direction, then uncritical contextualization is extreme in the other direction. Uncritical contextualization use of the old beliefs and forms, leads in the end, to a mix in which the essence of the Gospel may be lost in traditional religious structures.²⁴ The approach embraces too much of culture and sells out Biblical truth, as uncritical contextualization gives culture more authority than revelation.²⁵ In this case Christianity soaks up culture like a sponge; consequently, the church becomes part of the world.

Critical contextualization. Some Christian scholars have criticized the concept of contextualization. For example, Herbert, have argued that contextualization is one of the best reasons for syncretism, (the mixing of different beliefs,). Of course, contextualization can lead to syncretism, but that is not always the case. It only leads to syncretism when it has gone so far to the extent that it has lost its Christian principles.²⁶ Notably, the essence, Christianity is lost when its form and meaning has been captured by culture. Thus, instead of Christians using culture as a vehicle of communicating the message, culture has taken over Christianity to exploit faith for its own aims.

²³ Gordon R. Doss, “Too Far or Not Far Enough: Reaching Out to Un-entered People,” <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2005/too-far-or-not-far-enough> (02 August, 2015).

²⁴ Robert Daniel Shaw, “Contextualizing the Power and Glory,” *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 12 (1995): 156.

²⁵ Paul G. Herbert, “Critical Contextualization,” *Missiology: An International Review* 3 (1984):289.

²⁶ Jon L. Dybdahl, “Cross Cultural Adaptation,” <https://www.ministrymagazine.Org/archive/1992/November/cross-cultural-adaptation> (26 August, 2015).

Dimensions of Contextualization

There are three dimensions where the gospel can be contextualized. These three dimensions are Church life, ethics, and theology. The first aspect is Church life; it includes elements like hymnody, architecture, worship style, ecclesiastical structure, method of government and decision-making. The second aspect is Ethics which involves the standards and moral life of the Church. The third is the theological aspect, which includes doctrinal beliefs, statements of faith, and explanation about God. While to some extent these areas overlap, each presents its own unique challenges. However, Contextualization may take place in all three aspects.

Importance of Contextualization

Dybdahl's factors for contextualization are:²⁷ These factors illustrate the significance of contextualization and its urgency to be applied right now. First, Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide church. Therefore it must be cross-cultural. To reach the whole world with the Adventist message, missionaries must meet people where they are. Some ethnic groups cannot be converted unless the message comes to them in harmony with their own contexts or world views.

Second, the increase of knowledge in anthropology and sociology has led to greater awareness about other people. As a result of the sensitivity of one's culture, then when we admit people of another ethnic group as God's children and that we are equal before Him, it will be hard to count ourselves superior to other cultures. For all are sinners saved by grace.

Third, the youth culture where cross-generational communication in a rapidly changing society involves cross-cultural communication. The aged people face major challenges in communicating to their children and grandchildren. That is why it is

²⁷ Ibid., 46.

imperative to contextualize our message to fit their subculture so that they can hear the message as something worth of listening.

Scripture and Contextualization

The issue of contextualization has its basis in the Bible. Biblical messages were given within a given historical, cultural context. No wonder when one reads the Old Testament is confronted with various aspects of Israeli's culture, similar to those of other cultures. The fact that Israel was allowed to share in many of the forms and elements of other cultures suggests that the deeper meaning of such things as rites, ceremonies, architectural designs are primary, while the form, if not accidental, is of secondary importance.²⁸ These being the case some principles can be drawn and used in Luos staying in Ukwala Sub-location within Ugenya Sub-County to enter the un-entered and plant a Church. One of the remarkable passages for contextualization is 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. To the Jews, I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.

In this passage, we get three principles of contextualization. The first principle is becoming incarnate. The Bible says Paul became (from Greek word *ginomai*) all things to all people, in order to reach Jews, Gentiles, and those of weak faith. He incarnated himself in these cultures. The second principle is becoming humble. The apostle made himself a servant to all. This could mean that Paul did not consider his culture as something to cling to it, though he was free to cleave to his culture, he opted to deny it for the sake of others. He had to forgo some of his cultural values for the welfare of others. Reinder Bruinsma states that it takes work and humility to be all things to all people.²⁹ Paul was imitating the character of his Lord who according to

²⁸ Reinder Bruinsma, "Contextualizing the Gospel Option or Imperative," <http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1997/December/contextualizing-the-gospel-option-or-imperative> (18 August 2015).

²⁹ Jon L. Dybdahl, Cross Cultural Adaptation, <http://www.ministrymagazine.org>.

Philippians Chapter 2, took a form of a slave to contextualize Himself in a human culture and communicate with them. The third principle is aiming to win more people. All efforts to contextualize the gospel into a specific culture have to be aimed at winning people for Christ. To lose sight of this objective is to turn contextualization into an empty intellectual exercise.

Scriptural models. One of the models who used contextualization in the Scripture was Jesus. To save men, Christ became one in culture and customs with his people He came to save. Philippians 2:7 says, “He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.” His lifestyle, practices, language, and illustrations were immersed in Palestinian culture, Jewish traditions, and a Hebrew worldviews.

Jesus Christ. According to the Gospels, Jesus underwent the radical change into human form necessary for His mission to succeed. In Jesus Christ, the meaning of history comes into focus, the total mission activity of God becomes coherent, and the deepest needs of humans for meaningful existence are fulfilled. Christian witnessing is not a plan originated by church leaders. It is not a man-made church program. God ordained it. Christianity is not a theory. It is not merely a set of doctrines or a system of belief. It is a Person. It is our relationship with the Person, Jesus Christ that produces the miraculous life change known as conversion or being born again. Witnessing is the delicate art to tactfully and lovingly leading others into this relationship with Christ. Jesus knew who He was, yet willingly adopted Jewish culture to establish a stronghold in one homogeneous unity before commissioning His followers to proclaim the message of salvation to people of different cultural background. John 20:21 points out, “Just as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you,” Nevertheless, Jesus was not bound by every custom of the Jews; as that would

mean that he relied on uncritical contextualization. Instead, the Bible reveals that in some occasions, Jesus had to act contrary to the Jewish customs, so as to fulfill salvation plan. For instance, Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well suggests that it was contrary to Jewish customs. Pharisaic custom prescribed Jews not to associate with Samaritans. However, Jesus broke the Pharisaic customs of His nation by spending the night among Samaritans and eating food prepared by their hands.³⁰

Irrespective of customs, Christ made a distinction between a divine principle and Jewish cultural norms. The Bible says "his disciples were surprised to find him talking with a woman" (John 4:27). It is likely that they equated Jewish customs with divine principles. Jesus followed Jewish customs when they did not contradict divine principles, but when they contradicted, He avoided them.

The twelve disciples. Jesus spent the 40 days between, His resurrection and ascension primarily in preparing the disciples and His church for worldwide evangelism. The best-known and most quoted resurrection account is Matthew's. However, during this period there were other occasions during which the risen Christ could have given further details on the gospel commission. There were two appearances in Jerusalem, two in Galilee (one by the sea of Tiberius, one on the hilltop), and the meeting reported in Acts 1:1-14.

Under the power of the Holy Spirit and obeying the words of Jesus, the apostles quickly spread across the ancient world. Paul preached on the northern shore of the Mediterranean; Philip worked in Samaria. According to early Christian tradition, Matthew traveled to Ethiopia and Thomas to India.

³⁰ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 102.

Though starting out small, and with so much opposition, through the grace of the Lord these faithful followers were able to spread the gospel message to the world. Whatever their faults, weaknesses, fears, doubts, and struggles, they accepted the call and worked for the salvation of the world. That is, what they learned about Jesus, what they got from Jesus, they sought to share with others, which is what being a Christian is all about.

The Jerusalem Council. The Jerusalem Council that was held in AD 49 is one of the indications that, the early church had room to accommodate contextualization (Acts 15). In fact, the apostles themselves set an example of critical contextualization. They provided clear instructions that, Gentiles who gave their life to Jesus, should not first be made Jews before they were accepted in the Fellowship. In his verdict, James contends that “Brothers, listen to me. Simon has described to us how God at first showed His concern by taking from the Gentiles for himself” James here basically says that God raised a people from Gentiles just like the Jews were raised. Thus God was breaking the wall that separated the two. James states “it is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God” Consequently, James suggested the Gentiles observe the following.

1. Abstain from food associated with idol worship; this meant to avoid any association with idolatry which was common in the pagan world.
2. Abstain from sexual immorality. It should be noted that at that time, this was extremely prevalent in the pagan world. Morality still applied to gentiles.
3. Abstain from the meat of strangled animals; the intention for this prevention was to avoid the eating of blood.
4. Refrain from consumption of blood. This suggests that there were some tendencies of consumption of blood in some of the gentiles like it is in some of the African ethnic groups.

Therefore the accommodation of gentiles meant that they were not required to undergo Jewish traditions first to be accepted in the church, meanwhile, instructing

Gentiles to abstain from some of the traditions, suggests that Apostles and the early church in general, favored a critical contextualization.

The apostle Paul. When the Apostle Paul was confronted by Judaizer, who were demanding that Gentiles follow Jewish tradition of circumcision first before they were accepted in the church, Paul objected. He just stated clearly that “Circumcision is nothing and un-circumcision is nothing, but obeying God’s commandment is everything. Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him” (1 Corinthians 7:19, 20) the context of this verse has to do with the pinpointing the importance of observing God’s law versus men customs.

The Lord called Paul to take the gospel to the Gentiles after He had given a chance to the disciples of Jesus who became reluctant. They had been glued to the Jewish worldview to the extent that they had demonized all the Gentile cultural practices. This led to a point where for a gentile who converted to Christianity had to follow the Jewish culture which was based on the Mosaic Laws as they were regarded as necessary for salvation(Acts 15:1f). This judgmental attitude of the Disciples became a great stumbling block to the growth of God’s church during the early part of the first century. It is this scenario that led God to appear to Paul in a special way and led him to his conversion. With the wisdom that God gave him, Paul learned to mingle with people from all walks of life with the focus of wanting to build bridges of understanding.

Acts 17 provides another illustration of contextualization. It is a Pauline discourse with Greeks at Areopagus. In his speech, Paul presented his gospel in Greeks concept. He spoke in their terms to establish common ground between himself

and the Greeks audience.³¹ In this endeavor, Paul came down from his superior understanding to communicate at their level. Paul did not criticize them. Instead he phrased his words in a way that, one may think that Paul is advocating or he is in agreement with idolatry. On the contrary, Paul was penetrating the Greek concept to uproot idolatry.

Church Fathers and Contextualization: Tertullian

Although the term contextualization is an invention of a recent origin, the early church fathers employed its concept. The concept of contextualization as referred here is an integral part of the exercise of spreading the truth of the gospel in a given group of people. According to Smith, there are three explanations of the concept of contextualization; namely syncretistic contextualization, linguistic contextualization and de-contextualization.³² To a large extent, Tertullian employed what Smith calls Linguistic contextualization. This involves purposeful consideration of communicating effectively to people who speak different languages and views the world in a different way from those of the Middle East background. Ambrosio mentions Tertullian a North African Theologian, as the first father to engage the Latin language in his writings rather than Greek of the New Testament. Ambrosio Father argued that Latin gradually became the language of the church in the West. Moreover, in the East some Christian authors such as St. Ephrem began to write in local

³¹ Bertil Wkländer, “Incarnational Ministry,” [https:// www. Ministrymagazine.org/archive /2001/November/incarnational-ministry.html](https://www.Ministrymagazine.org/archive/2001/November/incarnational-ministry.html) (06 October 2015).

³² Ralph Allan Smith, “The Trinity and Contextualization,” [https://www.Berith.org/pdf/Trinity Contextualization. Pdf](https://www.Berith.org/pdf/TrinityContextualization.Pdf) (06 October 2015).

vernaculars such as Syrian-Aramaic, a dialect of the language spoken by Christian.³³
This is what Stephen Bevans calls translational.

Reformers and Contextualization

Martin Luther. Martin Luther (1483-1546) is considered the father of reformation. When he began making reforms in the church, he faced a crucial issue, the relation between civil and ecclesiastical authorities. He advocated the doctrine of two metaphysical kingdoms. One comprised of believers and the other of unbelievers.³⁴ He argued for a strict distinction between the two. Nevertheless, he portrayed a connection of two kingdoms, where God is ascribed for dispensing both the kingdom of believers (the kingdom of God) and the kingdom of unbelievers (the kingdom of the world).

According to Aniol, Luther was holding a stand that, a Christian is a citizen of the kingdom of God only, thus subject to ecclesiastical authority in Spiritual matters. However, since a Christian lives the earth, he/she should also subject himself or herself “to civic rulers in temporal matters for his own good and the good of those in the society around him even though he is not the member of the kingdom of the world”.³⁵ Niebuhr calls this approach “tension approach.” He argues that Martin Luther places the gospel in a tension between Christ and culture.³⁶

³³ Marcellion D’Amrosio, “Early Church Fathers Overview: Snapshot of the Fathers of the Church,” www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/52/Early_church_fathers_overview_snapshot_of_the_father_of_the_Church.html (06 October 2015).

³⁴ Scott Aniol, “Martin Luther’s Approach to Culture,” <http://religiousaffections.org/articles-on-culture/martin-luther-approach-to-culture/> (06 October 2015).

³⁵ Ibid. 68.

³⁶ Niebuhr, “Niebuhr’s Christ and Culture,” <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/rit/webBook/chapter7/niebuhrTech.htm> (15 October 2015).

Hoefler, on the other hand, seems to object this idea; to him, Luther was practicing what he calls ‘adiaphora’ principle, which implies ‘things that do not matter.’ By this, he intends to convey a message that Luther was accommodating ‘things that do not matters and rejecting only those things of doctrinal or practical nature that violate a fundamental tenet of Christian faith.’³⁷ If this is the case, then Martin Luther was using an approach which is similar to synthetic approach.

John Calvin. John Calvin’s (1509-1564) was also among the influential reformers. He is recognized as the founder of the Reformed and Presbyterian Church. His influence was felt in Switzerland, France, Netherland and part of German. His motto was *ecclesia reformatta, quia simper reformanda*,³⁸ meaning a reformed church because it should always continue in reforming. That is to say; reformed church is dedicated to perpetual reformation.

When it comes to the issue of contextualization, the position of John Calvin regarding the relationship between the church and culture is debatable. On the one hand, for instance, Van Drunen argues that Calvin essentially concurs with Luther on the doctrine of two worlds, the world of nature and the spiritual world, contrary to the Neo-Calvinists who insist that their transformation from believing the two world came from Calvin.³⁹ On the other hand, Niebuhr, argue that Calvin’s position regarding the relationship of the church and the surrounding culture is that of

³⁷ Herbert Hoefler, “*Rooted or Uprooted: the Necessity of Contextualization in Mission*,” International Journal of Frontier Missiology 24 (2015), 133.

³⁸ Louis Praamsma, “Calvin and His Contribution to the Reformation,” www.net/articles/praamsma-calvin-apr09r59-n4.htm (15 October 2015).

³⁹ John Witte, “The Ecclesiology of John Calvin: His Contribution to Church Government,” curiouspresbyterians.wordpress.com/2015.10/15/join-calvin-and-church-government-by-join-witte/ (15 October 2015).

transformation.⁴⁰ Such that Calvin was advocating three truths; the first, culture is the manifestation of God's good creation. The second, sin deeply infected every part of creation, including human culture, and the third truth; culture can be redeemed in the name of Christ.⁴¹ Hence the gospel serves to transform the culture by seeking, enhancing, and celebrating the original good of culture artifacts, while eliminating the effects of sin.

Therefore, while Luther insisted members to belong to one of the two worlds, Calvin suggested a membership in both, the spiritual world, and the civil world. Thus Calvin was engaging a contextual approach, hence contextualization. In short, Calvin was emphasizing Christians to be trained in the spiritual as well as the civil worlds.

Ellen G. White. It should be acknowledged that even during Ellen G. White's lifetime the term contextualization was not common. However, the practice was already in use. By her own words, she frequently stressed the need for cultural adaptation in church planting. As stated "The servants of Christ should accommodate themselves to the varied conditions of people. They cannot carry out exact rules if they would meet the cases of all. Labor will have to be varied to meet the people where they are."⁴²

Furthermore, White points out that "The people of every country have their own peculiar distinctive characteristics and it is necessary that, men should be wise in order that they may know how to adapt themselves to the peculiar ideas of the people

⁴⁰ Scott Aniol, "John Calvin's Approach to Culture," religiousaffections.org/articles/articles-on-culture/john-calvin-approach-to-culture (14 October 2015).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Oshawa, Ontario: Pacific Press, 1923), 256.

and so introduce the truth that they may do them good. They must be able to understand and meet their wants.”⁴³

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in the authenticity of the Bible. Thus the above evidences on the cross-cultural approach reflected in the Bible ascertain the fact that God revealed Himself in multiple ways. God has also blessed the church with the gift of Spirit of Prophecy bestowed in men and women chosen by Him to convey to others the truth about Jesus and His word.⁴⁴

One of these individuals was Ellen G. White. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church Ellen White’s writings are not only regarded as a revelation from God but also serve as a lesser light reflecting the will of God as revealed in the Bible. Hence it is prudent that this Thesis analyzes the missiological guidelines as stipulated by Ellen White so as to further ascertain the cross-cultural mission approach based on the Spirit of Prophecy.

In expressing her point on mission to the foreign fields, that is, outside America, Sister White emphasized the importance of starting right.⁴⁵ She gave this guideline as a response to the mission work in England where the missionaries were applying the traditional method to reach out to the British. By starting right, she meant that ministers should be sensitive to the practices of the communities. That they try to “avoid anything that might be considered “uncouth” in any attitude or deportment that would “strike the beholder with disgust.”⁴⁶ She further posed a challenge to the ministers to reflect Jesus’ way of doing mission. She asserts that “He

⁴³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies and Gospel Workers* (Boise: Idaho, Pacific Press, 1923), 214.

⁴⁴ Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord; The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Oshawa, Ontario, Pacific Press, 1998), 2, 3.

⁴⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1948), 9:188.

⁴⁶ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 145.

sought access to the people by the pathway of their most familiar associations.”⁴⁷

Hence, calling the ministers to be culturally sensitive when communicating the divine truth to unbelievers.

One of the issues she strongly discouraged was creating controversy in the mission field. To achieve this, she advised the missionaries to meet people where they were.⁴⁸ Fausto E. Nunues in his article ‘Introducing Adventist Distinctive in new Fields: A Literary and Historical Analysis of selected counsel by E. G. White,’ while commenting on this phrase claims that it may have meant that Adventist evangelists were to meet their audiences where they were, geographically, doctrinally and spiritually, as Paul did when approaching Jewish audience.⁴⁹

Summary

The church that engages in mission is not a monolithic group. It will seek to reach as many cultural groups as possible. However, there are particular groups of people that cannot respond to the message until the message is presented in their context hence contextualization. Although there are several conflicting models of contextualization, the church cannot afford to proceed without it. Religion and culture were theoretically inseparable during the time of Jesus. Of course, there is a risk of syncretism, but the cost of averting it is too high if compared to critical contextualization.

⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1905), 23.

⁴⁸ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Washington, DC: Review and Heralds,), 152.

⁴⁹ Bruce L. Bauer, ed., *Faith Development in Context; Presenting Christ in Creative Ways* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005), 74.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LUOS

The Description of the Study Area

In the previous chapter on literature review was given on historical and theology of contextual missiological approach as an alternative way of reaching the ethnic group. This chapter deals with the methodology of the study and data presentation. It aims at giving an explanation of the procedures and methods that were used in the fieldwork. The chapter is organized as follows; description of the study area, research design, population analysis, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data processing and analysis validity and relevance of data and chapter summary.

Luos living in Ukwala Sub-Location of Ugenya Sub-County are peasants who depend on small-scale farming and business for their social and cultural lives. They found themselves divided into several groups living in different parts of East Africa. Though each local group has had its own history, with its own migrations and interactions with other people, there are still commonalities that unite the groups regardless of how widely separated they might be. Economic, linguistic, cultural, ecological and social similarities are maintained through interaction and relations between the Luos groups.

Ugenya is a Sub County of Siaya County. It is situated in the Western part of the Nyanza along River Nzoia. The inhabitants of Ukwala are predominantly Luos, the fourth largest tribe in Kenya after the Kikuyus, Kalenjins and Luhyas according to

2009 national census.¹ However other tribes also reside in Ukwala, both from within or outside Kenya. These are the majority of government employees, private practitioners, and business people. Religiously speaking, Ukwala Sub-Location is well dominated by major religious groups: the Roman Catholics; the Protestant churches, Islamic faithful among other indigenous faiths. The Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location is made up of four interrelated clans. These clans are grouped into four main communities who lives in various geographical locations as follows: Kager, Kapuny, Joboros and finally Nyadeje. The clan men respect each other and work together as one person. Conflict issues are resolved quickly and amicably even without the intervention of the local government (Chiefs). They currently have one four Chiefs who are enforcing law and order and reduce the theft instances from the Luhyas from Busia who come to steal cows. During this research, they played a pivotal part in bringing the elders together who gave the required information.

It is important to note that the Luos living at Ukwala Sub-Location are not living in seclusion anymore. They stay at Ukwala close to many years, but their close neighbors- the Luhyas who are majority Christians did not impact them in any way with their faith. Instead, the percentage of those who had been Christianized diminished as they moved back to their traditions. The reason behind this trend is the main concern of the study. In other words, there is a need to unearth the factors social, cultural obstacles hindering them from embracing the Christian faith.

Geographical Analysis

Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location are of the few remaining societies in that part of Siaya County. They are indigenous people of the rural Ukwala. Some authors, have

¹ Kenyan Census, 2009 Census Report, Accessed 20-5-16. <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/1000340/-/11114rlz/-/index.html>.

argued that the Luos of Ukwala have relatively recently been settled. Kjekshus date the settlement of the Luos from 150-200 years² while Young and Fosbrooke date the migration to the area between 300-400 years ago.³ The researcher concurs with Kjekshus who suggests the arrival of groups of people along the Nile River between 150-200 years. The Sub County covers an area of 19,026 square kilometers and lies between latitudes 6.60% and 7.29% S and 38.30% E. These villages cover a wide area, including the plains and slopes of Ukwala where this study was conducted.

Political Analysis

It is noticeable that the Luos in Ukwala sub-location have an organized leadership structure. The highest body is the Council of Elders which encompasses all the scattered groups. The headquarters offices are situated at Kisumu, Kenya. Their guidance affirms the moral responsibility of each member of the community to the physical and spiritual laws of nature. This body solves disputes and governs the Luo people. Property is held communally through a system of tenure in which animals and plants are a part of the land. The Elders are responsible for the distribution of property to clans or family members. Land boundaries are demarcated and identified through the use of swamps, glades, valleys rivers streams and sacred trees, exemplifying the spirituality and sacredness that land and its inhabitants play in the life of the Luos in Ukwala. As a sign of respect and identification, each family names their portion of land, acknowledging their responsibility to the occupancy and usage of the property.

The Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location have never had a centralized political system like that of some tribes such a Kisii, or Luhyas. The whole society is

² Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History the Case of Kenya 1850-1950* (London: UK, James Currey, 1977), 117.

³ Young R. and Fosbrooke H., *Smoke in the Hills Land and Politics among the Luos of Kenya* (London: UK, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), 73.

decentralized, and the major political organization is mainly through the lineage.⁴ Like in other matrilineal societies, in Luo men are the custodians of the land which implies, men are vested with power and authority, while they are the ones who elect the council of elders. It is not surprising, therefore that traditionally men are the major decision makers' even if they are educated or not.

Social Analysis

While traditionally men are the major decision makers in Luo land people, it is more often noted in society following a strongly matrilineal kinship pattern. As stated before, in such a society, men hold the power to make decisions. Viewed from a patriarchal perspective, husbands are to a large extent marginalized from their families. They do not enjoy the power and authority over their women as do their counterparts in patrilineal societies.⁵

Witnessing ministry to the Luo's community living in Ukwala Sub-Location has received much opposition for many years. This struggle has been caused essentially out of a clash of culture. The Luo's in Ukwala Sub-Location protects their indigenous features to avoid extinction. At the same time, they are ever suspicious of the motive behind those who claim to be witnessing the word of God to them. They are firmly convinced that missionaries are intruders and their work is to destroy rather than conserve the cultural teachings. Majority persists in retaining their preconceived ideas, and nothing seems to shake them.

Another critical social convention is that regarding of removal of the six teeth as a special in the society. Boys are officially justified to be grownups after

⁴ Thomas Otieno, *The Matrilineal People of Western Kenya: Luos Residing in Ugenya* (London: Oxford University, 1975), 45.

⁵ Ibid, 47.

undergoing the initiation rites. A further belief that contrasts with Adventist teaching is the belief in ancestral spirits. Each year, the head of the lineage who is a male gives sacrifices to the ancestors in a special ceremony called “Liswa.” During this time, communication with the dead ancestors is carried out along River Nzoia. Thus, yearly sacrifices are offered to enforce rainfall and hence both good harvests as well as good human fertility. The ideology behind all these is the appeasement of the ancestors.

External religion records reveal that Missionaries of the Roman Catholic affiliation (Holy Ghost Mission) were the first to visit Ukwala land whereby they started their station at Sega in 1884. For many decades, Roman Catholics have established themselves around the region. Apart from the Roman Catholic Church, Evangelical is another Christian religion. The Seventh-day Adventists arrived in the area in the 2000s and based their station in Ukwala Township. An attempt to reach more Luos with the gospel was made by the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Ukwala. In 2015 a company of few native families was started at Nzoia Shopping Center. In 2016, the church moved to Karadolo and Obet. However, figures from these places indicate that there is but little progress on the part of the Luos staying in Ukwala Sub-Location in embracing Adventist faith.

Population Analysis

In qualitative case-study research,⁶ population refers to every individual who qualifies under the criteria that the researcher has set out for research respondents.⁷ Normally it is impossible to study the whole population. Researchers make use of a sample to select research subjects who represent the entire research population. Thus,

⁶ Houghton C, Casey D, Shaw D, Murphy K, “Rigour in Qualitative Case-study Research,” *Nurse Researcher* 20 (2012):12.

⁷ Martin N. Marshall, “Sampling for Qualitative Research,” *Family Practice* 13 (1996):522.

a representative sample was chosen from the entire group. The study researcher studied a population which can be divided into three main groups.

1. Global Mission Pioneers who are working among the Luo people in Ukwala Sub-Location.
2. Current indigenous believers in Ukwala Sub-Location.
3. Dropout indigenous Adventist believers in Ukwala Sub-Location.

All these groups were regarded as the main and primary source of data; books, periodicals, magazines are a secondary source.

Cultural Barriers in Planting Churches

The Institution of Polygamy

The social relations among the Luo are governed by rules of kinship, gender, and age. Descent is patrilineal which is traced through the male line to determine kinship. Kin align themselves for purposes of exchange of goods, marriage, and political alliance.

Names are received through the male line, and after marriage women reside in the homesteads of their husbands. A married woman builds up alliances for her husband's family by maintaining strong relationships with her brothers and sisters who live at her birthplace or elsewhere. It is expected that after marriage a woman will bear children for her husband's lineage. Bride, wealth, given by her husband and his family, contributes to the lady's ability to maintain ties with her family throughout her life. By having children, a woman greatly enhances her power and influence within the lineage of her husband. As the children grow, they take special care of her interests.

Findings show that over thirty percent of the Luo homesteads are polygamous. This contributes to solidarity between a mother and her children, and between

children born of the same mother. Both men and women commonly accept polygamy, provided traditional ideas and regulations are maintained. These include a special recognition of the first wife or “great wife,” whose house and granary are located prominently at the back of the homestead opposite the main gate. Subsequent wives come in many ways: through normal customary weddings, widow inheritance, and in case of barrenness or producing only girl children.

According to the Luo elders, polygamy is a solution to sexual immorality because a man was not supposed to have sex with the woman whose child is below five years of age. This is because they strictly adhered to the natural way of family planning. The belief that their community is getting extinct also motivated them to have many wives so that they can father as many children as possible. Polygamy was also a prestigious thing because the more cows you had, the more women you could marry. Those who had only one wife were disrespected and were not allowed to share in a pot of traditional liquor. They were supposed to sit at the door and receive their drink there.

Belief in Ancestral Spirits

Another social, cultural hindrance to the work of planting Seventh-day Adventist Churches among the Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location is the cherished practice of ancestral veneration. High esteem is put on the dead especially within a given family lineage. According to the Luos in Ukwala, this is not equivalent to ancestral worship, but it is just an elevated concern towards the dead.

This tradition is derived from the belief that those who are biologically dead continue to influence the lives of the living for better or for worse. For this reason, it means to create necessary conditions for the ancestors to live happily together with the living. This is in line with the explanations given to various aspects of the

traditional African worldview. This includes belief in hierarchies and entities of power, a strong sense of community, a strong orientation to power to live a good life, and belief in mystical powers.

The hierarchical understanding dictates that God be at the top, followed by a host of supernatural beings and forces, then the human spirits who died a long time ago, while living human beings are the next in the sequential, followed by animals, vegetation, and inanimate objects. This hierarchy is in such solidarity that to destroy or remove one of these categories is to destroy the hierarchy's whole existence because one mode of existence presupposes all the others. Since their disturbance causes a casualty among the orders of hierarchy in the African worldview, no natural or supernatural separation is entertained. Strange and miraculous things are not unusual in this system. Ancestor veneration and some of the things related to it fit well into the cosmological picture. A supposition that an illness is punishment from ancestors for wrong conduct involves an explanation that "is at once psychological, rational, mechanical, and whole physique."⁸

The specific forms that ancestor veneration may take vary from place to place. Some communities pour libation, share a meal, and praying on deceased graves. Others may put a mouthful of food on the floor before eating and refrain from emptying and washing the evening meal pots until the morning, just in case the dead come and find nothing to eat.

One of the most important duties requires careful attention in the ancestral cult is burial and mourning ceremonies and rituals. It is important that these be duly carried out, often at a greater expense.

⁸ Mercy Amba Aduyoye, *The Value of African Religious Belief and Practices for Christian Theology* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), 82.

The practice of ancestor veneration is dependent on the idea of life after death among African people. It is held tenaciously that ‘death does not write finish to human life.’ This idea implies a particular view of human nature first, is the concept of human origin. Africans have several myths, but the central theme is that humans have their origin in a deity. Traditional Africans believe that humans are not entirely the same in composition as animals. Humans are partly material and partly immaterial- dualism.

Finally, death is seen as a separation of body from its spiritual substance, which is the essential person. The personality soul may turn into a ghost and which never dies, may linger until it is received in the company of his forbears, after the celebration of funeral ceremonies; or the immortal soul may travel into the next world through a dangerous desert region.

The Institution of “Ramogi”

Luo culture dates back from centuries and eons. The Luo culture is based on the respect for one another and respect for the older people as well as respect for the teachings and beliefs. It is a belief that God brought us the rules and regulations are to be followed. It is believed among the Luo community that the people given the task to chart the way forward for the community were “*Ramogi*” is a powerful individual vested with powers. These individual possess traditional and political powers which protect the Luo community. “*Ramogi*” is their spiritual symbol because of the many activities that his office performs. There is no any other power that exceeds that one of the “*Ramogi*” as far as the Luos are concerned. This was a title that was later adopted and given to any credible leader whom the people believe are the leaders of the Luo community just as the spiritual leaders are. It is belief that whosoever fails to

follow the laid down guidelines are to be followed by a curse from God “*Obongo Nyakalaga*,” as Luo call Him.

The Luo culture has been one of the most interesting and complicated cultures as perceived by many who do not understand it. One of the most controversial issues that have rendered the culture to be of interest to many is the issue of wife inheritance. This has been a hot topic to many who would want to understand the cultural practices of the Luo community. This does not imply that there is no positive aspect of the culture that is admired by many.

Ramogi admits that Luo are known for their fishing traditions and are believed to be the first community to fish. The Luo culture believes that the children belong to the father and in case the parents separate, then they are left with the father to take care of them. The culture also stipulates that any man who has a lot of wealth; the society expects him to take care of as many women as possible as their social responsibility. It is from this that the issue of wife inheritance comes in. However, this is the most misunderstood issue in the community’s cultural practices. Matters have also been by the young people misusing the practice to commit adultery with those women who have lost their loved ones.

According to my knowledge of the Luo culture, the law stipulates very clearly the main purpose of wife inheritance is to let the believed feel at home with the family. It is also to take care of any children left behind by the father. This does not mean that those involved should be forced to have normal wife and husband relationship. It is only those who have already established their homesteads that are allowed to inherit. According to *Ramogi*, many of our generations have bone against this laid down procedure. Another view is that Luo belief that for a man to inherit,

there must be a proper consultation with the whole community involved to determine what nature the inheritance will take place.

The Luos in Ukwala believe that Ramogi is a powerful individual vested with mystical powers. These people possess both evil mystical powers which destroy human life and good powers which protect the community. Ramogi is their spiritual symbol because of the many activities that his office performs. Before the Luos respond or welcome any foreign denomination, the Ramogi must be consulted first and if he says no, there is no Luos in Ukwaka who will listen to anything else. For many years, the Luos in Ukwala sub-location, have relied on the guidance of these individuals and they feel that things have been moving on well.

Mr. Oloo Onyango Rateng⁹ played a major role in clarifying the information concerning the office of Ramogi because he belongs to those who believe in Ramogi. According to Rateng', Ramogi are beings of mysterious powers, usually inherited through his clan. It was thought that if the successor began to prophesy before the death of his parents and predecessor, his prophecies would not be taken seriously with the Luos in an Ukwala Sub-Location. This suggests an inheritance power passing through a line of chosen individuals, in most cases from father to son. In times of natural calamity, prophets were consulted since they had the power to interpret natural occurrences and give possible directions. The Luo community relied on them throughout the time of adversity.

The term spiritualism is defined as the belief that the human personality continues to exist after death and can even communicate with the living through a medium. The Luo people hold that death is merely a change of wavelength for those

⁹ Oloo Onyango Rateng' was born in 1945 in a clan called Kager in Ugenya a place called Ramunde. His father who was a one of the famous Ramogi died in 1975 and his brother who is now deceased became a very powerful Ramogi after him. He is very much versed with the activities of the Ramogi activities. An interview was done at his home on 5th October, 2016.

who die. They believe that when an individual who has undergone the rites of passage dies, the person joins the living-dead ancestors who are regarded as capable of solving issues arising in the Luos residing in Ukwala Sub-Location. Also, there are cases where some people are found possessed with evil spirits, in this case, the act of Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location is to seek help from sorcerers.

Whereas spiritualism is still very strong in Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location, Adventists are to work out a new understanding of spiritual life as a contextual mission. The aim of the contextual mission is not transplantation of traditional spiritualism concepts into the Church. The contextual mission is concerned with the translation of Christ into the culture of Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location.

The best way to deal with spiritualism is to provide biblical truth concerning the state of the dead, that they know nothing. “When they die, they return to the dust; on that day all their plans come to an end (Psalms 146:4).” The Bible neither teaches that the soul at death ascends to heaven nor that the soul is immortal. It is the deception of the devil that men “shall not die (Genesis 3:4).” However, the Bible explicitly speaks that the dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5). This truth should be presented.

The researcher was fortunate to have an interview with the practicing “*Ramogi*” who is said to have played a vital role in teaching Luos on their culture at Nzoia along River Nzoia. The ninety-five year old Mr. Obuon Rabala Otieno¹⁰ is a highly respected by the community. He is conversant with the history of luos in relation to Ramogi. He cited that the Luo community makes up around 25% of Kenya’s population, making it the third largest ethnic group after the Kikuyu and the Luhya. He informed me that there are approximately 12 sub-groups within the tribe.

They are a colossal group, with their territory spreading beyond Kenya, into Tanzania, Sudan, and Uganda. The traditional occupation of Luo is fishing, though many are also farmers or work jobs in larger cities. The Luo community, according to history emerged from the Southern part of Sudan.

According to Rabala, Luo community included the Kalenjins who later came to be known as the Highland Nilotes and the Masai group who later came to be referred to as the Plain Nilotes. The Luo community later came to be referred to as the River-Lake Nilotes. The naming of these communities came about according to their prevailing activities during the times of migration. The Luo community, however, were the most unique. During this migration, they followed the river Nile and settled along Lake Victoria hence the name.

The researcher established from the old man, that Nilotes originated at Wau in Southern Sudan, near the confluence of the Meride and Sue Rivers. The Kenya Luo migrated into western Kenya via today's eastern Uganda, the first wave arriving sometime around 1500 AD. These arrivals came in at least five waves which are said to have been arriving at different times. The Joka-Jok from Acholiland, were the first and largest migration. They comprise the Jo-Karachuonyo, Jo-Kabondo, Jo-Nyakach, Jo-Kanyada and Jo-Kadem among others. These settled in the South Nyanza which is today the location of Homabay and Migori Counties. Another group migrating from Alur joined the Joka-Jok. The JooK'Owiny who migrated from Padhola includes Jo-Sakwa, Jo-Uyoma, Jo-Seme, Jo-Asembo, Jo-Kajulu, and Jo-Kisumo among others who settled in the Kisumu region and part of the Northern side of Nyanza.

¹⁰ Mr. Obuon Rabala Otieno is known as Ramogi and many people visit him to get stories of Luos. He was interviewed at his home at Nzoia on 10th October 2016.

The old man explained to the researcher in detail the historical background of Jok'Omolo are said to have come from Pawir and arrived later, they include the Jo-Alego, Jo-Ugenya, Jo-Gem and Jo-Yimbo who settled on the northern side of Nyanza.

In summary this chapter has dealt with the historical background of the Luo community. The planting churches at Ukwala, have experienced several challenges which are not common to other places in Luos living elsewhere. The research finds that the prevailing Mission strategy requires a dramatic change. One approach to Mission cannot fit in every situation, on matter how successful is has been. Diverse contexts demand diverse approach. It is extremely difficult to maintain a sense of heritage. Church workers should learn to communicate the gospel to diverse group of people in a way that they do not hear the message as dead and irrelevant. I concur with Dybdahl that “people can respond only to the message they clearly hear in their own context”¹¹

Therefore if Adventist is to be accepted, and owned by the Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location, it has to be contextualized according to the Luo culture. The best approach is to use conversional-celebrative approach. By taking this contextual mission, the church can fulfill the purpose of assistance which is always to preach Christ and his gospel of truth as revealed in the Bible with specific emphasis on the three angels message.¹² However a mere mention of the name of Jesus is neither the message nor the mission of the church. Christ must be presented as key in answering

¹¹ John L. Dybdahl, “Cross-cultural Adaptation, “<https://www.ministrymagazine.Org/archive/1992/November/cross-cultural-adaptation> (6 November, 2016).

¹² Aleksandar S. Santos, “Church and Culture: New Challenges and a Proposal to Shape the Culture in Which We Live, “[accessed at https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2010/03/church-and-culture](https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2010/03/church-and-culture) (8 November 2016).

the questions people ask.¹³ Synthetic approach to mission should go beyond the aesthetic level and address the core issues that pertain to the Luos at Ukwala Sub-Location spirituality

The Luo elders interviewed at Ukwala stated that, the Luo knew and worshipped God before the white missionaries came to Kenya. They called Him “Saye Nyakalaga.” They believed that people do not actually die, but when they die they only go to the world of spirits. They believed that the dead could come back to their homes to advise the living relatives with regards to future events. Such beliefs made them bury the dead in the houses and in shallow graves. Another fact which confirms the idea is that the dead were alive in spirit form is that, at the funeral, the women who mourned for the dead talked to them telling him or her to take greetings to those who had died before.

The Luo elders interviewed stated that even though our people knew God, they knew Him in a different way from what we find in the Bible. In the past, before the missionaries came, our Luo folk had chiefs, magicians, physicians, and scientists (who studied various conditions) as their leaders. Although they did not know how to read and write, they were orderly. They had good memory. Some were excellent historians who were able to tell people about past events very accurately.

The Pastors interviewed stated that strategies used by non-Adventist Pastors emphasized the social aspects of their religion that they had reduced the gospel of Christ to a horizontal “social gospel,” which live little or no place for vertical aspect of religion: the relationship between people and heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. When that happens, religion has ceased to be Christian. However, at the same time,

¹³ Zebron Masukume Ncuba, “The Mission of a Going Church for a Coming Lord,” accessed at <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2000/08/the-mission-of-a-going-church-for-a-coming-Lord> (8 November 2016).

faith in God must also impact relationships with other human beings: otherwise, religion, likewise, cannot be characterized as truly Christian.

CHAPTER 4

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Even though the gospel is to be taken to all peoples according to the “great commission” in Matthew 28:18-20, the purpose of this work is to design strategies which can be effectively used to minister the un-entered society of the Luos at Ukwala Sub-Location, in Ugenya Sub-County. The major aim of this researcher is that the church is planted in the un-entered territory of Ukwala Sub-Location.

Program Development

Preparation

1. The researcher prepared a detailed questionnaire.
2. The questionnaires were printed and administered to different groups in Ukwala Sub-Location for three consecutive weeks.

Objectives

1. To examine ways the Seventh-day Adventist Church can plant churches in the un-entered Ukwala Sub-Location.
2. To identify the weak areas in those methods. Implementation

Out of 300 questionnaires administered in various parts of the Ukwala Sub-Location, 250 respondents returned them to the researcher. Here are the results as reflected in their responses.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section contains the presentation/analysis and the interpretation of data collected. However, the only instrument used to obtain data from respondents was a

questionnaire. These questionnaires were all administered to Luo elders and pastors. This will allow for true representation of the targeted people in Ukwala Sub-Location.

Demographic Distribution of Church Members

The analysis to be presented here is demographic distribution of members based on age, marital status and how long they have stayed in Ukwala Sub-Location. Table 1 shows that 20 (8 %) of the total respondents were not more than 20 years of age. 26 (10.4 %) were between 21- 30 years old, 85 (30 %) of the respondents were between 31-40 years old. 74 (29.6 %) fell between the ages of 41-50 and 55 (22 %) were more than 50 years old. It is very clear that more respondents are mature enough to explain social-cultural barriers hindering planting Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Ukwala Sub-Location.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage %
10- 20	20	8
21-30	26	10.4
31-40	75	30
41-50	74	29.6
51-above	55	22
Total	250	100.0

Table 2 reveals that 20 (7.99%) are singles, 220 (88%) are married, while only 10 (4%) are widowed. This implies that more married people responded to the questionnaire.

Table 2. Distribution by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage %
Single	20	7.99
Married	220	88
Widowed	10	4
Total	250	100.0

Table 3 shows that 175 (70%) of the respondents has been in Ukwala Sub-Location for more than 80 years, 50 (20%) came to Ukwala between 50 years ago, while only 25 (10%) has been living in Ukwala Sub-Location for 40 years ago. This implies that more people who are staying at Ukwala under review responded to the questionnaire. One can conveniently say here that the responses of these members are the true conditions of social, cultural barriers affecting planting of Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Ukwala Sub-Location.

Table 3. Duration of Stay in Ukwala Sub-Location

How long?	Frequency	Percentage %
80 Years	175	70
50 Years	50	20
40 Years	25	10
Total	250	100.0

Strategies for SDA Church Growth in Ukwala Sub-Location

Need for a Strategy

As a religious organization, a strategy forces us to seek the mind, and the will of God, strategy is an attempt to anticipate the future God wants to bring about for His people. It is what we believe the future to be and how we can go about bringing it into existence. Strategy is also a means of communicating to fellow Christians, so they can

know where we should concentrate our efforts. It gives us our overall sense of direction and helps to generate cohesiveness. It will tell us what to do and not what to do.

Strategic Approach to Planting SDA Churches in Ukwala Sub-Location

Just as every individual is unique before God, so every people and people group is unique before Him. This uniqueness implies that there are means and methods to be used for this category of individuals. Having this in mind, the only place to start this type of evangelism is with the aim of planting SDA Churches in Ukwala Sub-Location.

Given the fact that this work is about planting SDA Churches, it means they are worthy of all our thought, time and energy because Christ also” died for them. Among these people to be reached are different classes or categories of people. The traditionalists, the Pentecostals, the Catholics, the business men and women, civil servants who are in Ukwala Town to make money because of the abundant opportunities available. The implication of this is that the people to be reached will determine the kind of approach.

A study of the ministry of Christ method in reaching people constantly responded to obvious needs of individuals and groups. He healed the blind, the lame, and the lepers. He was sensitive to the deep needs of people and broke social conventions to help those in need and find followers.

The words that Christ shared about the kingdom of God were masterful expressions within the meaning systems of His day. However, they were also masterful in touch with the hurts and hope of His people in Palestine. He sensed the different needs and spoke differently to individuals with various needs. To the woman

at the well, He spoke of the living water. Nicodemus heard about being born again. The rich young ruler, possessed by his possessions heard the words, “sell all. Give it to the poor. Come and follow me.” To each Jesus particularized the meaning of the kingdom.

In talking about approach, the culture of the people must be seriously considered. Culture is an adaptive mechanism. It provides people with ideas and tools to meet the full range of their needs. Yet no culture is successful in meeting all the needs of its population. One of the results of sin is that cultures everywhere have demonic as well as admirable qualities.

Every society has unresolved tensions. Groups within society struggle with each other over scarce resources and use the culture against one another. Society brings people together in friendship and cooperation only to make them intimate enemies. Human beings are sociable and antagonistic at the same time. The various valued aspects such as personality, physique, intelligence, and wealth are unevenly distributed. People have resentments, tensions, satisfactions, and fears of different sorts. These give daily life its emotional tone. Knowledge of these needs is essential to evangelism. People normally are reluctant to make new religious commitments. They are wary of new claims that differ from the traditions of their parents and people group. This is often coupled with a tendency to punish or reject those who do make new commitments. People are unlikely to give serious consideration to the Christian faith unless they have experienced elements of strong dissatisfaction with their current tradition. Change happens when there is discontent with the way things are.

The major goal of this work is to design ways by which SDA can reach the unentered Ugenya particularly Ukwala Sub-Location. If truly Jesus died for both the rich

and the have-nots, educated and illiterates then conscious effort must be taken to get the gospel of Christ to all classes of people.

Having this in mind, the example of Jesus revealed that Christ met people differently. For the rich, He met them at their level, the educated He met them at their level, the rulers of His days, He met them also on their level. Jesus started from the known to the unknown. What this means in that the kind of people to be reached in Ukwala Sub-Location will determine the kind of approach to be used.

Again a study of the ministry of Christ impresses His followers with the way He constantly responded to the obvious needs of individuals and groups. He healed the blind, the lame and the lepers. He was sensitive to the deep needs of people and social convention to help those in need.

He sensed the different needs and spoke differently to people with different needs. For examples to the woman at the well, He talked about the living water, Nicodemus heard about being born again. The rich young ruler possessed by his possessions was asked by Jesus Christ to go and sell his riches and give them to the poor. After that, he should come back and follow Christ. To each Jesus particularized the meaning of the kingdom.

Likewise, in Ukwala Sub-Location the approach will be determined by the kind of people we want to meet. If the individual is in need of healing, then it will be through our health messages. If the person has challenges about his or her children, we introduce our educational system. For every category of people, we are looking for, there is the approach that suits them.

Evaluation

This strategy has the following;

1. A small number of people so easy to coordinate.
2. Does not require much finance
3. There is time for testimonies and prayer requests.
4. Makes interaction very easy.
5. How members can easily be impacted positively.

Ukwala Sub-Location will surely benefit from this kind of strategy in the sense that the nature of the un-entered area does not give room for easy penetrations of SDA Church in planting new congregations. The few members converted last year can also organize social programmers' for the residence in Ukwala Sub-Location, and this will adequately take care of the social needs of the residents of Ukwala who like social activities.

Bible Instructors

This type of evangelism requires Bible Instructors to be sent out preferably in pairs. Their major assignment is to teach and instruct people about the truth in the word of God. Because there are a lot of false teachings in the society today, and particularly in Ukwala, the church of God is in need of those that can humbly be sent out to instruct others.

This strategy will work in Ukwala Sub-Location where there are some that will not have time to attend any program organized the few members converted last year 2016 at Ohagre Shopping Center. As the case may be, these Bible instructors will meet them in their various houses, shops or offices. The arrangement would be made for a given period may be twice in a week. The good thing about this strategy is that it

does not require those non-members to go out of their comfort zone before the gospel will reach them. We meet them where they are, and they will be happy about that opportunity.

Medical Evangelism

Medical ministry can play a significant role in the evangelization of the un-entered Ukwala Sub-Location. The SDA Church in Siaya should, therefore, develop a system of high standard medical coverage in the un-entered area of Ukwala. That will attract many people staying at Ukwala, and some might be won to Christ.

For many years now, the Adventist Church in Kisumu has not paid enough attention to its health system for the purpose of gospel ministration. Ukwala in Ugenya has been completely neglected in this area. It cannot be explained that for the many years that Adventism has been in Kisumu, not even a clinic has been put up. It is unbelievable why this is so.

The pioneers of the church during their own time were developing both the spiritual and the health life of the people together. When one looks at the society today especially Ukwala, it is very easy to conclude that the health of many individuals has degenerated.

The first step to be taken by the church health system is to put an awareness program in place to educate people in Ukwala about the kind of lifestyle to be chosen.

The natural plants that God has given to humans will go a long way to take care of the many health challenges facing people today. With this kind of program on ground, these people will get to know about the SDA Church, and they will naturally put their money down for gospel ministration. Also, there are cases of health challenges that require a vegetarian diet. In such cases, instead of just loading

patients like that with conventional medicines that will still not take care of it, a vegetarian diet will do the healing.

The Role of Publishing Ministry/Printing Press

Publishing Ministry is also as old as the church. The pioneers of the church were so passionate about spreading the gospel through this means that they made sure that, at every particular point in time, materials were printed for people to read. Rev. 18:1 says: “After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority,” and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.” God’s Church has been entrusted with the task of preaching the good news to everybody in the world including Ukwala. This gospel must be successfully carried out to all people because John saw it in a prophetic vision that the whole earth was indeed “illuminated” No wonder Jesus Himself explained that illumination. “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).

One cannot talk about publishing ministry without literature evangelist (LE). One major challenge that the church in Siaya must look into is the lack of sufficient literature evangelists. There must be an aggressive endeavor to recruit more literature evangelists to be distributing our books on the un-entered part of Ukwala. If this is not done, literature evangelism cannot be effective. When these books are sold, more people would know about Christ and SDA Churches will be planted.

This research focused on social, cultural barriers hindering the church planting among the Luos in Ukwala through a biblical cultural case study. This was needed because the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Siaya Township has failed to convert and retain a significant proportion of Ukwala people in the Adventist faith. Scholars argue that people can respond only to a message they clearly hear in the own context.

The Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location view Christianity as a foreign culture which not only threatens their social, cultural traditions but is also feared to be carrying with it the overtones of assimilation and loss of their cultural background. This study has tried to suggest specific solutions to the barriers indicated.

Enhancing Cross-Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural mission which sometimes is referred to as *contextualization* is defined by Carlos G. Martin as, “an attempt to communicate the gospel in word and deed to establish the church in ways that make sense to people within their local cultural context,”¹ by taking into consideration the world view of the community. He further ascertains that the main focus of cross-cultural mission is to present “Christianity in such a way that it meets people’s deepest needs and penetrates their world view”² allowing them to follow Christ in their own cultural context. Hence cross-cultural mission is essential for it builds a platform where the gospel interacts with the culture of the people with a view of accommodating the world view of the people group within the framework of the gospel truth.

Given the above definitions, it is clear that the subject at hand is of greater value that calls for a keen study. The major question to be discussed at this level is, ‘why cross-cultural mission or witnessing?’ Will the mission of Christ fail if this approach is not considered? There are several reasons why mission should be done cross-culturally.

First, for the fulfillment of, the great Commission, Jesus Christ established His Church here on earth for the purpose of reaching out to save humanity. Before He

¹ Phillips James and Robert T. Coorte, eds., *Towards the Twenty-First Century in Christian Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 35.

² Ibid.

ascended into heaven, He promised his disciples that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit who would enable them to evangelize the entire world starting from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). The book of Revelation 14:6 states ; “Then I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;”(RSV) In view of this texts, the great commission reveals that the plan of God for His church is to reach out to all cultures here on earth. Hence cross-cultural witnessing creates a platform for the success of the mission.

Second, for effectiveness in communicating the gospel; as defined previously that contextualization is, “the process of making the biblical text and its context meaningful and applicable to the thought patterns and situations of a given people.”³ This is crucial in carrying out mission for it is about reaching out to different people groups. Apparently each community has its own belief systems that form their religious practices. Hence, the new teaching “has to touch the lives of people in all aspects of their being.”⁴ Thus the level of effectiveness in communicating the gospel will depend largely on the relevance of the message to the receptor. In many places the gospel has not penetrated well because the missionaries introduced it in the context of the Western culture, which led the indigenous to see it as a foreign and unfitting message.

However, one would ask why should the missionary adopt and adapt the local cultural beliefs, values, and practices in sharing the gospel? Is Christianity not a culture of its own? What contribution does the indigenous culture play in the mission

³ Phillips James and Robert T. Coorte, eds., *Towards the Twenty-First Century in Christian Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 35.

⁴ Bruce L. Bauer, editor, *Faith Development in Context; Presenting Christ in Creative ways*, (Michigan: Department of World Mission, 2005), 28.

of the church? Mayer in his argument as to why missionaries should use cross-cultural approach states that, a *traditionalist* sees his world as one that never changes and should never change. In other words, the other person must at least partially abandon what he is- his principles, his beliefs, and his life, in order to get along with him. The traditionalist focuses primarily on form or expression, rather than on meaning. The form is to remain the same whatever the cost.⁵

With the above kind of mindset, it is not easy to communicate the gospel to a particular people group in a language they cannot be able to interpret in the framework of their world view. Further, as it has been stated before, if the message is to be of relevance to the setting of the receptor, the messenger has to communicate the message within the perception of the people. Paul Hiebert observes that, when the whole areas of culture are written off as not fit for use in the communication of the Gospel, the results are often less than what was desired.⁶ Melvin L. Hodges further asserts that, The gospel is not regional, ... It has been designed by God, Himself, so that it fill the need of the African, the Chinaman or the Indian ... It is adapted to every type of humanity, and to every social climate. It is a universal gospel.⁷ Hence, just as the gospel is dynamic in the sense that it addresses different people groups within the confinement of their cultures, mission ought to be dynamic also.

The elders revealed that there are individuals who secretly accept Adventist message while in Towns and are vibrant. The church must shift the efforts in searching for them, nurture them and later use them in un-entered territory of Ukwala.

⁵ Stephen A. Grunlan and Marvin K. Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology; Christian Perspective* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 69.

⁶ Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 184, 185.

⁷ *Ibid*, 190.

Converted people with the same background or traditional way of life, will easily gain access to their fellow people and convince them to join a new religion.

Third, for self reliance, many successful missions are people driven. Our master Jesus Christ demonstrated a good example when He came to establish His mission here on earth. The Bible states that, he started by appointing twelve disciples with the view of equipping them to be partakers of His mission by calling them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Mathew 4:19 RSV): For the mission to be sustainable, it requires total ownership by the indigenous people that would lead to total commitment just as Jesus did. This goal can best be achieved by carrying out mission in context for it makes them appreciate their contribution to the message and own it. When he realized this fact, Dr. Henry Veny, Secretary of the church Missionary Society of England, stated that, he planned to establish an indigenous church which is, self-support, self-governing and self –propagating.⁸ This is one of the most effective approaches which have a long term result.

Fourth, culture would be the best vehicle in disseminating the gospel truth. Peter Roennfeldt stated that, there are God’s footprints in the local cultures such as the way He has revealed himself through written and oral traditions, rituals or sacred ceremonies.⁹ Since the Old Testament time, the Lord has been in the business of transforming the human cultures by adopting and adapting different cultures in the processes of communicating His message to mankind. He has been using the human cultures as bridges in re-establishing his redemptive relation to humanity. Hence, these are some of the key reasons why cross cultural mission is very essential in the life of God’s church in fulfilling the great commission of our Lord.

⁸ Ibid, 7.

⁹ Bruce L. Bauer, *Faith Development in Context; Presenting Christ in Creative ways*, (Michigan: Department of World Mission, 2005), 36.

One very common question asked by many people is, where did culture come from? The scriptures is very clear that God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26 RSV). This means man had un-fallen nature, endowed with the glory of God and intended to live eternally. Further, as Charles Kraft claims that, man was also created with a creative power.¹⁰ This could be the power that man used to establish his pattern of life after the fall to sin. But before that God was very close to mankind, constantly revealing His will and His nature to him. He is the one who after creating Adam and Eve; He gave them the divine principles of life which we can term them as supra-culture. These consisted eternal beliefs, values and practices by which if they were obedient, they would not have tasted death.

When the devil led them to fall in to sin, God redefined to them their new operating principles, this time were the principles of toil, pain and destruction (Genesis 3:15-17 RSV). Their fall created a great rift between God and themselves to a point that their creator turned to be a stranger in their affair, hence, man's creative nature could be, ... responsible for the vast number and diversity of human cultures and languages in the world today.¹¹

In search of the fallen mankind God established several links to bridge the gap. He could not appear to the fallen race in the fullness of His glory because the entire world is marred by sin; hence He had to reveal Himself to the communities of men through dreams and visions by using some individuals whom he could relate to at a personal level within their cultural mindset and use them as His agencies of change to the fallen race.

¹⁰ Charles Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 85.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 85.

The Bible registers people like Noah and his family (Genesis 6-9), Abraham and his family (Genesis 12-25), among others who interacted with God. He appeared to men and women of different cultural background and used their world view to communicate His will to them and their communities. There are several Biblical examples where God used the existing culture as a vehicle to pass His message across; some of these are the issue of inheritance, the miracle of incarnation, human expressions in the Bible and Paul's mission strategy.

The Issue of Inheritance

During the time Abraham, inheritance was a very important issue. Archaeologists discovered some documentation called the Nuzi Text (an ancient clay document excavated in the town of Nuzi to the east of the Tigris), that indicates the practice of inheritance was common among the Mesopotamia where Abraham came from. The text addressed many issues on inheritance including child adoption. The text asserts that: A property owner who had no son would normally adopt an heir. The adopted 'son' might be a freeborn man, a slave, or a relative.¹²

Hence with that practice (world view) during Abraham's generation, God appears to him with instructions to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's home and go to the Promised Land. The Lord further promised him many descendants who will make a great nation while knowing clearly that he was facing the same challenge of the inheritance (Genesis 12:1, 2). However, God's main objecting in articulating these promises was to establish a great faith in the life of Abraham. He used an approach that triggered his desire.

¹² J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 26.

Many Bible readers are amazed by the great faith of Abraham who obeyed the voice of the Lord and left his own country without knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8b). However, the truth is that God used the existing worldview to communicate His will to Abraham who was craving for an heir because of the barrenness of his wife; hence the message was very and appealing to him. In regard to the call of Abraham, J. Blauw asserts that, the call of Abraham, and the history of Israel which begins at that point, is the beginning of the restoration of the lost unity of mankind and of the broken fellowship with God.¹³

As Adventists we often speak of finding an entering wedge for the mission. In this part we cannot, because of prejudice, immediately start speaking about Jesus or the Bible. People often put up barriers as soon as the Adventist starts talking about spiritual things. The health message often has broken down in many parts of the world. Personal friendship is perhaps the most effective entering wedge. When one becomes friends with people, they often start to ask about ones Christian beliefs.

Indigenous View on Traditional Religion Life and Culture

The Bible was written by forty different authors of different backgrounds within a period of one thousand and five hundred years. However, one will be amazed about the level of cohesion of ideas throughout the Bible. This was mainly because they wrote under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Though the Spirit did not dictate to them what to write but they expressed their understanding in the context of their cultural background. In regards to the New Testament writings, Rene Padilla expresses his perception about the message by asserting that it is ... a message whose

¹³ J. Blauw and al., *Crossroads in Mission* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1962), 19.

narration and interpretation are colored by the Semitic and Greco-Roman cultures in which the Biblical authors lived ¹⁴

According to his view, he sees the New Testament writings as God's inspired message expressed in the context of the author's, ... attitude towards God, his ecclesiastical tradition, and his culture.¹⁵ Hiebert concurs with Rene by stating that, God's revelation is always given to humans in specific historical and cultural context, thus, "to understand the scripture, we must relate them to the time and setting in which they were given."¹⁶

Hence, this understanding reflects how God has used the existing human cultures to reveal His divine will. Does this mean there were no other ways that God could use to reveal Himself? Apparently that is not the case, but God expressed His greatness in mercy by volunteering to limit Himself in the confinement of human culture using it as the vehicle to make Him known.¹⁷ This confirms the fact that, since time memorial God has been interested in the affairs of mankind and the main focus was to reveal His merciful character. Thus the best approach therefore, was for him to relate His messages in the context of mankind.

Bible writers also received God's inspiration based on the cultural influence around them. S. Ananda Kumar asserts that, Inspiration also involved the incorporation and adoption of certain ideals or concepts within the framework of 'heathen' or 'pagan' myths which were in harmony with the character of the creator-

¹⁴ Ibid, 288.

¹⁵ Ibid, 289.

¹⁶ Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insight for Missionaries* (Michigan: Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1985), 17.

¹⁷ Stott John and Robert T. Coote, editors, *Gospel and Culture, The Papers of a Consultation on the Gospel and Culture Convened by the Lausanne Committees Theology and Education group, Culture and the Old Testament* by S. Ananda Kumar (California: William Carey Library, 1979), 48.

Saviour God of Israel.¹⁸ His argument expresses the idea that some of the Biblical concepts were directly borrowed from the philosophies that existed among the pagan Gentile religions. For instant the expression of Acts 17:28, for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring.

This quotation is not only from a pagan poet, but also referred unequivocally to Zeus, the chief god in the Greek pantheon. And yet Paul uses it to depict the character of the Christian God.¹⁹ Marshall substantiates this fact by stating that, ... in the New Testament period the Gospel did not create a new culture over against the Hellenistic world as a whole; it simply created a new variant that might have existed fairly happily within Hellenism with its broad toleration of different ways of life.²⁰

Another practical example found in the New Testament is the Jewish cultural practice of foot washing which was adapted in to the Bible truth (John 13:1f). Christ adopted this practice as part of the Lords supper procedures. The cultural meaning of foot washing to a Jew was a gesture of hospitality, refreshment or outer cleansing to a guest who had travelled a long distance by foot in open shoes and gathered dust on his or her feet. Commenting on the practice, Taber observed that feet are not the most exalted part of the body and to minister to another's feet requires a very humiliating posture. Thus, the normal procedure seems to have been that a host provided water for a guest to wash his own feet.²¹ In the event that the guest was very special, "the host

¹⁸ Ibid, 54.

¹⁹ Ibid, 32.

²⁰ Ibid, 29, 30. Marshall further ascertains that, "the Gospel is expressed in the language and thought-forms of a particular culture (or group of culture), and that in the form in which we have it, it is tied to this particular culture.

²¹ Ibid, 127. "Hermeneutics and Culture: An Anthropological Perspective," by Charles R. Taber.

would assign a slave to do the unpleasant chore.²² Likewise when Jesus stood up to wash the feet of His Disciples, He was exercising the spirit of humility he had towards mankind (John 13:6f). This practice has turned to be a key illustration on humility and God's love to Christian believers who are expected to follow Jesus' steps.

The Lord called Paul to take the gospel to the gentiles after He had given chance to the disciples of Jesus who became reluctant. They had been clued to the Jewish world view to the extent that they had demonized all the gentile cultural practices. This led to a point where for a gentile who converted to Christianity had to follow the Jewish culture which was based on the Mosaic Laws as they were regarded as necessary for salvation(Acts 15:1f). This judgmental attitude of the Disciples became a great stumbling block to the growth of God's church during the early part of the first century. It is this scenario that led God to appear to Paul in a special way and led him to his conversion. With the wisdom that God gave him, Paul learnt to mingle with people from all walks of life with the focus of wanting to build bridges of understanding.

There are many occasions where Paul upheld the cultural practices of those he was reaching out when that particular culture was not against the gospel truth. One of them was the circumcision. The Jewish Christian who converted from Judaism had based their faith both on the Jewish practices and the Christian faith. According to them, circumcision was one of the practices which they equated with the Bible truth of salvation. Meaning that for anyone to be saved he must be circumcised, be it a Jew or a Gentile. They had based this belief on what is written in the book of Genesis Chapter 17:1ff, where God instructed Abraham to circumcise his sons as a sign of the covenant He made with him.

²² Ibid, 128.

In his effort to reach the Gentile, Paul contextualized this Jewish worldview into a spiritual meaning where he states in Colossians 2:11, 12 that, In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the un-circumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

These statements clearly indicate that Paul was not subscribing to the Jewish school of thought that all Gentiles must be circumcised the moment they receive Christ as their saviour for them to be counted righteous. It could be possible that Paul did not emphasis on circumcision to the Gentiles because many communities may not have been practicing and that could greatly hinder the spread of the gospel truth. However he did not just shelf the idea, but rather he contextualized it to bring a general spiritual meaning which was relevant to both, the Jewish and Gentiles Christian of his time. The circumcision which is being referred by Paul here is the spiritual experience of true conversion of a believer through the manifestation of the Holy Spirit who leads to righteous living as stated in Romans 2: 25- 29. The missionaries need to contextualize the on traditional religion life and culture of the Luos in Ukwala Sub-location.

Indigenous View on Hindrances against Reaching the Luos

Missioners lack Indigenous knowledge of reaching the Luo staying at Ukwala. The Luos at Ukwala are eager to protect their culture by all means. This study proposes that for missionaries to overcome this barrier, they need to enhance cross cultural communication. Christianity and African traditional customs are two different

cultures facing each other from extreme ends. There must be due consideration to translate the gospel to fit into the cultures to which the message is preached. For easy penetration and permanent results, there is need to integrate the Christian teachings with the African traditional culture values which may be considered useful. There must be a serious effort to bring together various aspects of such indigenous culture into the Christian context so as to build up a more meaningful Christian life.

In this background therefore, in order for missionaries to be understood by their hosts, especially people from different culture, they must take into account key issues. This consists in at least some of the religious ideas and practices of the new culture. No Christian mission, can take place, let alone succeed to any noticeable extent, without this interaction of human communication. Rufus Jones is right when he says that with regard to evangelism, "The habits of thought and action of a people, what we call the psychological climate or apperception mass, together with their characteristic emotional tones, work powerfully, though silently, to alter and reshape whatever is transmitted."²³ So whatever is received is received according to the position of the receiver. It always involves a degree of risk, as Jones has noted, to impart new truths to a people with its own peculiar habits of mind. Some of the most important features of the message imparted may be actually lost, while almost every aspect may be transformed.

The message will not be the same after assimilation and interpretation through a new group of minds. Yet this is actually not such a great risk after all. It does not necessarily lead to peril. On the contrary, it is part of the normal process of intercultural communication. Without it there may be imposition but not

²³ Jones, Rufus, *The African Culture and Integration of Christian Values* (New York: Mackdonald Press, 1924), 18

communication. In Christian term, imposition has no cultural roots; communication makes the message part of the culture.

This study proposes that the missionaries must extract useful traditional values from the Luo community staying at Ukwala and to try to inculcate Christian values within the prisms of their categories. There are useful African traditional customs; those values which make the Africans live in harmony as they respect their institutions which they find themselves in. For instance, chastity before marriage is something which was highly regarded in the African setting. Love was expressed in symbolic exchange of gifts, ritual visits and exchange of vows or agreements between the clan members of the betrothed before marriage.

In this regard, marriage was a matter between relatives of the bride and the groom. After marriage the two groups were responsible for the outcome of the newly wedded couples. This communal responsibility unlike the individualistic way of doing it from the west, guaranteed permanence, and no divorce was easily made. This is not a bad cultural practice, and there are many more within the Luo community staying at Ukwala which can be appreciated before hand, as the witnessing ministry.

It is more appealing when an evangelist draws parallels from the traditions held by the target community such as a sacrifice to cleanse evildoers or to appease community spirits and God in comparison with biblical concept of the Old Testament atonement. The indigenous community feels that Christianity has come to strengthen their belief system, hence quick adaptability. It is also not harmful to Africanize the accent of the liturgy, using songs which make the liturgy more enjoyable. Another example is the belief on the sacredness of Church buildings which can evoke on how shrines were revered as God's dwelling places or even his manifestation in Luo spirituality. However it is important to note that both traditional and Christianity

cultures are on a serious transition. It is as Megesa puts it: “They have lost their relevance and applicability. So any effort at ‘inculturation’ is an exercise in futility if it based on massive borrowing from indigenous African heritage.”²⁴

In addition, missionaries must overcome egocentric and superiority complex which puts them at a much higher level than the people they are targeting. Sometimes missionaries refuse to eat, live and even mingle with the native people. They stay miles away from where the target communities stay. There is no visitation because of fear of attack from people possessed with mystical powers. This study proposes that in order for gospel workers to gain access, they need to identify themselves with indigenous communities by establishing community based projects which can attract the natives attaching their cherished core values. These activities can act as stepping stone for reaching out to them. Establishment of Medical Missions and Mission Schools, this technique can be used to penetrate communities that are upholding indigenous practices like the Luos living at Ukwala Sub-Location .

Strategies Used by Non Adventists

The first missionaries to proclaim Christianity were from Roman Catholic. The Catholic Church dominates almost the whole region. The Roman Missionaries who came to evangelize Ukwala area had initiatives; they learned the language of the local people and wrote their customs and cultures. Though they emphasized on change of behavior of their converts, yet they were more accommodating to local traditions and customs. The Catholics came in Segwa and established a Medical Mission. This community relies on getting treatment from traditional medicine men who give them herbs and other things to get well. This is important because of two

²⁴ Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 2004), 13.

reasons: Firstly, the ministry of healing was an important part of the ministry of Jesus Himself as well as that of His disciples. Secondly, missionary should view medical missions as an important evangelistic agency.

Another current body of Christians which is making a notable impact on Ukwala is Pentecostalism. As in other places, Pentecostalism normally appeals to spiritualistic faculties. It involves emotions and feelings. Because of that, some Luo people judge that Pentecostalism can replace spiritualism. Discussing about Pentecostalism, respondents unanimously stated “Pentecostalism is gaining influence in Ukwala area because it is contextualizing her message. Although they prohibit their members to dance in secular setting they encourage dancing in the church.”²⁵ As I talked to respondents from Ukwala three out of four agreed that, “Pentecostalism is characterized by manifestations of the experience of feeling unusual similar to a person possessed by spirits”²⁶ This being the case, it is not surprising to find Luo joining the Pentecostal movement.

Useful Contextual Approach in entering Ukwala

In the question, what are useful contextual things that are the Adventists can learn from non-Adventists? Two things were mentioned as useful to Adventist mission. The GROUP1 proposed that, “the church can learn to contextualize worship, to make worship relevant to worshipers. The church should improve singing services and make them live”²⁷ Another respondent added that, “The Adventist church can

²⁵ Anonymous, Ukwala Indigenous non-believer of Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by author, Ukwala, 10 January, 2017

²⁶ Moses Ochuodho, Indigenous non-believer of Seventh-day Adventist Church Ukwala, interview by author, Ukwala, 10 January, 2017.

²⁷ Daniel Otieno, Ukwala Indigenous believer of Seventh-day Adventist Church Siaya, interview by author, Ukwala, 10, January, 2017.

learn from Pentecostals the strategy of effective visitation.”²⁸ Although the church has been insisting that the Global Mission Pioneers sent there should visit people in their houses frequently, visitation has never been implemented seriously.

I asked the same question to GROUP 2 this group indicated that “church should learn to create some teachings for specific age group similar to rites of passage but with different contents and purposes. The small group is what brings people together so that they can nurture one another.”²⁹ The Catholics have their small group that brings them together to encourage one another. One of the greatest characteristic of the Luo is a strong sense of close relation between the clan. One respondent said that, “When a Luo accepts the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he loses friends and relatives. The church has to fill the gap left by relatives”³⁰ church has to provide fellowship and lessons for his sons and daughters as an alternative to the traditional rites of passage of non-Adventist believers.

The church can introduce adult education classes to assist those who did not get opportunity to go through formal education. A God who cares for the well-being of the people will be accepted. This should be designed in a manner that it directly benefits the local rather than the ones who came with it. If for example a Seventh-day Adventist Church introduces school at Ukwala, many children will join and consequently get converted which in turn will impact their family members. Christian virtues as well as moral, industrious and orderly habits unless they are moved from

²⁸ Mary Otieno, Ukwala Indigenous believer of Seventh-day Adventist Church Siaya, interview by author, Ukwala, 10, January, 2017.

²⁹ Peter Onyango, Dropout believer of Seventh-day Adventist Church Siaya, interview by author, Ukwala, 20 January, 2017.

³⁰ Millicent Owino, Dropout believer of Seventh-day Adventist Church Siaya, interview by author, Ukwala, 30 January, 2017.

their usual environment, they will never be transformed. We should go ahead and produce the indigenous African evangelists and teachers.

Promoting Formal Education among the Luos Staying at Ukwala

The researcher gathered some elderly men who were polygamists at Ukwala Shopping Center. The main agenda was to discuss and clarify the findings on polygamy and the challenges accompanying it from the Christian point of view. According to these elders, polygamy was acceptable and honorable. It raised the social status of a family. The bigger the family the greater respect earned in the eyes of the Luo community. Polygamy also helped to prevent or reduce unfaithfulness and prostitution. These polygamists unanimously agree that polygamy continues to be a major challenge to Christian witnessing in Ukwala.

The missionaries realized that polygamy was a deeply entrenched custom which could not be suppressed by force. Some denominations started accepting polygamous families in their churches and even incorporating them into church leadership. This is because of the fact that these people were many and influential in society without which support was not guaranteed. This was out of desperation and not in accordance to the original plan of our creator when He first created Adam and Eve. The claim is that there are several people in the Bible who had many wives and God did not condemn the act directly. He went along using these people for His own glory. However, the repercussions are clear in the Bible, but direct condemnation is lacking.

The group of polygamists proposed that the only way out is to promote formal education which will capture the young generation before they enter into such a snare. It is difficult to uproot in a day from the life of a community what is part of their

culture. The solution is to capture their children while still young, and instil into them a higher and better morality.

Application of Good Luo Cultural Practices

After a thorough literature, findings from the Luo community and the attempts by the Adventist at Siaya towards Luo people, the researcher is convinced that, in order to disseminate Adventist faith among Luo in Ukwala, there is need to change the mission approach from “Universal model” towards a contextual mission approach of reaching Luo. Based on insights gained throughout the study, the researcher proposes a synthetic model by Bevans’. Since the synthetic approach has not yet been put into practice among the Luo people of Ukwala Sub-Location within Ugenya Sub-County of Siaya County in Kenya, it would be more appropriate to view it as an ambition rather than practical.

Synthetic approach primarily assumes that in every culture there are good and valuable qualities. God is able to work with any culture. Hence the researcher argues the church to move from the prevalent model of mission (Universal model) which is Ethnocentric, to a biblical contextual (Synthetic) approach. In this model, the messages engage culture alternatively, accommodating or rejecting its varied aspects. So the project concentrates on the Synthetic approach as an approach of reaching Luo with the Adventist message.

One of the issues that emerged from the study is spiritualism, there is no way out except to stick to the teaching of the Bible. Luo have a belief in spiritualism. They believe death to be a transition from one state to another, and that those who die join their ancestors. In addition it is believed that these dead people can communicate to people. In fact, when a crisis happens they normally conduct a worship to appease the ancestors. This is contra to the Bible and cannot be overlooked. Gospel workers are to

instruct clearly what the Bible says about the state of the dead, and who is involved in the appearance of ancestors which is the work of the devil.

Luo are traditionally celebrative hence it appears that celebrative type of worship is likely to produce good outcome. With a synthetic approach Gospel workers are to carefully arrange impressive worships. In which worshipers are free to express their emotions and feeling for what God has done for them as they use celebrative worship. Normally people long to belong to a place where they feel.

In Luo perspectives, there are at least four distinct rites of passage, “*nago lak auchiel*”-removing six teeth, wedding, and death.” *nago lak auchiel*” illustrated respect training to assume adulthood .

The strongly believe that human existence is as a result of some supernatural intervention. If the Biblical God can be introduced in the language the can understand, massive conversion is inevitable. Although the Luo prays facing the sun, they do not worship it but something beyond. Reconciliation has a central role in the Luo religion and practice; broken relations are never allowed to go unhealed. Sacrifices are performed and communal meals held to restore normalcy. Christians should teach and practice the doctrine of reconciliation using Luo terms.

Covenant making is a characteristic of Luo people, when oaths are taken seriously: they are more binding than any signature made on legal document. The process of oath-taking always contains a religious element, one always swears by a divinity who thus becomes the chief witness to the transaction. The blood of Jesus which brings about the new covenant must be translated properly to all believers so that they can bind together as they celebrate the death of Christ.

Another issue which was explored in the study is the usage of herbs. Luo use some herbs for ritual ceremonies and for casting evil spirits. Despite the fact that there

are some herbs that are used for ritual ceremonies and for evil spirits, there are more plants that can be used for treating diseases and relieving pain. Receiving Christianity faith has nothing to do with discarding the use of plants as medicines (traditional healing). In fact, this is easily obtainable than conventional medicine which is scarce and sometimes difficult to access. Due to the absence of a well-established hospital in the region, Gospel workers are to bring the Adventist faith to the context by contextualizing healing ministry to traditional medicine as a way of creating a link between the church and the community.

As it has been highlighted, the current mission approach is inadequate regarding evangelizing Luo of Ukwala Sub-Location. It requires a radical transformation in the mission approach. Diverse contexts demand diverse approaches. As a mission approach synthetic will open a door of diversity and remove some barriers that hinder the spreading of the gospel by the Adventists among the Ukwala Luo.

Transformation of the Worldview of the Luos in Ukwala

Man is both a spiritual and a social being, spiritual in the sense that he always has an inner desire of relating to supernatural powers, and social for he cannot live alone. Due to this uniqueness, man has been the center of many studies. One of the disciplines which deals with man as a spiritual and social being is Anthropology which is categorized under the behavioral science subjects. Hence the study on cross-cultural mission would not be complete if the anthropological aspect of mission is not addressed. As it has already been observed that each community has an existing structure of values, beliefs, and practices which make the platform of its religious and cultural practices. Further that, each particular culture has an established ‘world

view' that defines the assumption of the people. Hence for mission to be relevant to a particular people group it has to address their belief systems that will appeal to their minds.

Thus when reaching out to any people group, it should be noted that there is no religious or cultural vacuum to that community. Therefore, for a messenger to have a meaningful interaction with the locals has to learn their culture and reach them within their context. To achieve this, there must be a deliberate decision to learn the new culture. It should be noted that sharing the gospel is more than just converting people to the truth. One great mistake the early Missionaries did was to convert Africans to Christianity in the context of western culture and forcing them to abandon their traditional practices. They demonized most of the existing cultural practices referring them as evil.

This kind of attitude eventually poses a challenge to mission. Hence to overcome this, we need to understand the people and their thinking to translate the gospel into their thought patterns, we also need to understand the scriptures within their cultural context so that we can translate them into the local culture without losing their divine message.

Developing Accessibility Avenues

The mission of the Adventist church to reach the whole world by no means excludes Luos in Ukwala. However the thinking pattern of an average Luo in Ukwala Sub-Location is influenced by his socio-religious and cultural background, and this has made it difficult to reach the Luos in Ukwala with Adventist message through public evangelism, the use of Adventist literature and other methods the Church has adopted over the years, hence, friendship evangelism can be an alternative method of reaching the Luos in Ukwala. Moreover, the principle of friendship evangelism is to

set a parameter that would serve as guide to those who engage themselves in reaching out to Luos in Ukwala through friendship relationship with a purpose to reach them with the Adventist message.

This study proposes that churches interested to send Global Mission Pioneers to Ukwala must put in consideration of the fact that people from other parts are not readily welcome in the region. They are usually suspected to be spies and will not get access to houses freely. Therefore if the Adventist message is to be accepted, and owned by the Luos in Ukwala, it has to be contextualized according to the Luo culture. The best approach is to use conversational-celebrative approach. By taking this contextual mission, the Adventist church can fulfill the purpose of assistance which is always to preach Christ and the His gospel truth as revealed in the Bible with specific emphasis on the three angels' message. However, a mere mention of the name of Jesus is neither the message nor the mission of the church. Christ must be presented as key in answering the questions people ask. The synthetic approach to mission should go beyond the aesthetic level and address the core issues that pertain to the Luos in Ukwala.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research focused on exploring a contextual approach and cross-cultural approach of reaching the Luos people of Ukwala Sub-Location in Kenya through a biblical cultural case study. This was needed because the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Siaya Township has failed to convert and retain a significant proportion of Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location with the Adventist faith. Scholars argue that people can respond only to a message they clearly hear in their own context. However, the Adventist church has not been focusing on a contextual approach, which is the concern of the research.

This chapter summarizes the findings of the research and also draws some conclusions based on the findings. The findings reveal that the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Central Nyanza Conference, in particular, Siaya has been using a Universal Model in reaching the Luos in Ukwala. The approach has not appealed and proved to be irrelevant and inappropriate to the Luos in Ukwala context. Therefore the researcher proposes a biblical-contextual approach that has the potential of disseminating the Adventist faith among the Luos in Ukwala.

This study found out that indeed the social, cultural barriers identified hinders the witnessing ministry among the Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location, social, cultural aspects together with other factors must be put into consideration. Mingling with the Luos in Ukwala, sharing their pains and attending to their physical needs, will help them open their hearts to the appeals of the Adventist message.

Summary

The Luos in Ukwala are strong bonds among members of each class and a strong valuing of their culture. When the Adventists at Siaya Township reached the Luos in Ukwala, they were disseminating the message that was wrapped in a Western culture adopted from the Missionaries. However, spreading the message wrapped in Western Culture is not the only reason for a failure in converting the Luos in Ukwala; there may be other factors which are beyond the scope of this study that has led to the failure of the Adventist church to convert and retain sufficient proportion of Luos in Ukwala. As a consequence, the Luos in Ukwala have been avoiding joining the Adventist church as they do not feel the church as a place to call their home.

The research has demonstrated that failure to use the appropriate approach has delayed Luos in Ukwala from starting a church. As it has been noted, the Luos in Ukwala love and have knowledge of God's love. A significant proportion is affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. That by itself is an indication that they love God. Global Mission Pioneers should learn to contextualize worship to make worship relevant to worshipers. The church planters should improve services and make them live. In addition to that, they should learn to create some teachings for specific age groups similar to the instruction at the rite of passage but with different content and purposes.

The Adventist evangelists need to instruct the few Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location who have accepted Adventist message to practice their faith among the Luos in Ukwala openly. To achieve all this goal it has to replace the universal models with the biblical contextual approach. The universal model approach of the Western missionaries affected the native missionaries and evangelists approach. Converts were obliged to abandon everything that was related to culture or stay outside the church of

God. This resulted in some Luos in Ukwala having to avert from the church to seek other movements, as the approach used by the Adventists was ineffective to take care of these potential church members. Although the universal model proved to be ineffective, evangelists are still using it. According to the respondents in the research, most people are still unable to convert the Luos in Ukwala into the Adventist church.

Conclusion

The universal approach, which is western centered in nature, needs to be replaced by a new one that is the biblical cross-cultural approach. Pastors and evangelists have to work together encouraging the usage of the new approach, support it to restore the Biblical contextual approach. Evangelists should begin to implement a biblical cross-cultural approach and reach the Luos in Ukwala in a better way of converting them. Also, the church should present guidelines for evangelists sent to work among the Luos in Ukwala.

The strong emphasis of Adventists concerning her uniqueness is a barrier for Luos in Ukwala to join the church. This is because the church expects her converts to adhere to that style of uniqueness, even if it is forged in one specific western context. Therefore, for the Adventist message to be received and appreciated by Luos in Ukwala, it has to be contextualized according to the Luo culture and environment. This can be realized through a contextual model to Luos in Ukwala Sub-Location.

Recommendations

Since the research has found out that there is laxity in reaching the un-entered area in Ukwala with an Adventist message, the researcher recommends that the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its leadership concentrate in evangelism within the Ukwala Sub-Location. This should be the area of concentration to Central Nyanza

Conference in 2015-2020 quinquennial. The aim is to plant Adventist Churches in several un-entered sub- locations within Ukwala.

The researcher further recommends that the church come up with a biblical contextual approach which is relevant to reaching the Luos in Ukwala. The church is to conduct a further study on how to reach the un-entered sub-locations of Ukwala and implement the findings. This can be achieved by putting all resources of evangelism in the territory.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Respondent,

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Researcher: Nelson Otieno Olum (+254 720 066 569)

Supervisor: Odek Rabach, PhD (+ 254 707 525 472)

Research Office: Sampson Nwaomah, PhD (+254)

I am a student, at Adventist University of Africa. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Assessment of the social, cultural barriers to planting Seventh-day Adventist Churches among the Luo community in Siaya County: A case study of the Luos in un-entered sub-location of Ukwala.” The aim of the study is to: develop a baseline framework on how to enter the un-entered area of Luo territories with the Adventists message.

Through your participation, I hope to: Identify the issues and challenges surrounding planting of Adventist churches, understanding social, cultural barriers to planting Seventh-day Adventist Churches among the Luo community in Siaya County. Ukwala Sub-location.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence.

There will be no monetary gain from taking part in this survey. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identify you as a participant will be maintained by the School of Theological Seminary, Adventist University of Africa.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

It should take you about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. I hope you will take the time to fill out the questionnaire.

Sincerely

Nelson Otieno Olum

Date: 30th September 2016

CONSENT

I -----hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of Participant:-----

Date:-----

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRES

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Gender

Male ()

Female ()

Age

11-20 Years ()

21-30 Years ()

31-49 Years ()

41-50 Years ()

51-60 Years ()

61 Years and above ()

What is your highest level of Education?

No formal Education ()

KCPE Certificate ()

KCSE Certificate ()

Artisan /Craft Certificate ()

Diploma ()

Bachelor's Degree ()

Master's Degree ()

PhD ()

Any other? Please Specify _____

Marital Status

Single ()

Married ()

Widow ()

Widower ()

How long have you stayed in the region?

80 Years ()

50 Years ()

40 Years ()

Less than 40 Years ()

Town/Village of Residence _____

SECTION B: Christian Values and the Luo Social Cultural Customs.

Do you know any Seventh-day Adventist in your village?

Yes ()

No ()

How long have you known him or her?

0-5 Years ()

6-10 Years ()

11-15 Years ()

16 Years and above ()

If yes, how is his or her Christian values compared with Luo social cultural customs _____

Have you listened to Seventh-day Adventist message in you village?

Yes ()

No ()

How important is the Christian values to you?

Very Important ()

Important ()

Not Important ()

Useless ()

Any other? Please Specify _____.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LUO ELDERS

What do you think is the level of importance to the Luo customary beliefs?

Very Important ()

Important ()

Not Important ()

Useless ()

Do you practice Luo rituals?

Yes ()

No ()

Do you believe in life after death?

Yes ()

No ()

To what extent is polygamy important to you?

Very Important ()

Important ()

Not Important ()

Useless ()

Is the Office of “Ker” important to you?

Very Important ()

Important ()

Not Important ()

Useless ()

Do the respect given to the ancestors by the community important to you?

Very Important ()

Important ()

Not Important ()

Useless ()

Do you think the role played by traditional medicine-men is important to you?

Very Important ()

Important ()

Not Important ()

Useless ()

To what extent does Christian culture contradict the Luo traditional culture?

Very Important ()

Important ()

Not Important ()
Useless ()

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PASTORS

Do you think missiological strategies used by Seventh-day Adventists in reaching Luo people at Ukwala are?

Very Important ()
Important ()
Not Important ()
Useless ()

What are the hindrances posed in reaching the Luos in Ugenya?

What are missiological strategies used by non-Adventists in reaching Luos in Ukwala

What useful contextual things can the Seventh-day Adventist Church learn to improve its mission strategies?

What can be the future of missiological strategy in reaching the Luos in un-entered territory?

What are the Adventist missiological strategies which can be dropped to enhance the mission to move with speed?

What is your overall impression of the Adventist method of spreading the gospel among the Luos in Ugenya?

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VITA

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EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017 Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology candidate
Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi Kenya.
2008 Bachelor of Arts in Theology
University of Eastern Africa, Baraton.

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2016 Central Nyanza Conference: Executive Secretary
2010 Central Nyanza Field: Personal Ministries, OAM, AMR,
ADRA Coordinator.
2009 Central Nyanza Field: Ministerial Secretary, Stewardship
Church Development Director.
2008 Kamnara District: Church Pastor
2004-2007 Thurgem District: Church Pastor
2003 Kisumu East District: Church Pastor
2002 Siaya/Nyalgunga Districts: Church Pastor
2001-2002 Sanda District: Church Pastor
1998-2000 Yala District: Church Pastor.