

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Missiology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title **IMPLICATIONS OF THE NC'WALA CEREMONY RITUALS ON
ADVENTIST FAITH PRACTICE IN KAPATA MISSION DISTRICT,
ZAMBIA: A MISSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE**

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This study examines the interplay between the Nc'wala ceremony and Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) faith practices within Zambia's Kapata Mission District, offering a missiological perspective on the integration of traditional and Christian religious expressions. The Nc'wala ceremony, a deeply rooted cultural and religious event, presents a unique challenge and opportunity for the relatively new SDA community. The research explores how the ceremony's communal rites, feasts, and ancestral veneration influence and sometimes conflict with established Adventist beliefs and practices.

Employing qualitative methods including interviews, and observations, the study investigates the diverse responses of Kapata Adventists to the Nc'wala ceremony which bring ancestral worship. It analyzes the strategies employed by

Adventist leaders and missionaries to navigate these complexities, balancing doctrinal integrity with cultural sensitivity. The research delves into the theological implications of this interaction, considering how the church negotiates cultural respect and theological purity.

The findings illuminate the dynamics between traditional African rituals and Christian practices, offering valuable insights for missiological theory and practice. The study highlights the need for ongoing dialogue and a context-sensitive approach that values local traditions while upholding core Christian beliefs. It emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding and respect in fostering effective and respectful engagement with local customs. Ultimately, this research provides a valuable case study for understanding the broader implications of cultural and religious intersections in missionary work and suggests avenues for future research on similar interfaith dynamics.

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A project

presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Missiology

by

Bright Hamuntili

May 2025

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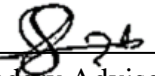
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I wish to dedicate this paper to my wife Mutale, my children –
Estellah, Joshua and Ellen for giving me space and
encouragement to write. I will forever be
grateful to God for them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Globally, human populations are divided into ethnic groups or tribes. These groups differ in language, origin, beliefs, traditions, and child-rearing practices, which together form their culture. Each community shares a unique group personality known as culture. Sometimes, aspects of this culture can conflict with the spread of the Adventist Gospel within the tribe.

In that regard, this disquisition singles out the Ngoni people of Kapata Mission District in Zambia, to explore the intricacies of their cultural beliefs and influence on Adventism. The Ngoni people have sustained a culture that is rich in traditional heritage. This stems from their steadfastness in passing on the traditional practices from one generation to the other in such a way as to preserve the quality as well as scope of their traditional beliefs.

This paper specifically focuses on the Nc’wala traditional ceremony of the Ngoni people, an event that symbolizes unity, highlights development, and commemorates the Ngoni's origins through practices established by their ancestors. As such, the Nc’wala ceremony serves as a fundamental aspect of their cultural identity.¹

¹ Marvin J. Newell, *Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 17.

Historical Background

The Ngoni People trace their recent origins from South Africa where they fled their homeland in search of better and peaceful land due to Zulu-land wars in the early 19th century. They are among the eighteen (18) ethnic societies that migrated to Zambia who included mainly the Lozi, Kololo, Makoma, Mbowe, Mwenyi, Nkoya, Ndundulu, Nyengo, Simaa, Kwandi, Shanjo, Sibuya and Totela.² Initially the Ngoni people were part of an ethnic society called Aba-Nguni who had earlier migrated from the Great Lakes region to South Africa in the 15th century.³ The Ngoni decided to settle in the eastern part of Zambia as their new home.

From the time of their organization as a people, the Ngoni people have held on to traditions that sustain their way of life. The main tradition being the Nc'wala traditional ceremony during which the Ngoni worship their god. In that period, sacrifices are offered to their god. Traditional ceremonies, such as the annual N'cwala Festival, celebrate the harvest and honour ancestors. These events feature vibrant dances, music, and the intricate art of storytelling, transmitting history and values to younger generations.

The Paramount Chief who is the leader of the Ngoni people undergoes consecration in which he is secluded a day before the ceremony. As part of consecration, the chief abstains from all manner of sexual relations. The sole purpose of the consecration is the belief that the Chief must be holy as he meets the god. On the actual day of the ceremony, a bull is slaughtered and the blood is given to the

² Kambidima Wotela, "Deriving Ethno-geographical Clusters for Comparing Ethnic Differentials in Zambia" (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 2010), 7.

³ Newell, *Crossing Cultures in Scripture*, 17.

Chief to drink. Further, the chief eats the roasted meat of the same beast as part of the requirements for conducting the Nc'wala ceremony.⁴

The Nc'wala Ceremony is a highly significant cultural event held annually by the Ngoni people of Eastern Province, Zambia. It is a celebration of the first harvest of the year and a time to give thanks to the ancestors for their protection and guidance.⁵ The Nc'wala ceremony is a vital cultural and spiritual event for the Ngoni community in Zambia, reflecting their rich traditions.

Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs) prioritize keeping the Sabbath holy and abstaining from any activities that may compromise their faith or go against their religious teaching, in the scriptures, God repeatedly urges individuals to devote themselves to him above all else. Engaging in rituals and practices that differ from their beliefs may pose conflicts for SDAs. Therefore, examining the impact of the Nc'wala ceremony rituals on their religious practice is important.

Participating in the Nc'wala ceremony does pose challenges for SDAs due to potential conflicts with their theology and practice. First, the ceremony typically involves communal activities, which may extend beyond the hours designated for Sabbath worship and rest. Second, traditional rituals often involve elements that may be considered incompatible with SDA teachings, such as animal sacrifices or the veneration of ancestral spirits. Such practices might conflict with the SDA commitment to the sanctity of life and their belief in one all-powerful God.

Furthermore, participating in the Nc'wala ceremony may blur the lines between cultural appreciation and religious syncretism for SDAs. While it is essential to respect and understand different cultural practices, the merging of different

⁴ Newell, *Crossing Cultures in Scripture*, 17.

⁵ Ibid.

religious traditions and customs is known as religious syncretism. For those dedicated to practicing the SDA religion, participating in rituals that mix traditional practices with their religious beliefs could raise concerns about maintaining the integrity of their faith and adherence to their religious principles.

Seventh-day Adventists should discuss the Nc'wala ceremony with their religious leaders to understand its cultural significance while maintaining their religious beliefs. This could involve learning about the ceremony from a distance or participating in community service aligned with their faith.

In conclusion, exploring the implications of the Nc'wala ceremony rituals on the SDA religious practice illuminates the complexities that arise when cultural traditions intersect with deeply held religious beliefs. Finding a balance between cultural appreciation and religious commitment requires thoughtful introspection, dialogue, and seeking guidance from religious leaders. Ultimately, each Seventh - day Adventist must navigate their individual path, ensuring that their actions reflect their faith while respecting the cultural heritage of others.

Statement of the Problem

The SDA Church places strong importance on faithfully following the core teachings and values of Christianity, with particular emphasis on worshiping God exclusively. Believers in Christ are called to revere the living God, the maker of heaven and earth, and to honor Him. In contrast to these expectations, the Ngoni people embrace the Nc'wala ceremony which is deeply rooted in traditional customs and rituals, often involving ancestral worship and the veneration of spirits.

This conflict of belief in worshiping to ancestral gods by the Ngoni presents several challenges for Adventist church members who are also part of communities that observe the Nc'wala ceremony. It creates a dilemma for individuals who must

reconcile their cultural heritage with their religious beliefs. Additionally, participation in the Nc'wala ceremony may be perceived as compromising one's faith, potentially leading to confusion and division within the Adventist community.

Consequently, this research aims to provide guidelines for the Adventist Ngoni people on how to refrain from participating in ceremonies involving ancestral worship and veneration of spirits while maintaining their religious integrity.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to examine the intricate connection between the rituals of the Nc'wala ceremony and the faith practices of the SDA community in Zambia's Kapata Mission District. Utilizing qualitative research approaches, the research explores the influence of this longstanding cultural celebration on the SDA congregation, with particular attention to areas of tension, ways in which adaptations occur, and the approaches taken to manage the intersection between cultural traditions and religious beliefs. Ultimately, this research aims to provide a missiological response that fosters understanding, promotes cultural sensitivity, and offers guidance for integrating traditional practices with core Christian beliefs within the Adventist context.

Significance of the Project

The study of the Nc'wala traditional ceremony in relation through understanding the intersection of culture and faith is greatly enhanced by examining the beliefs of the SDA Church. Nc'wala is a sacred event celebrated by the Ngoni people in Zambia, which involves various rituals and ceremonies that date back centuries.

For SDAs, who hold the Bible as their ultimate authority, engaging in the study of Nc'wala allows for a deeper exploration of the cultural practices and beliefs

that may influence the local Adventist community. By examining the rituals and traditions of Nc’wala, Adventists can gain insights into the cultural context of their congregants and foster a greater understanding and appreciation for their beliefs and values.

Research Questions

This research seeks to address these questions:

1. How do the Ngoni people in Kapata Mission District perceive and interpret their worldview?
2. On what biblical and theological basis does worship rest?
3. In what ways has the Nc’wala traditional ceremony influenced the presence of Adventism within the Kapata Mission District? What guidelines can be offered to Adventists in Kapata Mission District on the practice of the Nc’wala tradition?

Limitations

The following are limitations of the study:

1. **Cultural Specificity:** The focus on Kapata Mission District limits the generalizability of findings to other regions or cultural contexts.
2. **Data Collection Challenges:** Limited access to Nc’wala rituals, participant bias, and language barriers may affect the depth and accuracy of data.
3. **Methodological Constraints:** Small sample sizes, reliance on qualitative methods, and time limitations could restrict the study’s robustness.
4. **Theological and Cultural Sensitivities:** Researcher bias, misinterpretation of rituals or Adventist doctrines, and overlap of religious and cultural identity may complicate analysis.

5. Missiological Implications: Conflicting interpretations and limited prior research could hinder theoretical grounding and practical application of findings.
6. Ethical Concerns: Ensuring respect for sacred rituals, participant confidentiality, and ethical research practices in a sensitive cultural-religious setting poses challenges.

Delimitation of the Study

The study centred on participants in the Age range of eighteen (18) years and beyond. This was purposefully done in order to capture the thoughts and views of people who were able to make sound judgement of their own about the beliefs that they would embrace. This is premised on the fact that the constitution of the Republic of Zambia recognises someone as an adult when they clock 18 years of age. In addition, the research was confined to the Kapata Mission District in Zambia, as defined by the SDA Church's geographical limits.

Reflexivity

This research aims to comprehend the low spiritual engagement in Kapata Mission District. In 2011, despite extensive efforts, an evangelistic campaign had low attendance and only five baptisms after two weeks. The unwelcoming reception during home visits was unusual for Zambia, where religious programs usually receive positive responses.

The unexpected challenges and limited success of the campaign sparked a deep curiosity to investigate the underlying causes of this apparent spiritual disengagement. By examining the social, cultural, and contextual factors at play, this research seeks to explore the root causes of the district's low receptiveness to spiritual

activities. The findings are intended to contribute to a broader understanding of how local dynamics influence religious participation, providing valuable insights for future outreach initiatives in similar settings.

Methodology

This section covers the research process, design, target population, sampling methods, data collection techniques, and ethical guidelines.

Research Design

A research design outlines the intended approach to carrying out a study. Nonetheless, Philipsen contends that it should not be viewed as a rigid blueprint to be adhered to strictly; instead, he sees it as a collection of signposts that help maintain the researcher's course.⁶ This research paper has qualitative methods aimed at providing an in-depth description of fewer than twenty cases. It involves collecting diverse data, such as voice or video recordings, and analysing documents like diaries, letters, or emails. Due to the detailed nature of the research, a small sample size is recommended.

Population, Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

Population. The investigation take place in Kapata Mission District which has 2532 local church members from which the district constitutes the actual population through simple random sampling. It is upon this population that the researcher used when sampling of participants in the study.

Sampling. The sampling considered the individuals residing in Kapata District who identified themselves as members of the SDA Church and had attended the

⁶ H. Philipsen and M. Vernooij-Dassen, "Qualitative Research: Useful, Indispensable and Challenging," *Huisarts En Wetenschap* 47, no. 10 (2004): 454-457.

Nc'wala Traditional Ceremony. A list of SDA Church members in Kapata were obtained and a total of 12 individuals were randomly selected for participation in the survey.

Data Collection. According to Punch, data collection refers to obtaining information for research purposes, or gathering data intended to address the research questions.⁷ This research gathered data through both interviews and semi-structured interviews. The surveys involved direct, in-person interviews with participants who have been chosen for the study. The surveys ensured that respondents fully understand the questions before proceeding with data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the survey process to encourage honest and unbiased responses.

Data Analysis

Data was examined through thematic analysis, a process made more straightforward by coding and categorizing information into themes. These themes were then explained and utilized to synthesize the collected data. Key terms are identified to come up with good interpretations so as to arrive at a good conclusion.

Ethical Considerations

The study took ethical consideration into effect to avoid poor quality of research outputs. Cooper and Schindler stress that ethical considerations are crucial in field research. They argue these include approval of research instruments, participant protection, and adherence to the study design. In response, the researcher subjected the research proposal along with research instruments to the Ethics Review Board of

⁷ K. F. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (London: Sage, 2013), 23.

the Adventist University of Africa (AUA ISERC) for approval before the data collection exercise starts.

In addition, the researcher strictly followed the design of the study from the beginning to the culmination of the study. Finally, the researcher avoided any kind of harm to the respondents by excluding their names in the analysis and final report so that no one can establish who reported what.

Operational Definition of Terms

In this section, several important concepts are explained as they are used throughout this research. The definitions cover terms such as community, discipleship, commitment, fellowship, and belonging. The researcher defines the terms based on knowledge from various sources.

Adventist Duration: This term is used to describe the duration a member has been an Adventist.

African Community: Community is the opposite of individualism. It is a system of life within the African worldview. According to Turaki,⁸ African Community is the opposite of the Western individualism. It as a system of life that cherishes the relationship with one's fellow humans through fellowship, sharing, and participation.

Belonging: A state whereby a member of the church feels being part and parcel of the church community.

Discipleship: Discipleship is the state of a person choosing to become a follower of a teacher, a religious leader or a political figure. In the context of this

⁸Yusufu Turaki, *Engaging Religions and Worldviews in Africa: A Christian Theological Method* (Cumbria, UK: HippoBooks, 2020).

study, discipleship derives from Matthew 28:18-20 where Christ required believers to participate in making other followers for Jesus.

District Secretary: This is a position of an elder which represents and assist the pastor in a district that has a number of churches. His role is similar to that of a first elder in a local church.

Dorcas Society Leader: This is a female leader who runs a society of women in the church

Fellowship: A state of members of the church meeting together to socialize and enjoy the time of being together in eating and supporting one another in various ways. According to Sigmund Freud, “In the African context, fellowship takes place as a communal activity, where the entire clan participates in sacrificial ceremonies that include sharing food and drink together.”⁹

Generational Adventists: These are Adventist church members who were born in Adventist environment and have continued to be Adventists in their local churches.

Kapata Mission District: This is a combination of churches in the SDA in Chipata Political district run by one pastor forming what is called a mission district.

Nc’wala: It is an event very February where the Ngoni community from Zambia’s Eastern Province holds this yearly traditional ceremony on the outskirts of Chipata.

Syncretism: A state of a believer of a certain religion practicing dual allegiance. According to Kraft, “syncretism is the mixing of Christian meanings with

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 141.

pagan meanings in such a way that the result is not really Christian, though it may on the surface look like Christianity.”¹⁰

Worldview: This term refers to people’s pattern of thinking about essential matters in life such as God, creation, existence and purpose of life.¹¹ The African Worldview includes perceptions regarding the origins, people and relations with the universe and with the supernatural.¹²

¹⁰ Charles Howard Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 260.

¹¹ Afe Adogame, “Cosmology,” *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, ed. Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009), 178.

¹² Ezra Chitando, “Religion and Peacebuilding in African Religious Studies and Theology: An Overview and Preliminary Evaluation,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Religion, Peacebuilding, and Development in Africa*, ed. Susan M. Kilonzo, Ezra Chitando, and Joram Tarusarira (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 50; Molefi Kete Asante “Animatism,” *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, ed. Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009), 57.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF TRADITIONAL CEREMONIES AND RITUALS

The Old and New Testaments give a perspective on traditional ceremonies, and how they apply to our daily lives today. We explored the biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies, using verses from the Old and New Testament to shed light on their significance, meaning, and importance in our lives.

The traditional means of commemorating these rites goes beyond the immediate family. They involve both the extended family and the immediate community.¹ Whether one is religious or not, this section promises to offer valuable insights that deepens appreciation for traditional ceremonies and provides with a deeper understanding of the spirituality behind them. The reason for this unique regulation is holiness: “I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy” (Lev 11:44, NIV).²

This passage delves into the significance of traditional ceremonies from a biblical perspective. By exploring passages from both the Old and New Testament, it uncovers valuable lessons and insights that shed light on the purpose and spiritual meaning behind these ceremonies.

¹ Jongimpi Papu, “Rites of Passage and Seventh-day Adventists in Southern Africa,” posted August 9, 2021, accessed 16 April 2024, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=EH18>.

² General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Leviticus 11,” accessed 16 April 2024, <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/leviticus-11/>.

Traditional Ceremonies in the Old Testament

Hebrew rituals and traditions underwent a gradual yet profound transformation, shifting from practices rooted in and reflecting the natural cycles, to viewing and interpreting their ceremonies through the lens of historical events.³ As stated by Angel Manuel Rodríguez in *Israelite Festivals and the Christian Church*, “The Passover was instituted shortly before the Exodus from Egypt took place (Exod 12).”⁴ In the Old Testament, traditional ceremonies held significant importance and were deeply rooted in the religious and cultural practices of ancient Israel. Even those who practiced syncretistic worship often acknowledged them rebellious, deviation from monotheism (Jdg 10:10-16).

These ceremonies were not merely rituals but held profound meanings and valuable lessons for the people of that time. Let’s explore some examples of traditional ceremonies in the Old Testament and see valuable lessons.

The Passover: Exodus 12:1-14

Passover is a major biblical event that plays a crucial role in comprehending traditional rituals. Described in Exodus 12:1-14, this section of scripture tells how the Israelites were freed from bondage in Egypt.⁵ Before the last plague struck, God told the Israelites to put lamb’s blood on their doorframes so that the Angel of Death would skip their houses and not harm their eldest sons.

³ Magdel Le Roux, “Celebrating the Feasts of the Old Testament in Christian Contexts,” *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 62, no. 3 (2009): 1001-1028, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/45681189_Celebrating_the_feasts_of_the_Old_Testament_in_Christian_contexts.

⁴ Angel Manuel Rodríguez, *Israelite Festivals and the Christian Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 1, <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Release-3.pdf>.

⁵ *Britannica*, s.v. “Passover,” accessed 23 April 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yom-Kippur>.

Before the last plague struck, God told the Israelites to put lamb's blood on their doorframes so that the Angel of Death would skip their houses and not harm their eldest sons. This demonstrates the importance of faith and trust in traditional ceremonies. Additionally, the Passover emphasizes the concept of redemption and deliverance. The Israelites were delivered from bondage and experienced freedom through God's intervention. This motif recurs across the Bible and reaches its peak in the New Testament with Jesus Christ's sacrificial act leading to final redemption. In addition, Passover symbolizes God's steadfastness and His intent to form a covenant with His followers. Through partaking in this ancient ritual, the faithful affirm both the lasting reliability of God's promises and His devotion to those He has chosen.

Exploring the biblical perspectives on the Passover provides valuable insights into the significance of traditional ceremonies. It encourages believers to reflect on their faith, obedience, and the redemptive work of God in their lives. Exploring the teachings found in both the Old and New Testaments enables individuals to more fully comprehend the spiritual and cultural significance that traditional ceremonies hold in their personal lives.

The Feast of Tabernacles: Leviticus 23:33-43

Sukkot, commonly referred to as the Feast of Tabernacles, is a major traditional festival that plays a vital role in biblical tradition.⁶ This celebration is mentioned in the book of Leviticus, specifically in Leviticus 23:33-43. It is a time of remembrance and gratitude, where the Israelites were instructed to gather and dwell in temporary shelters or booths for a period of seven days.

⁶ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Leviticus 16:22," accessed 16 April 2024, <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/leviticus-1622/>.

Through this feast, the Old Testament provides valuable lessons on the significance of gratitude, humility, and reliance on God. It teaches man's needs to appreciate the blessings received and trust in God's provision, even in times of uncertainty. The temporary nature of the booths reminds man of the impermanence of earthly possessions and the importance of focusing on eternal values.

The Gospel of John in the New Testament mentions the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus Himself participated in this celebration and used it as an opportunity to teach important spiritual truths. In John 7:37-38, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

By referencing the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus connected the physical act of drawing water during the feast to the spiritual concept of finding true fulfilment and satisfaction in Him.⁷ He revealed Himself as the ultimate source of living water, offering eternal life and spiritual nourishment to all who believe in Him. As we explore the biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies, the Feast of Tabernacles stands as a testimony to the faithfulness of God and the timeless lessons learnt from the Old and New Testament. He presented Himself as the supreme wellspring of living water, granting everlasting life and spiritual fulfilment to everyone who places their faith in Him.

The Day of Atonement: Leviticus 16:1-34

Yom Kippur, which is referred to as the Day of Atonement, holds great significance in the biblical context. It is a solemn occasion observed by the Jewish community, symbolizing repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God.

⁷ Ryan S. Gardner, "Jesus Christ and the Feast of Tabernacles," *Religious Educator* 13, no. 3 (2012): 109-127.

Leviticus 16:1-34 provides a detailed account of the rituals and practices associated with this sacred day.

This excerpt highlights the detailed preparations required of the high priest prior to entering the Holy of Holies, the most sacred area within the tabernacle or temple. Before acting as an intermediary for the people of Israel, the high priest was obligated to purify himself and seek atonement for his own transgressions. This emphasizes the importance of personal purity and self-reflection before seeking forgiveness and reconciliation.

This passage highlights the careful preparations required of the high priest prior to entering the Holy of Holies, the most sacred area within the tabernacle or temple. Before acting as an intermediary for the people of Israel, the high priest was obligated to purify himself and seek forgiveness for his personal sins.⁸ This ritual symbolizes the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Within the New Testament, Jesus is frequently described as the Lamb of God, the one who removes the sins of humanity. By dying on the cross, he accomplished the definitive act of atonement, offering mankind the opportunity to restore their relationship with God.

The Day of Atonement teaches the importance of repentance, forgiveness, and seeking reconciliation. It reminds us of the need to acknowledge our sins, seek God's forgiveness, and strive for a renewed relationship with Him. This day's customs and observances highlight God's compassion and favor, emphasizing the significant sacrifice accomplished by Jesus Christ. The Day of Atonement provides deep understanding of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration, reinforcing for believers God's enduring love and His wish to renew His bond with humanity.

⁸ BibleProject, "What Is the Day of Atonement?" accessed 13 April 2024, <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/what-day-atonement/>.

Significance of Old Testament Ceremonies

Traditional ceremonies hold deep cultural and historical significance in many societies, often rooted in religious beliefs and practices. These principles shed light on the spiritual significance of these rituals and provide guidance for the daily lives of the people.

One of the key significances of these ceremonies is the importance of reverence and awe in approaching worship and rituals. In the Old Testament, examples of elaborate and sacred ceremonies, such as the dedication of the temple and the consecration of priests are clearly seen. These ceremonies were marked by meticulous attention to detail, offering sacrifices, and observing sacred rituals prescribed by God.

Through these ceremonies, the significance of approaching God with humility, respect, and a heart filled with reverence is clearly spelt out. They remind believers that worship should not be taken lightly, but rather be a sincere and intentional act of devotion.

Furthermore, these ceremonies also teach about the power of symbolism and the use of physical elements to convey spiritual truths. According to the New Testament, it was Jesus who established the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, each using physical elements such as water, bread, and wine.

These rituals help to grasp profound spiritual truths and deepen an understanding of faith. Moreover, these ceremonies emphasize the communal aspect of worship and the importance of coming together as a body of believers. In the Old Testament, various ceremonies were often communal events, where people gathered to celebrate, offer sacrifices, and seek God's guidance.

Within the New Testament, there is an invitation for believers to assemble together as the body of Christ, or church which is made for the sole purpose to worship, fellowship, and encourage one another. These ceremonies teach that faith is not meant to be lived in isolation but in the context of a supportive and loving community. These biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies presents valuable lessons that transcend time and culture. The importance of reverence, the power of symbolism, and the significance of community are just a few of the timeless truths from these ancient rituals.

Traditional Ceremonies in the New Testament

The New Testament, the second part of the Bible, offers valuable insights into traditional ceremonies and their significance. While the Old Testament provides a rich foundation, the New Testament further expands on these practices and provides examples that offer valuable lessons for believers today. One prominent example of a traditional ceremony in the New Testament is the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, as described in Matthew 3:13-17. This event holds great significance as it marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It serves as a powerful demonstration of surrendering to God's will and publicly declaring one's faith.

Another traditional ceremony highlighted in the New Testament is the Last Supper, described in Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, and Luke 22:7-23. This ceremonial meal, shared by Jesus and His disciples, commemorated the Passover feast but took on a new meaning. During this significant event, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist, emphasizing the importance of remembering His sacrifice and the establishment of the new covenant.

These examples of traditional ceremonies in the New Testament hold valuable lessons for believers today. They teach the importance of obedience, surrender, and commitment to God. The baptism of Jesus reminds man of the significance of publicly declaring faith and acknowledging one's identity as follower of Christ. The Last Supper teaches about the power of remembrance and the sacramental nature of Christ's sacrifice. The New Testament refers to different types of tradition, endorsing certain ones while rejecting others.⁹ Exploring these traditional ceremonies in the New Testament allows believers to deepen their understanding of biblical practices and draw inspiration for a safe spiritual journey. By studying these examples and reflecting on the lessons they offer, it provides valuable insights into how traditional ceremonies can foster a deeper connection with God and strengthen faith.

Baptism: Matthew 3:13-17

Baptism holds a significant place in Christian traditions and is mentioned in various passages of the Bible. One such notable mention can be found in the book of Matthew, specifically in Matthew 3:13-17. This passage recounts the moment when Jesus himself was baptized by John the Baptist. In this powerful scene, Jesus approaches John, expressing his desire to be baptized. Despite initially feeling unworthy to baptize the Son of God, John obliges, understanding the importance of the act. As Jesus emerges from the water, the heavens open, and the Spirit of God descends like a dove, while a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17). From this biblical account, believers glean several lessons and insights on the significance of baptism. It serves as a public

⁹ W. A. Moats and J. A. Kinner, "Observations on Brilliant Green Agar with H₂S Indicator," *Applied and Environmental Microbiology* 31, no. 3 (March 1976): 69, <https://doi.org/10.1128/aem.31.3.380-384.1976>.

declaration of one's faith and commitment to follow Christ. Just as Jesus willingly participated in this sacred act, believers are called to embrace baptism as a symbol of their identity as children of God. Moreover, Matthew 3:13-17 highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in baptism. The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus signifies the empowering presence of God in the life of a believer. Through baptism, individuals are not only cleansed and forgiven of their sins but also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who guides, comforts, and empowers them on their spiritual journey.

This passage encourages believers to reflect on the significance of baptism and its connection to their personal faith. It reminds them that baptism is not merely a ritual or tradition but a profound spiritual experience that unites Christians with Christ and the larger community of believers. Matthew 3:13-17 serves as a foundational verse for understanding the importance and symbolism of baptism. It invites believers to consider the transformative power of this sacred act and encourages them to embrace it as a vital step in the journey of faith.

The Last Supper: Luke 22:7-23

Jesus serves as our ultimate example in intercessory prayer. He frequently withdrew to quiet places to pray, seeking God's strength to face each day's challenges.¹⁰ This kind of model led him to continued communion with God and his disciples were indoctrinated to daily communion as well. The Last Supper is an example that holds profound significance in Christian tradition, as it was the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples before his crucifixion.¹¹ In Luke 22:7-23, a detailed account of this sacred event is given, which has been memorialized

¹⁰ Mark Finley, *Revive US Again* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2010), 16.

¹¹ Lisa Loraine Baker, "The Last Supper - Bible Story," accessed 15 April 2024, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-stories/the-last-supper.html>.

throughout history in the practice of Holy Communion. According to Luke, Jesus and his disciples gathered to observe the Passover, an important Jewish celebration marking the Israelites' escape from Egyptian bondage. As they shared the meal, Jesus broke the bread after offering thanks, handed it to his disciples, and told them, "This represents my body, given for you; remember me when you do this." In the same way, he took the cup, expressed his gratitude, and declared, "This cup signifies the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you."

The sharing of bread and wine, a profound gesture, symbolizes both the sacrificial aspect of Jesus' forthcoming death and the creation of a new covenant linking God and humankind.¹² The Last Supper serves as a poignant reminder of Jesus' selfless love, his willingness to lay down his life for the forgiveness of sins. From a biblical perspective, the Last Supper offers several key lessons. Firstly, it emphasizes the importance of remembrance - Jesus urges his disciples to continue the practice of sharing bread and wine in remembrance of him. This act connects believers to the sacrificial love and redemption offered through Christ's death and resurrection.

Secondly, the Last Supper highlights the significance of fellowship and unity among believers. Jesus gathered with his disciples, fostering an atmosphere of togetherness and shared purpose. This serves as a reminder for Christians today to come together in community, supporting and encouraging one another in their faith journey.

¹² Jonathan Griffiths, "The Lord's Supper," accessed 21 April 2024, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-lords-supper/>.

Lastly, the Last Supper exemplifies humility and servant hood. Jesus, the Son of God, takes on the role of a servant by washing his disciples' feet, demonstrating the importance of humility and servitude in the Christian life.

The Last Supper stands as a powerful example of the profound spiritual lessons that can be gleaned from ancient traditions. It invites believers to reflect on the sacrificial love of Christ, the importance of community, and the call to humble service in the Christian faith.

The Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Communion, often referred to as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, is a central and meaningful ritual within Christian faith and worship. Its origins can be traced to scriptural foundations, notably found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

In this passage, the apostle Paul recounts the words of Jesus during the Last Supper, where He took bread and gave thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." He then took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." These verses highlight the importance of the Lord's Supper as a meaningful and symbolic act of remembering and commemorating the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It serves as a powerful reminder of His body broken and His blood shed for the forgiveness of sins.

The Lord's Supper holds deep spiritual significance for believers, as it signifies their unity with Christ and with one another. It is a time of reflection, gratitude, and humility, as Christians partake in the bread and the cup, representing the body and blood of Christ. Beyond its commemorative nature, the Lord's Supper also serves as a reminder of the future hope that Christians have in Christ's return. Paul states in verse 26, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you

proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." This highlights the anticipation of Christ's second coming and the eternal fellowship believers will have with Him.

As believers explore biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies, the Lord's Supper stands as a central and significant practice. It not only deepens their understanding of Christ's sacrifice but also strengthens their faith and unity within the body of believers. Through this sacred act, Christians are reminded of their redemption, their future hope, and the call to live out the teachings of Christ in their daily lives.

Significance of New Testament Ceremonies

The traditional ceremonies described in the Bible offer an abundance of valuable lessons that are still applicable to all generations. These ceremonies were not mere rituals; they were deeply rooted in spiritual significance and symbolism.

One crucial lesson depicted from these ceremonies is the importance of obedience and reverence towards God. In the Old Testament, for example, we see how the Israelites were given specific instructions on how to conduct various ceremonies and offerings. These instructions were not to be taken lightly but were meant to be followed diligently. This teaches us the significance of respecting God's commands and approaching Him with reverence.

Moreover, these ceremonies also highlight the concept of repentance and forgiveness. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were offered as a means of atonement for sins committed.¹³ This emphasizes the need for acknowledging wrongdoings, seeking forgiveness, and making amends. Applying this lesson means acknowledging

¹³ Nancy Guthrie, "The Provision of Sacrifice in the Old Testament," posted May 26, 2019, accessed 21 April 2024, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/the-provision-of-sacrifice-in-the-old-testament/>.

one's own mistakes and shortcomings, seeking forgiveness from those wronged, and striving to make positive changes thereafter.

Another significance derived from these ceremonies is the importance of community and unity. Many of these ceremonies were communal gatherings, where people would come together to worship and celebrate. This teaches the value of gathering with like-minded individuals, supporting one another, and fostering a sense of belonging. In the modern lives of people, prioritizing community involvement and finding ways to connect with others who share our beliefs and values is paramount. Additionally, these ceremonies also point to the concept of symbolism and foreshadowing. Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross fulfills the symbolism and purpose of the Old Testament sacrificial system. This teaches a profound message of redemption and salvation through faith in Christ. It reminds believers of the sacrificial love of God and encourages Christians to live a life devoted to Him.

In conclusion, exploring the biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies provides valuable lessons that are still relevant today. These lessons encompass obedience, repentance, forgiveness, community, and the profound symbolism of Christ's sacrifice. By studying and applying these teachings, a deeper understanding of our faith and strive to live a life aligned with biblical principles is gained.

The Purpose and Symbolism of Traditional Ceremonies in the Bible

Traditional ceremonies hold deep significance in the Bible, serving various purposes and carrying profound symbolism. These ceremonies were not merely empty rituals but held great meaning and conveyed important spiritual messages to the people.

In the Old Testament, traditional ceremonies held a central role in the religious practices of the Israelites. These ceremonies were often commanded by God Himself and served as a way for the people to connect with Him and express their devotion. These ceremonies encompassed a wide range of events, such as the Passover, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles, among others.

The sacrificial system was deeply intertwined with the biblical festivals. In fact, these sacrifices were fundamental to the festivals themselves, serving a purpose far beyond simple ritual or displays of religious devotion.¹⁴ The festivals were all marked by the happiness of presenting offerings and sacrifices to God. Leviticus 23 outlines these various festivals, explaining their intent: “These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you are to announce as holy gatherings for presenting offerings made by fire to the Lord” (verse 37, NIV).¹⁵ Therefore, each ceremony had its own purpose and symbolism. For instance, the Passover commemorated the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. It symbolized God’s deliverance and redemption, with the blood of the lamb being a significant representation of protection and salvation.¹⁶ The Day of Atonement, on the other hand, emphasized repentance and seeking forgiveness for sins, highlighting the importance of reconciliation with God and fellow human beings.

Sacrifice stands out as a central theme or principle throughout the Bible. Most scriptural discussions about sacrifices are found in the Old Testament, where animals

¹⁴ Jacques B. Doukhan, “Levitical Festivals - Part 1: Should We Observe the Levitical Festivals?: A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective - Part 1,” *Ministry*, April 2010, accessed 16 April 2024, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2010/04/levitical-festivals-1>.

¹⁵ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Reinventing Ancient Rituals?” accessed 16 April 2024, <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/reinventing-ancient-rituals/>.

¹⁶ Daniel Coulter, “The Passover: God’s Redemption and Judgment,” posted February 10, 2024, accessed 21 March 2024, <https://medium.com/@coulter.daniel/bible-study-exodus-12-a27b5c113b63>.

such as lambs, turtledoves, and pigeons were offered (see Lev 12:6). These rituals required the shedding of the animals' blood for the purposes of atonement and purification from sin practices that continued until the arrival of Jesus Christ. Since animal sacrifices could not permanently resolve people's sins, the process was repeated over time. On the other hand, the New Testament places emphasis on confessing sins and seeking forgiveness, underscoring that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross cleanses humanity's sins completely and finally, eliminating the need for recurring offerings. Healing is said to follow faith in Christ, as believers are healed through His suffering. Additionally, the Bible encourages individuals to dedicate themselves as living sacrifices, so they may resist following the corrupt patterns of the world.¹⁷

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ fulfilled many of the ceremonial practices of the Old Testament through His life, death, and resurrection. His sacrificial death on the cross became the ultimate fulfilment of the ceremonial sacrifices offered in the Old Testament. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, became the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, eliminating the need for the continual offering of animals. Despite the fulfilment of these traditional ceremonies through Christ, their significance remains relevant in understanding the spiritual lessons they convey. The symbolism and purpose behind these ceremonies teach about God's character, His redemptive plan, and the importance of faith, obedience, and repentance.

Exploring these biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies can deepen one's understanding of God's divine plan and His desire for a relationship with His people. By studying the lessons from the Old and New Testament, insights into the

¹⁷ Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, "The Bible and Akan Traditional Religious Values: A Search for Dialogue," *Journal of Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology* 2, no. 2 (2020): 78-86. <http://doi.org/10.38159/motbit.2020081>.

rich symbolism, meaning, and purpose behind these ceremonies are gained and applying them to the spiritual journey of a Christian is what brings salvation.

How Traditional Ceremonies Can Deepen Spiritual Connection

Traditional ceremonies have been an integral part of human culture for centuries, serving as a means to respect sacred rituals, celebrate milestones, and strengthen communal bonds. For instance, from weddings and baptisms to harvest festivals and religious observances, these ceremonies hold great significance in different cultures worldwide. Delving into the biblical perspectives of traditional ceremonies, man encounters valuable lessons that can deepen his spiritual connection. The Old and New Testaments provide insight into the importance of these ceremonies and how they can enhance the journey of faith.

In the Old Testament, numerous instances where God commanded the Israelites to observe specific ceremonies and rituals is clearly outlined. These ceremonies served as reminders of God's covenant with His people, offering opportunities for worship, repentance, and gratitude. For example, the Feast of Passover commemorated the Israelites' deliverance from slavery in Egypt, reinforcing their identity as God's chosen people.

Similarly, in the New Testament, we find Jesus participating in various traditional ceremonies, such as the Passover meal. Through His actions, Jesus not only recognised the customs and traditions of His time but also imparted deeper spiritual meanings. For instance, during the Last Supper, Jesus transformed the symbolism of the bread and wine, establishing the sacrament of Holy Communion as a way to remember His sacrifice and stay connected to Him. Traditional ceremonies can deepen our spiritual connection by reminding us of our roots, heritage, and the

faithfulness of God throughout history. They provide a tangible and communal experience that engages senses and emotions, allowing people to connect with the divine in a profound way.

Moreover, these ceremonies offer opportunities for reflection, introspection, and personal growth. They encourage followers to pause, contemplate, and realign their hearts with God's purpose for holy living. Whether it's through the purification rituals of baptism, the sacred vows of marriage, or the communal prayers of religious festivals, traditional ceremonies invite people to seek spiritual transformation and draw closer to God.

By engaging in these ceremonies with reverence, intentionality, and a sincere heart, man experience a deepening spiritual connection. They serve as reminders of faith, encourage unity within communities, and provide avenues for encountering the divine in everyday lives. It is expected that man approaches these sacred rituals with reverence, recognizing their power to strengthen spiritual connection and foster a deeper relationship with God.

Applying the Lessons from Biblical Ceremonies to Modern Lives

The Bible is a rich source of wisdom and guidance that can be applied to various aspects of peoples' lives, including traditional ceremonies. While some may view these ceremonies as mere rituals, there are valuable lessons drawn from them and apply to modern lives.

One of the key lessons derived from biblical ceremonies is the importance of reverence and intentionality. In the Old Testament, for example, it is observed how the Israelites approached their ceremonies with utmost respect and awe. They

understood that these rituals were not just empty traditions, but rather, they served as a means of connecting with God and expressing their devotion.

Similarly, in modern lives, whether it be weddings, baptisms, or other significant ceremonies, it's important to approach them with a sense of reverence and intentionality. Instead of merely going through the motions, usage of these occasions as opportunities for reflection, gratitude, and spiritual growth is highly important. By infusing meaning and purpose into these ceremonies provides spiritual nourishments, it deepens connection with the divine and enhance the significance of these important life events.

Another lesson found from biblical ceremonies is the power of community and unity. Throughout the Bible, we see how ceremonies were often communal gatherings, bringing people together to celebrate, worship, and seek God's guidance. These ceremonies served as reminders of the importance of fellowship and shared experiences in our spiritual journeys.

In the modern lives, prioritizing community and unity in our ceremonies is seen as an application of spiritual understanding of sacred things. Instead of approaching them as individualistic events, loved ones, friends, and fellow believers could be invited to join in these special moments. By fostering a sense of belonging and togetherness, does not only strengthen relationships but also create a space for shared spiritual growth and support.

Lastly, biblical ceremonies teach about the significance of symbolism and the power of visual reminders. From the Passover meal to the Last Supper, we see how the use of symbolic elements helped convey deeper spiritual truths and fostered a deeper understanding of God's love and redemption.

In the modern lives, incorporating symbolism into ceremonies as well helps believe stay connected with God. Whether it be through rituals, objects, or gestures, usage of these visual reminders to connect with the spiritual significance of the occasion creates a spiritual connection. By employing symbols that resonate with faith and values, create a more meaningful and impactful experience for followers and those participating in the ceremony.

In conclusion, exploring biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies provides with valuable lessons that can be applied to modern lives. By approaching ceremonies with reverence and intentionality, fostering community and unity, and incorporating symbolism, deepens spiritual connections, enhance the meaning of these significant events, and ultimately grow closer to God.

Cultivating a Meaningful and Authentic Spiritual Practice

Cultivating a meaningful and authentic spiritual practice is a vital aspect of exploring biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies. In both the Old and New Testaments, numerous references to the importance of sincere worship and devotion to God has been explained. One verse that encapsulates this idea is found in the book of Psalms: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (Ps 150:6). This passage highlights the invitation extended to all followers to participate in sincere worship, recognizing God’s majesty and showing thankfulness for His gifts.

Furthermore, the New Testament provides guidance on cultivating an authentic spiritual practice through the teachings of Jesus. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus instructs his disciples on the importance of genuine prayer: “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matt 6:6). This verse

highlights the significance of personal, intimate connection with God. It reminds believers that spiritual practice should stem from a place of sincerity and authenticity rather than seeking public recognition or approval.

To cultivate a meaningful spiritual practice, it is crucial to prioritize regular prayer, meditation, and reflection on Scripture. These practices enable man to deepen his relationship with God, seek His guidance, and align lives with His teachings. Additionally, engaging in acts of service and compassion towards others is another essential aspect of an authentic spiritual practice. The book of James in the New Testament emphasizes the importance of putting faith into action: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?” (Jas 2:14). By actively demonstrating our faith through acts of kindness, generosity, and love, not only glorify spiritual beliefs but also positively impact the lives of those around.

In conclusion, cultivating a meaningful and authentic spiritual practice involves sincere worship, personal connection with God, reflection on His Word, and active engagement in acts of service. By incorporating these elements into the followers’ life can deepen the understanding of biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies and truly live out the teachings of the Old and New Testaments.

Embracing Diversity and respecting Cultural Practices

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Bible is its recognition and celebration of diversity. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, examples of different cultural practices and traditions is being embraced and respected. These stories provide valuable lessons on how to navigate and appreciate the rich tapestry of cultures and traditions in our lives of people. In the Old Testament, we encounter

numerous accounts of God’s people encountering different cultures and their customs. For instance, the story of Ruth demonstrates the importance of embracing diversity and respecting cultural practices. Ruth, a Moabite woman, married into an Israelite family and wholeheartedly embraced their traditions and customs. Her willingness to adapt and honor new cultural identity played a significant role in her redemption story.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul also encourages believers to respect and honor diversity. In his letter to the Corinthians, he writes, “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews, I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law, I became as one under the law ... that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law ... that I might win those outside the law” (1 Cor 9:19-21). Paul’s words exemplify the importance of adapting to different cultures and customs in order to connect with and understand others.

In general, African cultures place great importance on rites of passage, which hold a key and central significance.¹⁸ As followers of Christ, a call to embrace diversity and respect cultural practices is made. This means recognizing that one’s way of worship and traditions may look different from those of others, but that doesn’t make them any less valid or valuable. It is through the lens of respect and understanding that we can learn from one another and grow in our faith.

In conclusion, exploring biblical perspectives on traditional ceremonies teaches us the importance of embracing diversity and respecting cultural practices. By following the examples set forth in the Old and New Testaments, it is possible to

¹⁸ Papu, “Rites of Passage and Seventh-day Adventists in Southern Africa.”

navigate through the complexities of cultural differences with grace and humility,
fostering unity and love among all people.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study delves into the intersection of traditional African worldviews, specifically focusing on the Ngoni people of Zambia, and the teachings of the SDA Church. It explores the Ngoni's traditional beliefs in ancestral spirits, magic, witchcraft, and the role of traditional healers, highlighting how these customs shape their daily lives and societal structures.

The study further examines the historical encounter between Adventist missionaries and African Traditional Religions, noting the initial misunderstandings and the challenges faced by converts attempting to reconcile their traditional beliefs with the new faith. Ultimately, the study aims to understand the cultural challenges that arise when the global identity of the Adventist Church interacts with local African customs and values, seeking to find ways to contextualize the Adventist message while acknowledging the deep-rooted significance of traditional ceremonies and beliefs within the Ngoni community.

World View

African cosmos is essentially spiritual in nature, they believe in magic and medicines which belong to the realm of spirit forces. ¹The Ngoni people live and believe in mediums and worship of the super forces in the spiritual world where every

¹ Kelvin Onongha and Bruce L. Bauer, *Dealing with the Demonic in the African Context* (Berrien Springs, MI: Lithotech Publishers, 2019), 37.

dead person joins the ancestors. Veneration of the dead and their activities takes a centre stage in their lives. Magic and witchcraft are part of their practices and these are abated by ancestors who protect the living. They also make rain for their farming activities and honor the gods of the harvest during Nc'wala ceremony. They do not accept any other god as they are already occupied without a vacuum.

The Ngoni People in Zambia

Originating from the Eastern province of Zambia, the Ngoni are a Bantu-speaking people. They have strong historical connections with the Bemba, whose roots trace back to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and are also closely linked to neighboring communities such as the Tumbuka and Nsenga. Like the Nsenga and Tumbuka, a portion of Chewa land was once dominated by the Ngoni, a group that descended from Zulu or Natal/Transvaal ancestors. Globally, the Ngoni are recognized chiefly for their masks, their clandestine societies named Nyau, and their methods of farming. Alongside groups such as the Nyanja, Tumbuka, Senga, Nsenga, and Mang'anja, the Ngoni are descendants of the Maravi (Malawi) people or empire.²

Originating from the Eastern province of Zambia, the Ngoni are a Bantu-speaking ethnic group. They are closely connected to neighboring communities such as the Tumbuka and Nsenga, and also share ancestral roots with the Bemba, whose origins trace back to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Like the Tumbuka and Nsenga, the Ngoni, who descended from Zulu or Natal/Transvaal ancestors, extended their influence over a limited part of Chewa land. The story of Mbona includes elements such as being conceived without a man, performing miracles like bringing

² Onongha and Bauer, *Dealing with the Demonic in the African Context*, 3.

rain during droughts, and being killed by his community. This narrative has evolved into a significant oral tradition.

Christianity, introduced to the Ngoni by Protestant and Catholic missionaries during the 1800s, is the predominant religion among them. While most Ngoni practice Christianity, they often retain elements of their indigenous faith. Their traditional beliefs recognize a single all-powerful deity, and place significant emphasis on venerating ancestral spirits and showing great reverence to the “living dead.”³ One key aspect of traditional religion is the all-male *Nyausecret* society, which performs traditional rites of passage.

Significant life milestones—like birth, marriage, and death—are observed by committed Roman Catholics and Protestants according to Christian customs. Nevertheless, for many in Ngoni communities, customary rites of passage remain central to the transition into adulthood. Typically, boys from the Ngoni group, usually aged twelve to sixteen, undergo initiation into a semi-secret organization known as Nyau, or “The Great Dance.”⁴

Boys spend roughly three days isolated in the bush, where they receive guidance and are taught discipline as part of their initiation. Girls aged nine to sixteen participate in chinamwali, a set of puberty and initiation ceremonies.⁵ The initiation ceremony might be organized by the church and include religious education, or it could be a customary rite that sometimes continues for two or three weeks. During

³ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London, England: Morrison and Gibb, 1971), 80.

⁴ Scott A. Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2012), 102.

⁵ E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM, 1980), 45.

this time, young girls receive instruction on traditional practices concerning sexuality and reproduction.

In this tradition, the village's elder women lead the young girls into the bush, where they are subjected to guidance and playful teasing. Afterward, every evening, they head back to the village to participate in celebrations with dancing and feasting. Nowadays, even in remote communities, church weddings are becoming more common. When finances allow, the groom appears in a Western suit, and the bride dons the conventional white gown and veil associated with Western ceremonies.⁶

Most Ngoni live in rural areas with limited access to healthcare, education, and electricity. Housing varies by location and materials; huts are typically circular or oblong with wattle walls and thatch roofs. Modern rectangular houses with bricks, cement, and iron sheets are also found. In urban areas like Chipata, housing is scarce, leading many to live in shanty towns and low-income homes.

Among the Ngoni, kinship is traced through the mother, with inheritance moving along the female line. Offspring belong to their mother's lineage and are primarily guided by their maternal uncles (the brothers of their mothers). Although individuals select their own spouses, a marriage is only officially acknowledged if the maternal uncles consent. The community experiences very high fertility, with the average woman typically having seven children over the course of her childbearing years.⁷

⁶ Mirjam de Bruijn and Rijk van Dijk, "Connecting and Change in African Society Example of Ethnography of Linking in Anthropology," *Anthropologica* 54, no. 1 (2012): 45-59.

⁷ Erling Bergea et al., "Lineage and Land Reforms in Malawi: Do Matrilineal and Patrilineal Landholding Systems Represent a Problem for Land Reforms in Malawi?" *Land Use Policy* 41 (2014): 61-69.

Seventh-day Adventist Church Views about African Customs and Values

The church can be compared to a garden filled with many different kinds of flowers, each possessing its unique characteristics. While these flowers may vary greatly from one another, every single one holds its own distinct worth.⁸ The SDAs recognize that, for Africans, traditional beliefs influence all aspects of life. Every action be it social, economic, political, or related to daily living—is undertaken with reference to spiritual reverence.⁹

Adventism Encounters African Traditional Religion

With the arrival of Adventist missionaries in Africa, numerous mission centers emerged throughout different regions of the continent. These Christian evangelists were part of the broader nineteenth-century imperial agenda encapsulated by the 3Cs: Christianity, Commerce, and Colonization. Seventh-day Adventist missionaries established themselves in Africa similarly to other Christian groups, particularly during the “Era of Missions,” which spanned roughly from 1800 to 1900.¹⁰

Nehemiah M. Nyaundi, in his article, “Adventists and African Traditional Religion” says that:

Missionaries had limited knowledge of Africa and its people, while Africans themselves were even less informed about the outsiders, including their motives for visiting. Adventist missionaries were seen by Africans much like any other missionaries or, more broadly, like all white foreigners. From the

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry* (London: Stanborough Press, 2011), 27.

⁹ Zetti Batista Ndola, “Adventists and African Traditional Practices in Tanzania,” published October 31, 2021, accessed 6 May 2024, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=GIBZ>.

¹⁰ Cornelius Matandiko, *Seventh-day Adventist in Zambia* (Lusaka, Zambia: Zambia Adventist Press, 2003), 67.

outset, Christian missionaries, influenced by biased reports and cultural prejudices from European travelers, perceived African Traditional Religion as something they needed to overcome. Academics suggest that this perspective stemmed from attitudes largely shaped by European anthropologists, ethnologists, and sociologists, among others.¹¹

Adventist missionaries, like other missionaries, regarded African Traditional Religion through a typically European perspective that labeled indigenous faiths with negative terms such as savage, heathen, satanic, and animistic.

Missionaries, with backgrounds rooted in Europe—known for its grand cathedrals, the prominence of clergy attire, Sunday church bells, and the King James Bible displayed on pulpits—often failed to understand African Traditional Religion, mistakenly perceiving it as a lack of religion. Since African Traditional Religion did not feature the visible symbols and artifacts familiar to them, missionaries quickly deemed it irrelevant or insignificant as a religion.¹² Yet, it is now understood that the perspective held by nineteenth-century missionaries regarding African Traditional Religion was highly inaccurate.

To Africans, SDA beliefs appeared as an unfamiliar faith with concepts that were not fully comprehended. The differences between the two religions were—and continue to be—pronounced. Additionally, it is reasonable to claim that, despite over two centuries of missionary efforts to suppress it, African Traditional Religion remains vibrant and resilient.¹³ We have no evidence to indicate that the relationship has significantly changed since then.

¹¹ Nehemiah M. Nyaundi, “Adventists and African Traditional Religion,” published January 29, 2020, accessed 6 May 2024, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=5I81>.

¹² J. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (Cape Town, South Africa: Waveland Press, 1915), 78.

¹³ Jele S. Mangany and Johan Buitendag, “A Critical Analysis on African Traditional Religion and the Trinity,” *HTS Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 1-13.

Adventist Teaching in Light of African Traditional Religious Beliefs

Kabwena states that the early Adventist missionaries adopted a prejudiced perspective of African Traditional Religion and aimed to instill in their converts an attitude of complete opposition toward it.¹⁴ Because they did not completely comprehend the doctrines of the new faith, Adventist converts quickly found that their traditional beliefs related more closely to their everyday lives than the limited understanding they had of the new religion. As a result, they frequently returned to their customary methods for addressing fundamental life issues.

They struggled to integrate new beliefs with their traditional religious practices. Despite converting, they were still included in village ceremonies due to birth-right and communal traditions. Often, converts participated in rituals because of associated taboos. In time, the missionaries realized that their converts were more drawn to traditional society, as many of them ended up returning to their original beliefs after being converted and baptized.¹⁵

Upon arrival at the mission village, converts were given a Christian name to foster a transformed sense of self. This practice proved effective, since being part of the settlement allowed stronger Christians to support those less firm in their beliefs, and it placed converts close to the missionary. Life in the mission village formed a distinct community nested within the original tribe, as the novel religious doctrines forged a different culture. After joining the settlement, converts were put through the

¹⁴ A. K. Kapungwe, "Traditional Cultural Practices of Imparting Sex Education and the Fight Against HIV/AIDS: The Case of Initiation Ceremonies for Girls in Zambia," *African Sociological Review* 7, no. 1 (2000): 35-52.

¹⁵ P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Ages of St Augustin* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 57.

challenging curriculum known at the time as the 3Rs—reading, writing, and arithmetic.¹⁶

An apt example of the African worldview appears during a discussion between Akunna and a Christian missionary in Chinua Achebe's novel. During their exchange, Akunna explains to Brown, "You claim there is a single Supreme God responsible for creating the heavens and the earth. We share this belief and refer to him as Chukwu. He is the creator of the world and other deities." While the missionary disputes the notion of the existence of "other gods," he nevertheless concedes that Chukwu—the Igbo term for the divine—is indeed the sole God who made the heavens and the earth.¹⁷

Traditional religious concepts often clashed with Adventist teachings. Practices like ancestor worship, magic, traditional medicine involving spirit rituals, and rites of passage conflicted with Adventist beliefs. For instance, traditional medicine required rituals and divination by soothsayers, while rites of passage involved practices like polygamy and purification rituals. Adventist teachings introduced significant changes, leading to conflicts.

Africa's Adventists have a deep commitment to, and a profound sense of ownership of, the church.¹⁸ Therefore, it is important to note that Africans living at the turn of the century, when Adventism was introduced, had their own complete way of life. The traditional African experience was self-sufficient both then and today. In

¹⁶ J. C. Coutts, *Our Faith and Theirs* (London, England: The Camp Field Press, 1983), 56.

¹⁷ J. F. Blaw, *Crossroads in Missions* (South Pasadena, CA: Watson & Pierce, 1989), 162.

¹⁸ Daniel Ganu, "Church, Culture, Identity: An African Perspective on Diversity and the Gospel," *Adventist Review*, February 2, 2021, accessed 2 April 2024, <https://adventistreview.org/magazine-article/2102-22/>.

each phase of life, individuals are bound by specific beliefs and customs. For Africans, life is seen as lacking meaning without these associated traditions and convictions.¹⁹

Many African Adventists continue to practice African Traditional Religion, even after conversion. This issue has led to membership terminations for those engaging in traditional beliefs. Prominent African scholars studied the impact of culture on the Adventist experience due to the coexistence of both religions.

The Cultural Challenges to the Adventist Church in Southern Africa

Rooted in its core beliefs, administrative structure, and missionary outlook, the SDA Church possesses a worldwide identity. Simultaneously, Adventists strive to adapt their message so it remains clear and meaningful within different local settings.²⁰

In certain regions, the swift expansion of the Church may require an increased level of cultural adaptation. Notably, the Gospel is introduced into existing cultures, transforming elements that conflict with Christian principles while also adopting cultural tools to articulate faith. Although encountering the potential danger of religious and cultural syncretism, this interaction is unavoidable; if it is properly managed, it can support the advancement of God's Kingdom.

Therefore, examining the Adventist presence in various locations should involve theological, ecclesiological, and missiological perspectives. While each of these areas is distinct, they are also interrelated and interchangeable. Additionally,

¹⁹ Anthony Chiorazzi, "The Spirituality of Africa," posted October 6, 2015, accessed 2 April 2024, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2015/10/the-spirituality-of-africa/>.

²⁰ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "How Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church Organized and Structured?" accessed 3 May 2024, <https://www.adventist.org/world-church/>.

considering sociological and anthropological factors can be valuable for comprehending the complex ways in which Adventism has become part of southern African culture.

African Customs and Values among the Ngoni

Some of the African customs and values among the Ngoni people of Kapata District include these discussed below.

Ancestral Spirits

Among the Ngoni, there is a widespread conviction that a person's life persists beyond death; individuals transform into spiritual entities, gaining qualities of everlasting life and timelessness. The spirits of ancestors refer to the souls of those who have passed away but were once living.²¹ According to Ngoni beliefs, when a person dies, their spirit continues to exist beyond the death of the body. Upon death, the spirit departs from the body, moving away like air or the wind, and attains a divine status, entering the realm of spirits. There, it becomes an ancestor and assumes a role within the ancestral spiritual order.²²

In Zambia, as in many parts of Africa, belief in spirits and an unseen spiritual realm is common. People generally differentiate between two main types of spirits: those originally created by God, and those originating from humans who have passed away.²³

²¹ C. Scott, *Natural Church Development in Traditional Africa: Practical Guide to a New Approach* (Moggerhanger, England: British Church Growth Association, 1996), 78.

²² J. Kangwa, "Reclaiming the Value of Indigenous Rites as a Strategy: A Gendered Analysis of Chisungu Initiation among the Chewa People of Zambia" (PhD diss., University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 2011), 87.

²³ Mbiti, *Introduction to Africa Religion*, 103.

Within Ngoni culture, ancestral spirits serve both to shield their community from threats like illness, drought, hunger, and sorcery, and to discipline those who violate established moral traditions.²⁴ When proper rituals are carried out by descendants, the Spirits maintain their connection with the living by appearing in dreams, manifesting in visions, or possessing individuals—a phenomenon that only a diviner can accurately interpret.

It is believed that after returning to the community, the ancestral spirit is seen as a benevolent protector for the family left behind.²⁵ According to tradition, spirit guardians possess authority over the well-being and destiny of their descendants. They play a vital role in uniting family members during rituals and maintaining familial harmony. In African beliefs, achieving health, wealth, and life's achievements requires respect for and submission to ancestral spirits. Consequently, illness is seen as a sign that the natural balance between the spiritual and human realms has been disrupted.²⁶

Without a doubt, ancestors hold the most significant place in African religion; they truly form the core of the spiritual realm in Africa. Klaus Nurnberger, in his book *The Living Dead and the Living God*, asserts that for authority to be effective, it needs to be present in lived experience.²⁷

In 1867, the renowned British explorer Sir Samuel Baker presented a paper concerning the religious beliefs of the Dinka and the Nuer to the London Ethnological

²⁴ Mbiti, *Introduction to Africa Religion*, 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁷ Klaus Nurnberger, *The Living Dead and the Living God: Christ and the Ancestors in a Changing Africa* (Pretoria, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2007), 37.

Society.²⁸ Baker claimed that these groups neither practiced worship or idolatry nor believed in a supreme being. He portrayed their intellect as shrouded in darkness, lacking even the slightest trace of superstition.²⁹ Baker, however, was merely reflecting the prevailing views of the era—an attitude that led Mbiti to lament how African religion has consistently suffered from "misinterpretation, misrepresentation and misunderstanding" over the course of history.³⁰

Witchcraft and Magic among the Ngoni

Among Africans, it is customary to have faith in the supernatural powers of magic and witchcraft. For the Ngoni people in particular, belief in witchcraft is strongly embedded in their mindset and still shapes their daily lives.³¹ Marwick, a researcher, conducted an investigation into magic and witchcraft, focusing on their roles within the unique social structure of the Ngoni's matrilineal society.³² He highlighted the connection between witchcraft and the social conflicts that exist within that specific system. Typically, magic is categorized as either 'good' or 'evil.'³³ He states that "society accepts and values the use of good magic." This mystical power is utilized by specialists—particularly medicine-men (ng'anga)—to serve and aid the community.

²⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 425.

²⁹ B. Carmody, *African Conversion* (Ndola, Zambia: Mission Press, 2004), 67.

³⁰ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 89.

³¹ Charles E. Van Engen, *Mission on the Way, Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 67.

³² J. Marwick, "Christianity in a New Key:" *New Voices and Vistas through Intercontinental Communication* (Gweru, Zambia: Mambo Press, 1996), 132.

³³ Mbiti, *Introduction to Africa Religion*, 79.

According to Mbiti, positive magic is employed to heal illnesses, prevent or lessen misfortunes, and to protect people from or neutralize harmful forces or witchcraft. In contrast, negative magic is based on the idea and practice of harnessing this power with the intention of causing injury or damage to individuals or their belongings.³⁴

The word ‘witchcraft’ refers to the wicked use of supernatural abilities, typically carried out in secrecy. Thus, Van Breugel defines a witch as someone who takes lives to consume human flesh.³⁵ Additionally, Van Breugel notes in his other work, *African Traditional Religion*, that the belief in witches consuming human flesh is common throughout Africa; however, it is evident that this refers to a form of spiritual consumption rather than a literal one.³⁶

People who practice magic are known as “sorcerers.” These individuals bring harm to society through the use of dangerous “medicine” and other harmful materials. Van Breugel concurs with Maboea, noting that sorcerers possess means by which they can kill from afar.³⁷ The Ngoni people explain suffering through witchcraft and magic, attributing evil to witches or sorcerers as the embodiment of human wickedness. People’s encounters with harm inflicted by others have prompted them to attribute much suffering and misfortune to enigmatic forces of evil. As a result, individuals have sought ways to shield themselves from, and find deliverance from, this malevolent power.³⁸

³⁴ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 14.

³⁵ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 34.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁸ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 67.

Ngoni Traditional Healers and Healing Methods

Ngoni traditional healers, due to their professional expertise, are both respected and sought out for their successful approaches to disease treatment. In the book *Persons in Community*, Lucinda Domoko Manda contributes a chapter called “Africa’s Healing Wisdom,” where she examines the significance of African traditional healthcare methods and systems. Her exploration focuses on how the ethics, worldview, and medical practices within traditional African culture aid women pursuing social, spiritual, and physical healing.³⁹

Ancestor Veneration

Every individual ultimately aims to enter the ancestral spirit realm, to be honored as an ancestor by future generations, and eventually experience reincarnation. Thus, ancestors are those who have attained the spirit world and are revered by their descendants.⁴⁰ They belong to the group of family elders whose responsibilities include blessing, safeguarding, and disciplining the family members. They take part in family assemblies, ceremonies, and ritual gatherings as representations of harmony, togetherness, and abundance in the family.

Rather than being objects of worship, ancestors are deeply honored as integral family members. Within the hierarchy, they are positioned just below the divinities.⁴¹ Ancestors serve as go-betweens connecting God and their family members.

³⁹ Lucinda Domoka Manda, “Africa’s Healing Wisdom: Spiritual and Ethical Values of Traditional African Healthcare Practices,” in *Persons in Community: African Ethics in a Global Culture*, ed. Ronald Nicolson (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press), 125-140.

⁴⁰ G. Mumba, *The Traditions of the Chewa People in Zambia* (New Delhi, India: GTM Publishers, 2002), 16.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

The Significance of Traditional Ceremonies

G. Mumba, in his book *The Traditions of the Chewa People in Zambia*, says that, “Tradition isn’t inherently negative. By bringing routine and order to our everyday actions, it allows us to maintain a link to our origins.”⁴² Therefore, while tradition provides valuable structure, routine, and a connection to heritage, it is crucial to critically evaluate traditions in light of evolving societal contexts and the ethical frameworks offered by Christian faith, ensuring they promote justice, compassion, and human flourishing rather than perpetuating harmful practices or inhibiting spiritual growth.

Views of Origin of Introduction of African Religion

Zvobgo points out that many Africans, particularly the elders, were reluctant to adopt the religion of the white man and did not rush into doing so.⁴³ Africans perceived the teachings of the SDA Church as an unfamiliar faith with underlying principles that were not entirely clear to them.⁴⁴ Because of this, SDAs in Africa recognize that Christianity has been perceived as a religion belonging to white people. This perception provided Africans with a reason to reject it, since a religion rooted in the West could not fully embrace African traditions and beliefs. As a result, many native Africans today dismiss Christianity, associating it with the customs and identity of white people and the Western values it upholds.

⁴² Mumba, *The Traditions of the Chewa People in Zambia*.

⁴³ Chengetai J. Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missionaries in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Zambia: Mambo Press, 1996), 9.

⁴⁴ Nyaundi, “Adventists and African Traditional Religion.”

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology under which this study takes place. This covers elements like the research approach, an overview of the study area, details about the population and sample selection, research tools used, measures for validity and reliability, methods for collecting data, procedures for analyzing the data, as well as ethical concerns.

Research Approach and Design

A research design serves as a framework or outline for how research is carried out. Nonetheless, Philipsen contends that it should not be viewed as a rigid set of instructions to follow precisely, but instead as a collection of guiding principles that help maintain progress along the proper path.¹ According to its definition, qualitative research involves exploring the characteristics of phenomena, such as their qualities, various forms, contexts of occurrence, and the viewpoints through which they can be understood. It does not, however, address aspects like their extent, frequency, or specific position within an objectively established sequence of cause and effect.²

¹ Asamoah, "The Bible and Akan Traditional Religious Values," 78-86; Arthur P. Bochner, "Notes toward an Ethics of Memory in Autoethnographic Inquiry," in *Ethical Futures in Qualitative Research: Decolonizing the Politics of Knowledge*, ed. Norman Denzin and Michael Giardina (London: Routledge, 2007), 197-208.

² Asamoah, "The Bible and Akan Traditional Religious Values," 78-86; Philipsen and Vernooij-Dassen, "Qualitative Research," 454-457.

This study employs a qualitative research approach specifically utilizing an ethnographic design to establish the relationship between the Ngoni's N'cwala ceremony and the SDA Church in Kapata. Ethnography allows for in-depth understanding of the cultural context and the lived experiences of individuals within that context.³ The researcher utilized participant observation to gain firsthand insights into the N'cwala ceremony, supplementing observations with semi-structured interviews.

Qualitative research seeks to thoroughly comprehend social phenomena within their real-life contexts. It emphasizes people's firsthand experiences as they interpret and create meaning in their everyday situations, centering its attention on understanding the reasons behind social phenomena rather than merely describing them.⁴ Rather than relying on logical or statistical approaches, qualitative researchers explore human experiences through a range of methods, including biography, case studies, historical analysis, discourse analysis, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology.

Population

According to 2022, census data, the Population of Chipata political district that hosts Kapata Mission is 19,693,423 people. 158,212 are male while 164,491 are female. From this group, 129,415 live in rural areas while 193,288 are in the urban

³ Jack Caulfield, "What Is Ethnography? | Definition, Guide & Examples," March 13, 2020, accessed 16 April 2024, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/ethnography/>.

⁴ Asamoah, "The Bible and Akan Traditional Religious Values," 78-86; Pritha Bhandari, "What Is Qualitative Research? | Methods & Examples," posted January 14, 2025, accessed 16 February 2025, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/>.

territory.⁵ The investigation took place in Kapata Mission district which has a total population of 2532 Adventists.

Sampling

Purposive sampling involves deliberately choosing participants according to specific traits, expertise, backgrounds, or other relevant factors.⁶ The study employed purposive sampling to select participants from both the SDA Church and the wider Kapata community. This method is particularly suited for qualitative research, enabling the selection of information-rich participants who can provide valuable insights into the research questions.

Health Liaison Librarians, in their article entitled, “LibGuides: Qualitative Study Design: Sampling,” says that, “Sampling involves selecting a subset from your population to study, allowing you to apply the findings to the population as a whole.”⁷ Twelve individuals were interviewed, divided into two focus groups of six participants each. One group comprised members of the SDA Church, including two youth (one male, one female), two senior adult Ngoni members (one male, one female with significant church involvement), and two church leaders (a District Secretary and a Dorcas Society leader).

The second group consisted of members from the broader Kapata community, encompassing two youth (one male, one female) who participate in the N’cwala

⁵ City Population, “Chipata (District, Zambia) - Population Statistics, Charts, Map and Location,” accessed 16 February 2025, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/zambia/admin/eastern/0302__chipata/.

⁶ National Center for State Courts, “Purposive and Convenience Sampling,” October 17, 2022, accessed 16 February 2025, <https://www.ncsc.org/consulting-and-research/areas-of-expertise/communications,-civics-and-disinformation/community-engagement/toolkit/purposive-and-convenience-sampling>.

⁷ Health Liaison Librarians, “LibGuides: Qualitative Study Design: Sampling,” accessed 5 February 2025, <https://deakin.libguides.com/qualitative-study-designs/sampling>.

dancing ceremony, two adults (one male, one female) who actively participate in the cultural ceremony, the local headman, and a community elder. This balanced representation ensured diverse perspectives and captures a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between the Nc'wala ceremony and religious beliefs.

Interviews

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative approach that allows researchers to explore a participant's attitudes and perceptions about particular subjects in detail.⁸ Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, allowing flexible conversations centred on their experiences. The interview guide targeted key themes based on research questions while fostering organic discussions through open-ended questions.

Audio recordings of the interviews were made and then transcribed word-for-word to ensure precise analysis of the data. The researcher remained neutral to minimize bias and create a trusting environment. All interviews were in Chinyanja or Ngoni with translation to English as needed for accurate interpretation. A total number of twelve participants were interviewed from two focus groups which includes six from each focus group.

Data Collection

According to Punch, data collection is the act of obtaining information for research purposes, or the act of assembling data intended to help answer research questions.⁹ Information was gathered using participant observation along with semi-

⁸ Carthy Heath, "Semi-Structured Interview: Explanation, Examples, & How-To," accessed 16 February 2025, <https://dovetail.com/research/semi-structured-interview/>.

⁹ Asamoah, "The Bible and Akan Traditional Religious Values," 78-86; Punch, *Introduction to Social Research*.

structured interviews. Participant observation involved attending and observing various aspects of the N’cwala ceremony, documenting key events and interactions, and taking field notes. This method provided context to the interview data and offered insights into the lived experience of N’cwala. Interviews were conducted individually to avoid group dynamics influencing responses and to ensure participant confidentiality. All interactions with participants adhered to strict ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. The data collection timeline was structured to ensure that data gathering occurred within a reasonable timeframe that did not disrupt the N’cwala ceremony.

Qualitative data collection methods aim mainly to obtain textual information for purposes like research and analysis, including thematic analysis. Frequently used approaches for collecting qualitative data during observations involve recording detailed field notes about what has been seen, heard, or encountered.¹⁰

Data Analysis

The data was examined through thematic analysis, a technique used to interpret qualitative information. This approach typically involves working with text-based materials like interview transcripts. By thoroughly reviewing the data, the researcher seeks to uncover recurring themes—such as repeated topics, notions, or patterns of meaning.¹¹ This approach involves meticulously reviewing the transcribed interviews and field notes to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to the research questions.

¹⁰ Bochner, “Notes toward an Ethics of Memory in Autoethnographic Inquiry,” 197-208.

¹¹ Jack Caulfield, “How to Do Thematic Analysis | Step-by-Step Guide & Examples,” September 6, 2019, accessed 20 February 2025, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>.

The researcher coded the data to identify key themes and then analyzed the frequency and significance of these themes. The analysis considered the context of responses within the broader cultural and religious framework of the study. Constant comparison throughout data analysis refined the themes and interpretations, ensuring that the analysis is rigorous, coherent, and contextually rich. This paper refers to the thematic analysis process as "systematic" due to its organized and step-by-step method for analyzing research data.¹²

Validation, Reliability, Triangulation

Validation

Member Checking: The researcher should share interview transcripts and/or preliminary interpretations with the participants themselves (both church members and community members) to ensure the interpretations accurately reflect their experiences, perspectives, and intentions. Also known as participant validation or respondent validation, it enhances the trustworthiness and authenticity of qualitative research findings.¹³ This helps to validate the researcher's understanding and minimizes misrepresentation.

For example, after transcribing an interview about an individual's struggle to balance Adventist beliefs with Nc'wala participation, the researcher would send the transcript back to the interviewee. They would then ask: "Does this transcript

¹² Muhammad Naeem et al., "A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 22 (2023): 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>.

¹³ Saul McLeod, "Member Checking in Qualitative Research," *Simply Psychology*, accessed 20 February 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387600910_Member_Checking_In_Qualitative_Research?channel=doi&linkId=67752554e74ca64e1f401cf5&showFulltext=true.

accurately reflect what you intended to communicate? Are there any points that need clarification or correction?”

Peer Review/Expert Consultation: The researcher consulted with missiologists, anthropologists familiar with *Zambian* culture, and/or theological experts to review the research design, data analysis, and interpretations. This helps to ensure the study’s rigor and validity from an academic perspective and provide feedback on the appropriateness of interpretations. The project advisors (Dr. Olaotse Gabasiane and Dr. John Shumba) fulfilled their roles.

Clarifying Researcher Bias: The researcher acknowledges a personal history related to the low spiritual engagement of the area of the study during an earlier evangelical campaign in the Reflexivity section. To counter any possible bias, the researcher provided a clear statement of their positionality and assumptions at the outset of the data analysis and interpretation. Explicitly acknowledging potential biases ensures transparency and allows readers to critically evaluate the researcher’s interpretations.

Reliability

For effective reliability, I did the following for the research to maintain a clear and detailed audit trail of the research process, including:

- Interview Protocols which used a semi-structured interview guide, but also recorded any deviations from the guide and the rationale behind those deviations.
- Coding Scheme which developed a detailed coding scheme or codebook that clearly defines the themes and sub-themes identified in the data. This scheme was applied consistently across all data sources. Include examples of data excerpts that exemplify each code.

- Data Analysis Process documented the steps taken during thematic analysis, including how themes were identified, refined, and related to the research questions.
- Thick Description which provided detailed and rich descriptions of the participants, their experiences, and the cultural context. Thick description helped to ensure that the research findings were grounded in the lived realities of the community and allowed readers to assess the transferability of the findings to other contexts.

Triangulation

For effective Data Triangulation, this study incorporates multiple data sources such as interviews with Adventist Church members, interviews with community members, and participant observation. The key is to explicitly compare and contrast the findings from these different sources.

- Do the themes emerging from the Adventist interviews corroborate or contradict the themes from the community interviews?
- Do the observations from the Nc’wala ceremony support or challenge the perspectives shared in the interviews?

When there were discrepancies, I explored the possible reasons for those discrepancies.

Methodological Triangulation in the data collected through interview was supplemented through participation observation during the annual Nc’wala ceremony. Detailed field notes were taken, capturing the sequence of events, the roles of participants, the symbolism involved, and any apparent impact on the attendees.

Theory Triangulation of the study already draws on missiological theory. By engaging with other relevant theoretical frameworks such as theories of cultural

adaptation, religious syncretism, or identity formation. The researcher further enriched the analysis and provided a more nuanced interpretation of the findings.

By implementing these strategies for validation, reliability, and triangulation, the researcher enhanced the quality, trustworthiness, and impact of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Research ethics protect the rights and well-being of participants, uphold the integrity of research findings, and contribute to the positive impact of research on individuals and society.¹⁴ Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection began, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study, their rights, and the potential benefits and risks involved. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, protecting their identities and sensitive information. All data were securely stored and handled in accordance with ethical research practices. The research proposal was submitted to the relevant ethics review board for approval prior to the commencement of the research. The researcher was mindful of the cultural sensitivity surrounding the N'cwala ceremony, respecting local traditions and customs at all times. The researcher's own positionality and potential biases were explicitly addressed in the research report, ensuring transparency and reflexive awareness.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the qualitative methodology that was employed to investigate the relationship between the Ngoni N'cwala ceremony and the SDA Church in Kapata. The study's ethnographic design, purposive sampling technique,

¹⁴ Enago Academy, "What Are the Ethical Considerations in Research Design?" posted December 26, 2023, accessed 23 February 2025, <https://www.enago.com/academy/what-are-the-ethical-considerations-in-research-design/>.

semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis provided a robust framework for gathering and interpreting data. Ethical considerations guided all aspects of the research, ensuring responsible and respectful engagement with the community. The next chapter presents the findings from the data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter analysed and present the research findings regarding the responses and concerns towards the Nc’wala traditional ceremony and rituals in the Kapata Mission District in Eastern Province, Zambia. The research was conducted using a interview developed by the researcher (Bright Hamuntili), who works for the Midlands East Zambia Conference of the SDA Church. The interview aimed to explore the implications of the Nc’wala ceremony and rituals on SDA religious paradigms and gather information on participants’ involvement in church programs.

Verbatim Report on Interviews Conducted on Church Members

This report narrates the insights and experiences shared by members of the SDA Church in Kapata, who participated in semi-structured interviews regarding their involvement in the Nc’wala ceremony and its implications on their religious paradigms. The group comprises two youth, two senior adult Ngoni members, and two church leaders.

Interview 1: Youth Male Participant (Aged 22)

The youth male respondent expressed that he has been a member of the SDA Church for approximately 10 years. Raised in a family that was not particularly strong in Adventist traditions, he found his way to the church through friends. He described

his level of involvement as regular; he attends church services and participates in youth activities.

When asked about the Nc'wala ceremony, he described it as an event that marks the beginning of the harvest season, characterized by traditional dances, rituals, and communal feasting. He was familiar with the ceremony, having participated twice, primarily in a support role for his family. He articulated the significance of the Nc'wala ceremony to him as a way of connecting with his cultural roots, although he feels a sense of conflict due to his church's teachings on cultural practices.

He stated, "I enjoy the Nc'wala, but I often think about how it aligns with what our church teaches about worship." He approaches this tension of Adventism and ancestral worship by prioritizing his Adventist beliefs while honoring family traditions, often seeking guidance from older church members on how to manage involvement in cultural events.

As a youth, he feels some pressure to participate due to family expectations but manages this by discussing his beliefs with his family, explaining why he might not fully engage in some activities. He concluded with insights on cultural sensitivity, noting that it's essential for the church to respect local traditions while upholding biblical principles.

Interview 2: Youth Female Participant (Aged 21)

The female youth respondent shared that she has been an Adventist for about 8 years, having been raised in an Adventist home. She identified her involvement as active, participating in youth groups and community service initiatives through the church.

Describing the Nc’wala ceremony, she acknowledged it as a vibrant celebration, rich in cultural heritage involving various rituals like blessings from elders and communal gatherings. Although she had not participated directly, she had attended the events as a spectator.

“The Nc’wala is important to my people,” she said, emphasizing the sense of community it fosters. For her, the challenge arises from the perceived conflict between Adventist belief and ancestral worship with her faith. She is thoughtful about her participation, explaining how she chooses to attend with a critical mindset, focusing on the aspects that promote unity rather than conflicting beliefs.

She articulated the significance of seeking advice from church leaders about how to approach traditional events, noting that the church encourages discussions on balancing cultural identity with religious beliefs. She reflected on cultural sensitivity, arguing that finding a middle ground of education between knowledge of Adventism belief and specified cultural participation without participation in ancestral worship is key to cherishing both cultural heritage and faith.

Interview 3: Senior Adult Male Participant

The senior adult male respondent has been a member of the SDA Church for over 35 years and was raised in a strong Adventist family. His level of involvement is profound; he serves as a deacon within the church and is deeply respected by the community.

He provided thorough insights into the Nc’wala ceremony, explaining its rich traditions, including ritual sacrifices and cultural dances that signify gratitude for the harvest. He has participated in the ceremony many times, and he considers it a significant communal event, although his approach has changed over recent years.

He confessed, “In my early days, I participated without questioning, but now I see the need to align my actions with my faith which makes me to decide between ancestral worship and God the creator of the universe.” He recognizes the importance of the ceremony but stresses the need for thoughtful engagement. He shared his experience of reconciling his Adventist principles with cultural practices through dialogue with church leaders and participation in church discussions.

His reflections extended to the advice he offers fellow church members, encouraging them to engage thoughtfully with traditions, highlighting the importance of understanding one’s faith and cultural practices, and finding ways to honor both.

Interview 4: Senior Adult Female Participant

This female respondent, active in the church for about 40 years, holds significant influence as a leader in the Dorcas Society. She shared her experiences as being “deeply embedded” in church activities and community service.

Describing the Nc’wala ceremony, she articulated its complex nature, involving not only celebration but also elements of spiritual significance of worshipping ancestors to bring prosperity and rains for the Ngoni people. She has participated multiple times, having even led community initiatives during the ceremony.

“When I partake in the Nc’wala, I do it with the understanding of my faith,” she explained, stating how she views the ceremony as an opportunity to connect with her heritage while being mindful of her spiritual commitments.

She expressed that meetings held by church leaders provide crucial insights into navigating these cultural intersections, emphasizing the need for the church to foster understanding and acceptance. Her perspective centres around the belief that

cultural practices of participating in ancestral worship should not conflict with spiritual beliefs in the power and existence of God but can coexist harmoniously with education and respect.

Interview 5: Church Leader - District Secretary

The District Secretary, after over 20 years in church leadership, articulated a robust understanding of the dynamics between the Nc’wala ceremony and Adventist teachings. Having grown up in an Adventist home, he described his role as one of a mediator between cultural expectations and church doctrines.

Discussing the Nc’wala ceremony, he noted its historical importance and the need for the church community to acknowledge it while providing spiritual guidance. He stated, “We cannot ignore the cultural identity of our members,” emphasizing the role of dialogue in understanding how to engage with such events.

He has witnessed conflicts within the church which compromises members to believe that there is nothing wrong to worship ancestors as we worship God as well, where some members feel pressured to conform to church teachings at the expense of spiritual worship of God. His approach has been to encourage open discussions during church sessions, allowing members to voice their concerns and find common ground.

He believes that cultural sensitivity is essential and advises church leaders to foster environments where cultural practices can be highlighted while promoting the principles of the Adventist faith. In closing, he urged fellow leaders to passionately work towards understanding and supporting their congregations in striking the right balance.

Interview 6: Church Leader - Dorcas Society Leader

The Dorcas Society leader, actively involved in church affairs for over 15 years, shared her insight into the complexities of navigating cultural rituals within the Adventist framework. Raised in a non-Adventist home, she embraced the faith later in life and has been a strong advocate for cultural awareness in the church.

Regarding the Nc’wala ceremony, she described it as a communal feast marked by deeper cultural and spiritual meanings to the cultural traditions and understanding of the N’cwala people. She often participates actively and influences her group’s approach to understanding it.

“Engagement with cultural practices doesn’t have to dilute our faith,” she remarked, encouraging her members to appreciate their heritage while adhering to the teachings of the Adventist Church. This approach has often helped her address concerns from church members who struggle with balancing cultural involvement of worshiping ancestors and Adventist faith adherence.

She highlighted the importance of fostering an atmosphere of cultural appreciation within the church, where teachings and traditions can coexist harmoniously. Her recommendation for church members involves seeking understanding first and being open to learning about their cultural practices, ultimately reinforcing their faith in the process.

Closing Remarks

The interviews reveal a nuanced relationship between SDA Church members in the Kapata Mission District and the Nc’wala ceremony. Participants, from youth to seniors and church leaders, connect deeply with their cultural heritage through the Nc’wala, honoring their Ngoni roots.

However, this connection often conflicts with their faith, leading to internal struggles. Dialogue and open communication within the church emerge as crucial. Members seek guidance from leaders to reconcile participation in Nc’wala with their religious beliefs. The need for cultural sensitivity within the church is also highlighted, advocating for understanding rather than rejecting local traditions. By fostering appreciation for culture, the church can help members balance heritage and faith, enriching their lives and strengthening the community.

Verbatim Report on Interviews Conducted in Kapata Community

Using purposeful sampling, I had the privilege of interviewing selected individuals from the Kapata community in Chipata, Zambia. The participants included two youth (one male, one female), two adults (one male, one female), the local headman, and a community elder. Each interview offered unique insights into the Nc’wala ceremony, its significance, and its relationship with the SDA Church.

Participant 1: Youth Male (Y1)

When asked about the Nc’wala ceremony, Y1 described it as a vibrant celebration of the Ngoni culture. “It’s the time of the year when we come together, dance, and give thanks for the harvest,” he explained. He emphasized the importance of the ceremony in reinforcing community bonds.

Regarding participation, Y1 shared, “I’ve been involved since I was a child, probably around 10 years now. My first memory is the excitement of dancing and the colourful attire.” For him, the significance of the Nc’wala ceremony lies in its celebration of Ngoni identity, stating, “It makes me feel connected to my roots.”

He described key rituals such as the thanksgiving offerings and the dancing, noting, “The dances are our way of honoring our ancestors.” Y1 believes the Nc’wala ceremony is crucial for the Ngoni identity and fosters a sense of belonging.

Y1 expressed some familiarity with the local SDA Church and remarked, “I’ve seen them around, and they seem nice.” However, he noted that among some community members, there are mixed feelings about Adventists participating in the Nc’wala. “Some say it’s not right, while others are more accepting.”

He mentioned knowing a few Adventists who participate in the ceremony, commenting, “They seem to manage it well; maybe it’s about having a personal conviction.” Y1 also recognized tensions of ancestral worship and what the Adventist worship of God and hoped they could be resolved through dialogue.

He observed that the community generally views Adventists positively, but there are concerns about their non-participation in cultural practices. “People fear losing their culture when others don’t engage,” he said.

Y1 characterized the religious landscape of Kapata as diverse, with various faiths coexisting. He underscored the importance of preserving Ngoni traditions, stating, “It’s vital for our identity.”

He articulated challenges with religious diversity, using the Nc’wala ceremony as an example. “It can create misunderstandings, but I think we can find common ground.” He suggested community dialogues as a way to bridge gaps.

Participant 2: Youth Female (Y2)

Y2 described the Nc’wala ceremony with enthusiasm, saying, “It’s a joyous occasion filled with food, music, and dance! It brings everyone together.” She noted her participation for about five years, emphasizing how she celebrates Ngoni culture.

“My earliest memory is dancing with my cousins; the excitement was contagious. It feels like a family reunion!” Y2 sees the ceremony as a vital part of her identity, explaining, “It signifies who we are as Ngoni people.”

She also highlighted rituals integral to the ceremony, stating, “The offerings to the ancestors are significant; they bless us for the coming year.” Y2 believes the Nc’wala ceremony is essential for maintaining community cohesion and strong cultural identity.

Y2 shared her impressions of the SDA Church, expressing some intrigue. “They’re different; they’re very committed to their beliefs.” She mentioned knowing Adventist friends who participate in the Nc’wala ceremony, saying, “They seem to juggle both worlds well.”

While acknowledging tensions of worship between ancestors and Adventism belief of God, she remarked, “Most Adventists I know, understand the cultural importance.” She observed some community scepticism about their participation, often stemming from misunderstandings about their beliefs.

Y2 viewed the religious dynamics in Kapata as rich and complex. “We have so many religions coexisting, but we also have our cultural values.” She stressed the importance of preserving Ngoni customs in a fast-changing world.

“Religious diversity can be challenging; sometimes it feels like a tug of war,” she admitted. However, she was optimistic about dialogue and education as pathways to mutual respect between different groups.

Participant 3: Adult Male (A1)

A1 echoed the sentiments of the youth about the Nc’wala ceremony being an important cultural event. “For us adults, it’s a time of reflection and gratitude. It’s

deeply rooted in our history,” he explained. He shared that he has been participating since childhood, with fond memories of the elaborate dancing and laughter.

He described the significance of the ceremony, saying, “It embodies our struggle and resilience as a community.” He detailed key rituals, such as the blessing of the fields, calling them a way to “connect with our ancestors and seek their guidance.” A1 emphasized that the Nc’wala ceremony reinforces the community’s identity, stating, “It’s our cultural backbone.”

A1 offered a balanced view of the SDAs, recognizing both strengths and challenges. “They are disciplined, and the community respects that,” he remarked. He knew of Adventists who participated, but also of those who refrained: “It can be tough for them; they want to honor their beliefs but also connect with their roots.”

He has witnessed some tension but believes it can be addressed through open dialogue. “We must understand each other better; respect is crucial.” He also described Kapata’s religious landscape as “a rich tapestry,” where diverse beliefs co-exist but also occasionally clash. He voiced out concerns about the preservation of Ngoni traditions amid growing religious diversity. He further believes interfaith dialogue could help build understanding, saying, “We must come together to share stories and traditions. It’s about unity.”

Participant 4: Adult Female (A2)

A2 expressed deep appreciation for the Nc’wala ceremony, referring to it as “our lifeblood.” She has participated for as long as she can remember, asserting, “It instils pride in our identity.”

She highlighted the significance of the ceremony, mentioning, “It is a way for our community to come together.” A2 passionately described the rituals involved, particularly the food offerings, highlighting their symbolic importance.

“For me, it is about honoring those who came before us and recognizing our place in the world,” she explained. A2 emphasized the importance of the Nc’wala ceremony as a means of fostering community and cultural identity.

Regarding the SDAs, A2 acknowledged a blend of views in the community. “Some see them as devoted members, others feel their absence at cultural events,” she stated. She expressed an understanding of Adventists who choose not to participate, believing it is a personal decision.

A2 noted that Adventists participate in the Nc’wala and manage to balance their faith and cultural worship of ancestors. She described Kapata’s religious dynamics as both respectful and tense, emphasizing the importance of Ngoni customs, including ancestral worship, for land and prosperity. She highlighted the enriching role of various beliefs in community life and suggested that education and shared experiences could bridge divides, advocating for mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

Participant 5: Local Headman

The headman articulated that the Nc’wala ceremony is an essential cultural event marked by gratitude and community unity. “It’s not just a celebration; it’s a reaffirmation of our identity as Ngoni,” he said, emphasizing how it brings people together from different walks of life.

He noted having taken part in the ceremony for many decades, recalling that, “My earliest memories are of the community gathering, young and old, sharing stories and traditions.” He elaborated on the significance of the ceremony for the Ngoni community. “It’s a moment where we all reconnect with our ancestry and reflect on the blessings we’ve received.” The headman identified key rituals, such as the traditional dances and the offerings, signifying respect toward ancestors and nature.

The headman expressed a moderate view towards the Adventist community. “They have a different approach to spirituality, but we cohabit this land,” he observed. He noted some Adventists around who engage positively in the Nc’wala ceremony but acknowledged the tensions that sometimes arise where expects people to participant in cultural worship but most of them shun these events with excuse that they don’t believe in these events.

He noted that the community often discusses the absence of some Adventists from cultural events, indicating a misunderstanding of their beliefs. The headman described the challenges of religious pluralism in Chipata, stating that it requires careful navigation. He stressed the importance of tradition in maintaining identity amidst rising religious diversity. He recommended that mutual respect should be the basis for coexistence and advocated for ongoing dialogue to understand different perspectives between the church and culture.

Participant 6: Community Elder

The elder passionately described the Nc’wala ceremony as essential to their identity, celebrating achievements and reflecting on their journey. His involvement spans decades, highlighting the ceremony’s role in strengthening community bonds and reaffirming identity through meaningful rituals and togetherness.

Regarding the SDA Church, the elder expressed respect for their beliefs but acknowledged the challenges regarding cultural participation. “They often find it difficult to reconcile their faith, which focuses solely on Godly worship, but ignore our traditional worship practices,” he noted. However, He happily recognized that there a few Adventists take part in the Nc’wala ceremony, noting, “Those who do manage to balance their faith and culture often become models of coexistence in the community.”

The elder expressed concern about the impact of religious diversity on Ngoni traditions. “We must remain vigilant in protecting our heritage,” he stated. He saw potential for dialogue and cooperation among different religious groups. “By coming together to share our stories and customs, we foster understanding and respect,” he concluded, reflecting on the possibilities that arise from embracing diversity.

Concluding Reflection

The interviews provided profound insights into the Nc’wala ceremony’s role within the Kapata community and the perspectives of both participants and the SDA Church. A recurring theme was the importance of dialogue and respect for both cultural heritage and religious beliefs in fostering a harmonious community. As the community navigates these dynamics, the potential for mutual understanding presents a pathway toward greater unity and coexistence.

Verbatim Analysis of Church Member Responses

Theme 1: Cultural Identity and Connection to the Nc’wala Ceremony

Evidence: All participants, regardless of age or leadership position, demonstrated awareness of the Nc’wala ceremony. The descriptions were consistently framed as a significant cultural event with rich traditions and communal importance. The Youth Male participant connected to his cultural roots, the Youth Female saw its importance to “my people”, the Senior Adult Male saw it as a “significant communal event”, the Senior Adult Female viewed it as part of their cultural and spiritual significance, and even the Church Leaders acknowledged its historical importance.

Analysis: This theme highlights the undeniable cultural significance of the Nc’wala ceremony for the SDA Church members in Kapata. The event isn’t just a historical relic but remains a living tradition that contributes to the collective identity

of the Ngoni members. It's a source of connection and belonging, even for those who have been integrated into the Adventist faith for extended periods.

Theme 2: Conflict Between Adventist Beliefs and Nc'wala Practices

Evidence: The “tension” between Adventist teachings and cultural practices associated with the Nc'wala was a recurring concern. The Youth Male respondent directly expressed this conflict. The Youth Female participant highlighted the perceived conflict between faith and ancestral worship. The Senior Adult Male confessed to questioning his participation in the ceremony after years of unquestioning involvement. The Senior Adult Female, and the Church Leaders acknowledged this spiritual significance.

Analysis: The core issue identified by these interviews is the conflict, specifically, with aspects of the Nc'wala. The participants' beliefs are rooted in the Adventist Church, and conflict arises when the cultural traditions intersect with these beliefs. This creates a difficult situation as members must weigh cultural heritage against spiritual beliefs.

Theme 3: Seeking Guidance and Dialogue Within the Church

Evidence: Participants across the board mentioned seeking advice from church leaders. The Youth Male respondent mentioned seeking guidance from older members. The Youth Female sought advice from church leaders. The Senior Adult Male reconciled through dialogue with church leaders. The Senior Adult Female noted the importance of meetings held by church leaders. The Church Leaders emphasized the need for dialogue and open discussion.

Analysis: This highlights the crucial role of the church as a support system in navigating this complex issue. Members are actively seeking guidance and a safe space to discuss their concerns. The church is not seen as an adversary, but rather as a potential resource for resolving the conflict between faith and cultural practice.

Theme 4: The Church's Role in Cultural Sensitivity and Understanding

Evidence: Many participants emphasized the need for cultural sensitivity within the church. The Youth Male participant noted it's essential for the church to respect local traditions. The Youth Female participant argued that finding a middle ground of education between knowledge of Adventism belief and specified cultural participation. The Senior Adult Female highlights the need for the church to foster understanding and acceptance. The Church Leaders believed cultural sensitivity is essential, as well as the importance of fostering an atmosphere of cultural appreciation within the church.

Analysis: The participants expressed a desire for the church to acknowledge and respect the cultural heritage of its members. This isn't simply about tolerating cultural practices, but actively seeking to understand them. Participants view that education of the tradition should be included within the church so that their congregations can strike the right balance between their faith and heritage.

Theme 5: Balancing Heritage and Faith through Modified Participation

Evidence: Participants discussed strategies for participating in the Nc'wala while maintaining their Adventist beliefs. The Youth Female attended the event with a "critical mindset," focusing on aspects that promote unity. The Senior Adult Male mentioned a need to engage thoughtfully with traditions, to understand their faith and

cultural practices. The Senior Adult Female participates with the understanding of her faith, and views the ceremony as a way to connect with her heritage while being mindful of her spiritual commitments. The Dorcas Society Leader encouraged her members to appreciate their heritage while adhering to the teachings of the Adventist Church.

Analysis: This theme reveals the agency of the individuals involved. Rather than choosing one extreme or the other, they actively seek to find a middle ground. This involves selectively participating in aspects of the Nc'wala that align with their values, modifying their approach to minimize conflicts, and actively seeking to maintain their faith. The key is that, rather than passive acceptance or outright rejection, they are engaging with their culture in a deliberate and thoughtful manner.

Verbatim Analysis of Community Member Responses

Thematic 1: The Significance of the Nc'wala Ceremony

Core Identity Marker: All participants, regardless of age or status, consistently described the Nc'wala ceremony as fundamental to their Ngoni identity. Phrases like “lifeblood,” “cultural backbone,” and “reaffirmation of our identity” underscore its central importance.

Community Cohesion: The ceremony is repeatedly emphasized as a unifying force, “bringing everyone together” (Y2, Headman) and “reinforcing community bonds” (Y1). It's seen as a time for reunion, shared experiences, and collective gratitude.

Ancestral Connection: The ceremony is intrinsically linked to honoring ancestors. Offerings, blessings, and dances are understood as ways to connect with and seek guidance from those who came before. (A1, Y2)

Harvest Celebration: Y1 explicitly states it is a time to give thanks for the harvest. Other participants mention reflection and gratitude which alludes to thankfulness for the earth's abundance.

Thematic 2: Perceptions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Generally Positive View: Participants often describe Adventists as “nice,” “disciplined,” and “devoted.” (Y1, A1, A2) There's a sense of respect for their commitment to their beliefs.

Concerns about Non-Participation: The primary tension arises from the perceived lack of Adventist involvement in the Nc'wala ceremony and other cultural practices. This absence is interpreted by some as a potential threat to the preservation of Ngoni traditions and raises fears of cultural loss.

Mixed Feelings Within the Community: While there's a general positivity, some community members express skepticism and even disapproval of Adventist non-participation, highlighting differing opinions on the compatibility of Adventist beliefs and Ngoni traditions.

Recognition of Individual Agency: Some participants (Y1, Y2, A2) acknowledge that individual Adventists may participate and successfully “juggle both worlds,” suggesting a degree of understanding and acceptance for those who find a balance between their faith and cultural heritage.

Differences in Religious Focus: The Elder highlighted that the church focuses solely on Godly worship but ignores the cultural worship practices that are part of culture identity.

Thematic 3: Navigating Religious Diversity and Cultural Preservation

Coexistence and Potential Conflict: Participants recognize Kapata as a religiously diverse community where different faiths coexist, but also acknowledge the potential for misunderstandings and conflict. (Y1, A1, A2, Headman, Elder)

Fear of Cultural Erosion: There's a palpable concern that increasing religious diversity could lead to the dilution or loss of Ngoni traditions. (Y1, A1, Elder)

Emphasis on Dialogue and Understanding: The most consistent recommendation across interviews is the need for open communication, dialogue, and education to bridge gaps between different religious and cultural groups. Interfaith dialogue and shared experiences are suggested as ways to foster mutual respect and understanding.

Importance of Respect: Respect is the key to coexistence (Headman) and understanding each other (A1).

Thematic 4: Balancing Faith and Culture - The Adventist Perspective (Implied)

Internal Struggle (Inferred): Although no Adventists were directly interviewed, the comments from other participants suggest that Adventists face an internal conflict between adhering to their religious beliefs (which may prohibit participation in certain cultural practices) and honoring their Ngoni heritage. This point is particularly clear when participants note that some Adventists find it "tough" or "difficult" to reconcile their faith and culture (A1, Elder).

Individual Solutions: The observation that some Adventists "manage it well" (Y1, Y2) implies that some individuals within the Adventist community have found ways to navigate this tension, perhaps by participating in aspects of the Nc'wala ceremony that don't directly contradict their religious principles.

Need for Clarification: The misunderstandings about Adventist beliefs suggest a need for clearer communication from the Adventist community about their reasons for non-participation and their views on cultural practices.

Thematic 5: The Headman as a Voice of Moderation and Unity

Emphasis on Coexistence: The Headman's perspective is particularly significant. He acknowledges the differing approaches to spirituality but stresses the importance of cohabitation and mutual respect.

Concern for Understanding: He highlights the community discussions regarding Adventist non-participation, indicating a desire for greater understanding of their beliefs.

Advocacy for Dialogue: He explicitly recommends ongoing dialogue to bridge perspectives and foster coexistence. This positions him as a key figure in promoting harmony within the community.

Conclusion of Thematic and Coding Analysis

The thematic analysis reveals divergent yet interconnected perspectives between church members and community members regarding the Nc'wala ceremony. While both groups acknowledge the significance of the ceremony, their interpretations and concerns differ significantly.

Below is Table 1 showing the comparisons between church members and the community in the responses to the interviews indicating similarities and differences.

Table 1. Comparative Perceptions of the Nc’wala Ceremony and Cultural Identity

No.	Theme	Church Members (Kapata Mission District)	Community Members (Chipata)	Comparison
1	Significance of Nc’wala	Undeniable cultural significance; source of connection and belonging; living tradition contributing to collective identity.	Fundamental to Ngoni identity; unifying force; reinforces community bonds; ancestral connection; harvest celebration.	Similarity: Both groups deeply value the Nc’wala ceremony, recognizing its central role in Ngoni culture and identity.
2	Perception of Adventist Church	Not directly addressed	Generally positive (nice, disciplined, devoted); concerns about non-participation; mixed feelings; respect for individual agency.	Difference: Community members focus on external perceptions; Adventists focus on internal tension between faith and cultural preservation.
3	Conflict/Tension	Conflict between Adventist beliefs and Nc’wala practices (e.g., ancestral worship); internal struggle reconciling faith and heritage.	Observed internal struggle for Adventists; difficulties reconciling faith and culture.	Similarity: Both acknowledge conflict, though Adventists experience it directly, while community members observe it externally.
4	Seeking Guidance/Dialogue	Active engagement with church leaders; church as a resource; importance of internal dialogue.	Emphasis on inter-group dialogue; shared experiences and understanding across cultural/religious lines.	Similarity: Dialogue is vital in both groups—internally for Adventists and across community boundaries for others.
5	Cultural Sensitivity	Explicit call for cultural sensitivity; importance of education to balance faith and heritage.	Not directly addressed, but implied through concerns about cultural erosion and need for respect.	Difference: Cultural sensitivity is an explicit need for Adventist members; implied concern in the broader community.
6	Balancing Faith & Culture	Selective participation; modifying engagement to minimize conflict; seeking middle ground.	Individual adaptation by Adventists; desire for clarity from the church on cultural stance.	Similarity: Both value balance, with an implicit call for greater openness and communication from the church.
7	Community Leadership	Not explicitly addressed	Headman as a voice of unity and coexistence; advocates for understanding and dialogue.	Difference: Community leadership plays a visible role in promoting harmony, a perspective not directly addressed by church members.

Overall Conclusion

Both groups recognize the need for dialogue and mutual respect to foster a harmonious community. Church members prioritize cultural sensitivity, advocating for an environment where cultural practices are respected without compromising faith. Community members emphasize open communication and initiatives that bridge cultural gaps between religious groups. The analysis stresses the importance of dialogue in the Kapata community to integrate cultural identity and religious beliefs harmoniously. Promoting understanding through dialogues, cultural exchange programs, and educational initiatives can help bridge these divides and create an inclusive environment.

Secure Maintenance of Project Records

The initial phase of the research focused on establishing robust project record maintenance and gathering preliminary data to inform the subsequent stages. A secure and organized system of a safe in my house with a flash drive for storing all project-related documents, interview transcripts, field notes, and consent forms was established, ensuring confidentiality and compliance with ethical guidelines. General feedback was actively sought through informal conversations with community members and church leaders to gain initial insights and refine research questions. This initial engagement proved vital in establishing rapport, and adjusting the planned research direction accordingly to ensure cultural sensitivity and ethical research practices.

Participant Observation

A significant component of the data collection involved participant observation during the annual Nc'wala ceremony, which took place in February 2024.

This was a crucial point. Despite a drought situation prevailing in the region at the time, an unexpected rainfall occurred on the final day of the Nc’wala ceremony. This rain was seen by some members of the community to impact their faith.

The researcher attended the Nc’wala ceremony, documenting the key rituals, interactions, and the overall atmosphere of the event. The researcher also captured the impact of the rainfall during the final day of the Nc’wala ceremony. The moment it rained after the chief drank the blood of bull, the people celebrated believing that their prayers had been answered. This celebration did not sit well among SDA members who do not believe in the ancestral worship.

Mission Strategy: Project Design and Implementation

Curriculum Design

Project Title: Bridging Faith and Culture: A Training Program for Seventh-day Adventists in the Kapata Mission District (see Appendix E)

Overall Goal: To equip Seventh-day Adventist Church members in the Kapata Mission District with the knowledge, understanding, and skills to navigate their cultural heritage, specifically the Nc’wala ceremony, in a way that is consistent with their faith, promotes unity within the church, and fosters positive relationships with the wider community.

Target Audience: All church members in the Kapata Mission District, with specific emphasis on youth, young adults, and church leaders.

Program Structure: This program is divided into three modules, each lasting one month (4 weeks each). Each module includes weekly 2-hour sessions incorporating various teaching methods.

Core Principles Guiding the Program

Biblical Foundation: All guidance and discussion must be rooted in solid Adventist theological principles.

Cultural Sensitivity: The program demonstrated respect for the Ngoni culture and traditions.

Contextualization: The program addressed the specific context of the Kapata Mission District and the lived experiences of its members.

Open Dialogue: The program created a safe space for open and honest discussions.

Practical Application: The program focused on providing practical guidance and tools that members can use in their daily lives.

Overall Timeline

Weeks 1-4: Module 1. Understanding the Nc'wala Ceremony and Adventist Beliefs (Month 1)

Weeks 5-8: Module 2. Navigating Cultural Identity and Adventist Faith (Month 2)

Weeks 9-12: Module 3. Building Bridges Within the Church and Community (Month 3)

Training of Church Members

Notification of Program Dates and Venue

To ensure maximum participation, church members were informed about the training programs through announcements during services and SMS messages. Dates and locations were chosen to suit participants' schedules, enhancing turnout and inclusivity. Churches involved included companies such as Chilumbe congregation,

Nkwenza congregation, Molozi congregation, and Chipata Main SDA Church, Hope Church, Chisitu Church, Maranatha Church, Chisangalalo Church, Mt. Moriah Church and Blessed Church each sending participants, totaling 200 people. The venue was Nkwenza congregation and Chilumbe congregation, with meetings held from the first Sunday of April to the last week of June.

Practical Outreach Ministry

A practical outreach ministry program was initiated to enhance the research and training efforts. Members of the church were motivated to partake in community service activities that showcased Adventist values while being mindful of cultural sensitivities. This program took place in July, following the training sessions. Initiatives included offering clean water, agricultural education, and health awareness to local populations. The objective was to foster trust and alleviate any unfavorable views of Adventists by showing genuine care and concern for the welfare of the community.

Project Implementation and Evaluation

The training program has been a valuable and necessary intervention in the Kapata Mission District. The research identified a clear need: Adventist church members were struggling to reconcile their cultural heritage, specifically the Nc'wala ceremony, with their religious beliefs. The program aimed to equip members with the knowledge, skills, and understanding to navigate this tension constructively.

How Training Was Conducted

Curriculum Design: The program was structured around three modules, each lasting one month.

Module 1: Focused on foundational understanding of both the Nc’wala ceremony and Adventist beliefs, identifying points of alignment and conflict.

Module 2: Equipped participants with strategies for navigating cultural identity and faith, while maintaining integrity.

Module 3: Empowered participants to become “bridge-builders” within the church and community, promoting understanding and respect.

Teaching Methods: Diverse methods were employed including lectures, small group discussions, debates, case studies, and role-playing. This variety likely helped cater to different learning styles and encourage active participation.

Resources: The program utilized relevant resources such as Bibles, the Adventist Church Manual, Ellen G. White writings, local cultural experts, and guest speakers.

Participation: The program was held with good amount participants from different churches.

Practical Outreach Ministry: The training efforts were boosted by the practical ministry. Initiatives included offering clean water, agricultural education, and health awareness to local populations

Feedback Received After Trainings

The feedback received after trainings based on the Analysis and Conclusion of Interviews. Here is a synthesis of what can be inferred about the feedback, based on the analysis provided:

Increased Understanding: The analysis of church member interviews suggests that the training helped them gain a deeper understanding of both the Nc’wala ceremony and their own Adventist beliefs. Participants were better able to identify

points of potential conflict and develop strategies to reconcile their faith with their cultural heritage.

Empowerment: The program appears to have empowered church members to actively engage with their culture in a more thoughtful and deliberate way. Rather than simply rejecting cultural practices outright, they were able to selectively participate in aspects that aligned with their values and modify their approach to minimize conflict.

Improved Communication: The emphasis on communication skills seems to have equipped participants to better articulate their beliefs to family members, friends, and community members. The training in active listening and conflict resolution likely helped them navigate difficult conversations and address misconceptions about Adventist beliefs.

Strengthened Community: The program appears to have fostered a greater sense of unity and support within the Adventist community. By providing a safe space for open discussion and sharing of experiences, the training helped members feel less isolated in their struggles and more connected to others who were facing similar challenges.

Enhanced Cultural Sensitivity: The participation of cultural experts and the emphasis on understanding Ngoni traditions likely increased the cultural sensitivity of church members. They developed a greater appreciation for the cultural significance of the Nc'wala ceremony and the importance of respecting local customs.

Positive Community Engagement: The practical outreach ministry was a good initiative in promoting Adventist values and building relationships with the wider community.

Desire for Continued Guidance: The recurring mention of seeking guidance from church leaders in the interviews underscores the need for ongoing support and dialogue within the church. The training program may have sparked a desire for continued learning and exploration of these complex issues.

Areas for Improvement (Inferred from Analysis)

Clarity in Communication: Based on what community members said, The responses also highlights a need for clearer communication from the Adventist community.

Targeted Follow-up: It would be beneficial to provide targeted follow-up support to those who continue to struggle with balancing their faith and cultural heritage.

Expanded Community Involvement: It is important to emphasize throughout all these initiatives that the church's primary allegiance is to God, calling people to commit themselves to Him as their primary allegiance. These practices may require thoughtful introspection, dialogue, and seeking guidance from religious leaders. Ultimately, each SDA must navigate their individual path, ensuring that their actions reflect their faith while respecting the cultural heritage of others.

Overall, the training program has been a positive and impactful intervention in the Kapata Mission District. By addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by Adventist church members in navigating their cultural heritage, the program helped to foster greater understanding, promote unity, and strengthen the community's ability to engage with the wider Ngoni society in a respectful and meaningful way.

Qualitative Evaluation Schedule (April - September 2024) (see Appendix F)

Overall Goal: To understand the impact of the “Balancing Faith and Culture” training program on church members in the Kapata Mission District, including changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and community engagement. The evaluation identified areas for program improvement and sustainability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of research findings concerning SDA perspectives on the Nc’wala ceremony in the Kapata Mission District. Interviews with church members and community members highlighted the cultural significance of the ceremony, the internal conflicts experienced by Adventists navigating their faith and heritage, and the critical role of dialogue and understanding within the church and the wider community.

The research led to the design and implementation of a training program aimed at equipping church members with the knowledge, skills, and cultural sensitivity needed to bridge faith and culture. Therefore, it is critical to consider the idea that understands your needs and convert your needs into objective or goals.¹ Initial feedback indicates that the program fostered increased understanding, empowerment, and improved communication, although continued guidance, clearer communication, and expanded community involvement are areas for future improvement.

¹ Mufungulwa Maurice Anakoka, *Professionalism in Literature Evangelism* (North West Province, South Africa: Mahikeng, 2019), 46.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This Master of Arts in Missiology project at Adventist University of Africa investigates the implications of the Nc’wala ceremony, a significant cultural and religious event for the Ngoni people, on the faith practices of SDAs within the Kapata Mission District of Zambia. The research uses qualitative methods (interviews, observations, and surveys) to explore the diverse responses of Kapata Adventists to the Nc’wala ceremony, ranging from rejection to accommodation. It analyzes the strategies used by Adventist leaders to navigate the tensions between maintaining doctrinal purity and respecting local cultural traditions. The study considers the theological implications of this interaction, seeking to understand how the church can balance cultural respect with core Christian beliefs. The study looks at the dynamics between African rituals and Christian practices to provide valuable insights for missiological theory and practice.

Conclusion

The research concludes that the interaction between the Nc’wala ceremony and Adventist faith practices presents both challenges and opportunities for the SDA Church in the Kapata Mission District. It highlights the need for a context-sensitive approach to missionary work that values local traditions while upholding core Christian beliefs. The study underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect in fostering effective and respectful engagement with local

customs. It offers a valuable case study for understanding the broader implications of cultural and religious intersections in missionary work.

Recommendations

1. **Promote Dialogue and Understanding:** Facilitate ongoing dialogue within the Kapata Adventist community about the Nc'wala ceremony, creating a safe space for members to share their concerns, experiences, and perspectives without judgment.
2. **Develop Context-Sensitive Missiological Approaches:** Encourage Adventist leaders and missionaries to adopt missiological strategies that are sensitive to the local Ngoni culture, traditions, and worldview, avoiding generalizations and stereotypes.
3. **Contextualize Adventist Teachings:** Offer guidance to Kapata Adventists on how to understand and apply core Christian beliefs in the context of the Nc'wala tradition, ensuring that their religious integrity is maintained. This could involve reinterpreting or adapting certain aspects of the Nc'wala ceremony to align with Adventist teachings.
4. **Encourage Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Provide cultural sensitivity training for Adventist leaders and members, enabling them to engage respectfully with local customs, including the Nc'wala ceremony. This training should focus on fostering mutual understanding and respect for Ngoni traditions and beliefs.
5. **Foster Mutual Respect and Collaboration:** Promote opportunities for Adventist and Ngoni leaders and members to engage in mutual understanding and respect, fostering a sense of peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

6. Conduct Further Research: Encourage additional research on the intersection of cultural and religious beliefs in missionary contexts.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

KAPATA PERMISSION LETTER

Midlands East Zambia Conference
Kabwe
hamuntilib@aua.ac.ke

1st November 2023

The Pastor,
Kapata Mission District
East Zambia Field
Chipata

Dear Pastor,

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KAPATA MISSION DISTRICT

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. My name is Bright Hamuntili, and I am currently employed by the Midlands East Zambia Conference as the Ministerial Secretary. I am writing to seek your permission and support for conducting research in the Kapata Mission District.

Firstly, I would like to provide some background information about myself. I am pursuing a Masters of Arts degree in Missiology at Adventist University of Africa in Kenya. As part of the requirements for the completion of my degree, I am required to conduct an in-depth research project on a topic of my choosing. After careful consideration, I have decided to explore the implications of the Nc'wala Ceremony rituals on Seventh-day Adventist religious paradigms.

The Nc'wala Ceremony is a significant cultural event celebrated by the Ngoni people in the Eastern Province of Zambia. This ceremony holds great cultural and traditional importance in the lives of the people in this region. As a religious scholar, it is crucial for me to understand how these cultural practices intertwine with the religious beliefs and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Researching the implications of the Nc'wala Ceremony rituals on Seventh-day Adventist religious paradigms will provide valuable insights into the ways in which cultural identity and traditional beliefs shape religious beliefs and practices. It will contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the interaction between culture and religion, and enable me to provide recommendations and insights for effective cross-cultural ministry.

I am specifically requesting permission to conduct my research in the Kapata Mission District, as it is known to have a significant Ngoni population, actively involved in the Nwala Ceremony. I intend to collect data through qualitative research methods such as interviews, observation, and analysis of relevant literature. Rest assured, I will fully

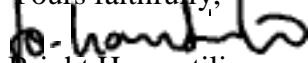
comply with the ethical guidelines set by my university and ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of all participants are respected.

I kindly request your assistance in facilitating access to the Kapata Mission District and its community members. It would be greatly appreciated if you could provide me with the necessary introductions, contacts, and any additional support required to make this research endeavor successful.

I firmly believe that this research project will not only deepen my understanding of the Ngoni culture and its influence on the religious practices of Seventh-day Adventists, but it will also shed light on strategies for effective evangelism and ministry in culturally diverse communities.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your positive response and appreciate any assistance you can provide. Should you have any further questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Your prompt response will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,



Bright Hamuntli

APPENDIX B

MIDLANDS EAST PERMISSION LETTER

Kapata Mission District
P. O. Box 510070
Chipata

5th January, 2024

Pastor B. Hamuntili
Midlands East Zambia Conference
Kabwe
Dear Pastor,

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KAPATA MISSION DISTRICT – JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

I am in receipt of your letter dated 3rd January, 2024, in which you have requested to conduct research in Kapata Mission District.

Your topic of study, *The Implications of the Nc’wala Ceremony Rituals on Seventh-day Adventist Religious Paradigms*, is interesting, and I believe that it will make an original contribution to research-based knowledge, especially in the area of missiology, which is quite a new field of study in Zambia.

I will give you the support you may need, especially that I am interested in missiological studies, since I am doing similar research among Chewa Seventh-day Adventists who converted from Chewa Traditional Religion to Adventism. Your study will complement mine, and I believe that I will personally benefit from it. The study is likely to benefit the Church in Eastern Zambia (and other regions) in the area of contextualization of the three angels’ messages.

Kapata Mission District is home to a number of Ngoni Seventh-day Adventists, some of whom have held positions in the Nc’wala Ceremony Organizing Committee. However, while Kapata Mission District will serve as the base for the research, we will need to visit Mwami Mission District and Chipata Central Mission District, both of which are very significant places for your study. I know where to get relevant data in both places since I was privileged to serve in both of them. Having been privileged to serve as Field President (2010-2015), I know many Ngoni Seventh-day Adventists who can give you first-hand information about the Nc’wala ceremony, and the impact it has had on Seventh-day Adventism in Eastern Zambia. We need to visit Nsingo Hall in Mwami Mission District and the Nch’wala Ceremony arena in Mtenguleni.

You are welcome to Kapata Mission District, and I wish you the very best in your studies.

I will be looking forward to receiving you, and conducting the study with you.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Dr. Emmanuel Mwale (Ph.D., MTh, BA, LLB, Dip. Ed)

DISTRICT PASTOR

APPENDIX C

CHURCH INTERVIEW

ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA

Hello!

I'm Bright Hamuntili and I work for the Midlands East Zambia Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Currently, I hold the position of District Pastor in Kabwe. As part of my Masters of Arts in Missiology degree program at Adventist University of Africa in Kenya, I am conducting a project. I would greatly appreciate your participation in this survey, which aims to gather information on your involvement in church programs. Rest assured, your responses will remain anonymous and your personal details will not be shared with anyone. If you would like to have a personal follow-up or need to interact with me in the future, you may provide your name here: _____

Note: This interview aims to gather information about the EXPLORING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE NCWALA CEREMONY RITUALS ON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST RELIGIOUS PARADIGMS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TRADITIONAL BELIEFS IN EASTERN PROVINCE OF ZAMBIA. Please indicate your response by selecting the appropriate option or providing the requested information. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will remain anonymous.

Understanding the Nc'wala Ceremony as Church Member

1. Kindly describe the Nc'wala ceremony.
2. How familiar are you with the Nc'wala ceremony?
3. Have you participated in it? If so, how many times and in what capacity?
4. What is the significance of the Nc'wala ceremony to you personally and to the Ngoni community?
5. What are its perceived benefits or purposes?
6. Are there specific elements of the Nc'wala ceremony that you find particularly meaningful or challenging? Please explain.

The Interplay Between Nc'wala and Adventist Faith Practices

1. Do you feel participation in the Nc'wala ceremony create any conflict with your Adventist faith?
2. If yes, kindly elaborate on any conflicts or tensions you experience.
3. How do you reconcile (or attempt to reconcile) your adherence to Adventist beliefs with your participation (or non-participation) in the Nc'wala ceremony? What strategies do you employ to navigate these potential conflicts?

4. Are there any Adventist teachings or principles that are particularly relevant to your understanding of or approach to the Nc'wala ceremony?
5. How do you think your Adventist faith community addresses or responds to the Nc'wala ceremony? Do church leaders offer guidance on participation? How is this guidance received?
6. Have you ever witnessed or experienced any conflict or tension within the Adventist community related to participation in the Nc'wala ceremony? If so, can you describe these experiences?

Section 4: Perspectives and Responses

1. What are your thoughts on the role of cultural sensitivity in balancing adherence to Adventist beliefs and participation in local cultural events such as the Nc'wala?
2. Do you think the Nc'wala ceremony could be adapted or reinterpreted in a way that would be more compatible with Adventist teachings? If so, how?
3. What advice would you offer to other Adventist members facing similar challenges related to participation in the Nc'wala ceremony?

Section 5: Closing Remarks

1. Is there anything else you would like to add about the relationship between your Adventist faith and the Nc'wala ceremony?

Thank you for taking the time to answer this interview!

APPENDIX D

COMMUNITY RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA

Hello!

I'm Bright Hamuntili and I work for the Midlands East Zambia Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Currently, I hold the position of District Pastor in Kabwe. As part of my Masters of Arts in Missiology degree program at Adventist University of Africa in Kenya, I am conducting a project. I would greatly appreciate your participation in this survey, which aims to gather information on your involvement in church programs. Rest assured, your responses will remain anonymous and your personal details will not be shared with anyone. If you would like to have a personal follow-up or need to interact with me in the future, you may provide your name here: _____

Note: This interview aims to gather information about the **EXPLORING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE NCWALA CEREMONY RITUALS ON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST RELIGIOUS PARADIGMS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TRADITIONAL BELIEFS IN EASTERN PROVINCE OF ZAMBIA**. Please indicate your response by selecting the appropriate option or providing the requested information. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will remain anonymous.

Section 1: Understanding the Nc'wala Ceremony

1. Can you describe the Nc'wala ceremony as you understand it? What are its most important aspects?
2. How long have you been participating in the Nc'wala ceremony? What are your earliest memories of it?
3. What is the significance of the Nc'wala ceremony for you personally and for the Ngoni community? What does it mean to you?
4. Describe the key rituals and practices involved in the Nc'wala ceremony. What is their purpose?
5. How important is the Nc'wala ceremony to the Ngoni identity and sense of community?
6. Are there any aspects of the Nc'wala ceremony that have changed over time? If so, how?

Section 2: Perceptions of Seventh-day Adventists and their Relationship with the Nc'wala Ceremony

1. Are you familiar with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chipata? What are your impressions of them?

2. Do you know any Seventh-day Adventists who participate in the Nc'wala ceremony? If so, how do they balance their faith with participation in the ceremony?
3. Have you observed any tension or conflict between Adventist beliefs and practices and the Nc'wala ceremony? Can you describe any specific instances?
4. What are the common perceptions within the community regarding the participation (or non-participation) of Seventh-day Adventists in the Nc'wala ceremony?
5. Do you think the Nc'wala ceremony poses challenges to the Adventist community? Why or why not?
6. What are the potential benefits or drawbacks of Seventh-day Adventists participating (or not participating) in the Nc'wala ceremony? Consider the impact on both the Adventist community and the wider Ngoni community.

Section 3: Community Dynamics and Religious Pluralism

1. How would you describe the religious landscape in Chipata? How do different religious groups interact with each other?
2. How important is the preservation of Ngoni traditions and customs to you?
3. How do you feel about the influence of different religions on the community? Are there any challenges or benefits associated with religious diversity?
4. Do you think there is a way for Seventh-day Adventists and the wider community to find common ground and mutual respect regarding the Nc'wala ceremony? How might this be achieved?
5. Are there any other cultural events or traditions that present similar challenges for religious groups in the community?

Concluding Questions

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about the Nc'wala ceremony, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, or their relationship in Chipata?
2. What advice would you give to Adventist leaders seeking to better understand and engage with the Nc'wala ceremony?

Thank you for taking the time to answer this interview!

APPENDIX E

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Module 1: Understanding the Nc’wala Ceremony and Adventist Beliefs (Month 1)

Overall Goal: To provide a foundational understanding of both the Nc’wala ceremony and Adventist beliefs, enabling participants to identify points of alignment and potential conflict.

Time: 2 hours per week.

WEEK	TARGET	ACTIVITY
Week 1 (Weeks 1)	Theme	Introduction and Overview of the Nc’wala Ceremony: (2 Hours)
	Content	History, origins, and evolution of the Nc’wala ceremony. Key rituals, symbols, and practices. The social and cultural significance of the ceremony.
	Method	Lecture (30 mins), presentation (30 mins), video clips of past Nc’wala ceremonies (30 mins), Q & A (30 mins).
	Bible References	Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 16
Week 2 (Week 2)	Theme	Exploring Adventist Beliefs on Worship and Ancestral Veneration: (2 Hours)
	Content	Adventist understanding of worship (Sabbath, prayer, tithe, offerings). The biblical perspective on ancestral veneration. Understanding Syncretism.
	Method	Bible study (45 mins), theological discussion (45 mins), Q&A (30 mins). Small group discussion (15 mins)
	Bible References	Exodus 20, Matthew 4:10, 1 Corinthians 10:14-22
Week 3 (Week 3)	Theme	Identifying Points of Alignment and Conflict: (2 Hours)
	Content	Facilitated discussion identifying points where the Nc’wala ceremony may align with or conflict with Adventist beliefs. Exploring concepts of cultural preservation vs. religious compromise.
	Method	Group discussion (45 mins), brainstorming (30 mins), SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of Nc’wala participation (45 mins).
Week 4 (Week 4)	Theme	Guest Speaker - Cultural Expert: (2 Hours)
	Content	A respected Ngoni elder or cultural expert presents on the meaning and purpose of the Nc’wala from a cultural perspective. Opportunity for participants to ask questions and learn more about the tradition.
	Method	Presentation (60 mins), Q&A session (60 mins).

Module 2: Navigating Cultural Identity and Adventist Faith (Month 2)

Overall Goal: To equip participants with strategies for navigating the complexities of their cultural identity and Adventist faith, while maintaining their integrity and promoting unity.

Time: 2 hours per week

WEEK	TARGET	ACTIVITY
Week 1 (Week 5)	Theme	Sharing Personal Experiences: (2 Hours)
	Content	Participants share their own experiences (positive and negative) with the Nc'wala ceremony. Focus on creating a safe and supportive environment.
	Method	Small group discussions (1 hour), storytelling (1 hour).
Week 2 (Week 6)	Theme	Biblical Principles for Cultural Engagement: (2 Hours)
	Content	Examining biblical examples of individuals navigating cultural differences (e.g., Daniel, Esther, Paul). Principles for discerning appropriate engagement with culture.
	Method	Bible study (45 mins), case studies (45 mins), theological reflection (30 mins).
	Bible References	Daniel 1-6, Esther 1-10, Acts 16:1-5, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23
Week 3 (Week 7)	Theme	Developing Strategies for Thoughtful Participation (or Non-Participation): (2 Hours)
	Content	Practical guidance for respectfully participating in the Nc'wala ceremony while maintaining Adventist beliefs. Alternatives for non-participation. How to politely decline participation in activities that conflict with faith.
	Method	Role-playing (45 mins), scenario planning (45 mins), group problem-solving (30 mins).
Week 4 (Week 8)	Theme	Guest Speaker - Successful Adventist Role Model: (2 Hours)
	Content	An Adventist from the Kapata area who has successfully navigated their cultural identity and Adventist faith shares their story and offers advice.
	Method	Presentation (60 mins), Q&A session (30 mins), mentoring (30 mins).

Module 3: Building Bridges Within the Church and Community (Month 3)

Overall Goal: To empower participants to become bridge-builders within the church and the wider community, promoting understanding, respect, and positive relationships.

Time: 2 hours per week

WEEK	TARGET	ACTIVITY
Week 1 (Week 9)	Theme	Effective Communication Skills: (2 Hours)
	Content	Learning techniques for communicating Adventist beliefs respectfully and effectively to family members, friends, and community members. Active listening skills.
	Method	Communication training (45 mins), role-playing (45 mins), conflict resolution exercises (30 mins).
Week 2 (Week 10)	Theme	Addressing Misconceptions and Stereotypes: (2 Hours)
	Content	Identifying common misconceptions about Adventist beliefs and the Nc'wala ceremony. Developing strategies for addressing these misconceptions in a constructive way.
	Method	Group discussion (45 mins), Q&A session with church leaders (45 mins), brainstorming (30 mins)
Week 3 (Week 11)	Theme	Community Outreach and Service Projects: (2 Hours)
	Content	Planning and implementing a culturally sensitive community service project that demonstrates Adventist values and builds relationships with the wider community.
	Example	Clean water initiative, agricultural training, health education workshop.
	Method	Brainstorming (30 mins), project planning (1 hour), community engagement (30 mins).
Week 4 (Week 12)	Theme	Celebration and Commitment: (2 Hours)
	Content	Celebrating the completion of the program and committing to continued growth and service. Sharing success stories from the community outreach project.
	Method	Testimony (30 mins), music (30 mins), prayer (30 mins), dedication ceremony (30 mins).

Teaching Methods to be used in the training:

- Lectures
- Small Group Discussions
- Debates
- Case studies
- Role Play

Resources:

- Bibles
- Adventist Church Manual
- Ellen G. White writings
- Local cultural experts
- Guest speakers
- Training materials (handouts, presentations)
Funding for community outreach projects

APPENDIX F
EVALUATIONS

Evaluation Template 1: Church Members

Purpose: To assess the effectiveness of the “Bridging Faith and Culture” training program from the perspective of church members who participated.

Section 1: Program Satisfaction & Perceived Value

1. Overall, how satisfied were you with the “Bridging Faith and Culture” training program?
 - a. Very Satisfied
 - b. Satisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Dissatisfied
 - e. Very Dissatisfied
 2. To what extent did the program meet your expectations?
 - a. Exceeded Expectations
 - b. Met Expectations
 - c. Partially Met Expectations
 - d. Did Not Meet Expectations
 3. How relevant was the program content to your experiences as a Seventh-day Adventist in the Kapata Mission District?
 - a. Very Relevant
 - b. Relevant
 - c. Somewhat Relevant
 - d. Not Relevant
 4. Please rate the following aspects of the program: (Scale: 1-5, 1=Poor, 5=Excellent)
 - a. Quality of Teaching: 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Usefulness of Resources: 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Opportunities for Discussion: 1 2 3 4 5
 - d. Overall Organization: 1 2 3 4 5
 5. What did you find most valuable about the training program? (Open-ended)
-
-

Section 3: Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors

1. To what extent has your understanding of the Nc’wala ceremony changed as a result of the training?
 - a. Significantly Increased
 - b. Increased
 - c. No Change

- d. Decreased
- 2. To what extent has your understanding of the Adventist Church's teachings on worship changed as a result of the training?
 - a. Significantly Increased
 - b. Increased
 - c. No Change
 - d. Decreased
- 3. How confident do you feel now in your ability to navigate cultural events like the Nc'wala ceremony in a way that aligns with your Adventist beliefs?
 - a. Very Confident
 - b. Confident
 - c. Somewhat Confident
 - d. Not Confident
- 4. Do you plan to participate in the Nc'wala ceremony in the future?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe
- 5. If yes, how will your participation differ from your previous involvement (if any)? (Open-ended)

- 6. Have you discussed your beliefs about the Nc'wala ceremony with family members or friends as a result of the training?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 7. If yes, what was the outcome of those discussions? (Open-ended)

- 8. Have you observed any changes in the way your church community addresses or responds to the Nc'wala ceremony since the training? (Open-ended)

Section 4: Community Engagement

- 1. Did you participate in any community service projects as part of the training program?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 2. If yes, describe your involvement and the impact it had on the community. (Open-ended)

- 3. Do you feel the training program has strengthened the relationship between the Adventist community and the wider Ngoni community?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
- 4. Please provide an example of the interaction between the Adventist and Ngoni community.

Section 5: Areas for Improvement and Sustainability

1. What aspects of the training program could be improved? (Open-ended)

2. What additional topics or resources would you like to see included in future training programs? (Open-ended)

3. How can the church sustain the positive impacts of this training program in the long term? (Open-ended)

4. What kind of training or activities that the Adventist Church can engage in with the Ngoni community?

- a. Educational training
- b. Practical ministry skills
- c. Agricultural training

5. Should the Adventist Church partner with the Nc’wala people in reaching out to the community?

Section 6: Open-Ended Feedback

1. Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the “Bridging Faith and Culture” training program?

Evaluation Template 2: Community Members

Purpose: To assess the impact of the “Bridging Faith and Culture” training program and the Adventist community’s engagement efforts from the perspective of community members who are not Seventh-day Adventists.

Section 1: Awareness and Perceptions of Adventist Community

1. How familiar are you with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Kapata area?

- a. Very Familiar
- b. Familiar
- c. Somewhat Familiar
- d. Not Familiar

2. Have you had any interactions with members of the Adventist Church?

- a. Yes
- b. No

3. If yes, please describe those interactions. (Open-ended)

4. What is your overall impression of the Adventist community? (Open-ended)

Section 2: Awareness of the “Bridging Faith and Culture” Program and Adventist Engagement

1. Are you aware of any recent efforts by the Adventist community to engage with the wider Ngoni community, such as the “Bridging Faith and Culture” program?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. If yes, how did you become aware of these efforts? (Open-ended)

3. Have you observed any changes in the Adventist community’s engagement with the Ngoni community since these efforts began? (Open-ended)

4. Did you get an opportunity to interact with members of the Adventist Church?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. Have you engaged in any Adventist’s teachings?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Please provide an example of when you engaged in a Church program.

Section 4: Impact on Understanding and Relationships

1. Do you feel that the Adventist community has a better understanding of the Nc’wala ceremony and Ngoni culture as a result of these efforts?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
2. Do you feel that the wider Ngoni community has a better understanding of Adventist beliefs and practices as a result of these efforts?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
3. Has the relationship between the Adventist community and the wider Ngoni community improved as a result of these efforts?
 - a. Significantly Improved
 - b. Improved
 - c. No Change
 - d. Worsened
4. Have the Adventist Church has been engaged in community building programs?

Section 5: Perspectives on the Nc’wala Ceremony and Religious Diversity

1. Do you believe it is possible for members of different religious groups to participate in the Nc’wala ceremony in a way that respects both their religious beliefs and Ngoni traditions? (Open-ended)

2. What are some of the challenges and opportunities associated with religious diversity in the Kapata area? (Open-ended)

3. What steps can be taken to promote greater understanding and respect between different religious and cultural groups in the community? (Open-ended)

4. In your personal experience, how can the Adventist Church support the community?
 - a. Food programs
 - b. Offer clean water
 - c. Medical assistance

Section 6: Suggestions for Future Engagement

1. What can the Adventist community do to better engage with and support the wider Ngoni community? (Open-ended)

2. What additional activities or initiatives would you like to see the Adventist community undertake? (Open-ended)

3. In what way can the Nc’wala community be involved in the community based outreach programs?

Section 7: Open-Ended Feedback

Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the Adventist community’s engagement with the wider Ngoni community or the “Bridging Faith and Culture” program?

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