

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Dissertation Abstracts

A BIBLICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSION: A CASE STUDY OF THE LOBI FUNERAL RITES IN BURKINA FASO

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Problem

Converts to Christianity in traditional contexts often face pressure to continue traditional rituals and practices which sometimes contain unbiblical elements. Non-selective performance of traditional practices can produce dual allegiance and syncretism. Such is the case with Lobi Seventh-day Adventists concerning their traditional funeral rites of passage. Some core elements of these traditional funeral rites, in which all community members are expected to fully participate, conflict with biblical teachings on the human condition after death.

Method

This dissertation starts by laying the theoretical and theological basis for addressing the problem. The dissertation then uses ethnographic research of funeral rites among the Lobi people of Burkina Faso to understand the biblical and missiological issues they raise. The process of data collection during my field research was based on observation of people's behavior at a funeral ceremony and on a purposeful sampling of 16 participants for interviews to have a personal and deeper understanding of the Lobi cultural and religious contexts in relation to funeral rites. I interviewed

three Lobi religious leaders, six Lobi Adventists who have taken part in traditional funeral rites before becoming Adventists, two Lobi Adventists who continue to take part in traditional funeral rites, four Lobi Adventists who are being pressured to participate in funeral rites, and a Lobi Catholic priest who has published on Lobi funeral rites.

Results

My findings broadened my understanding of the religious and sociocultural significance of the Lobi funeral rites as well as the challenges some traditional practices pose to those committed to being fully biblical Christians. A biblical and missiological framework was developed to address the challenges such traditional rites pose to Christian mission in general and to Seventh-day Adventist mission in particular.

Conclusion

Given that the number of converts to Christianity among the Lobi of Burkina Faso is only five percent of their population, the Joshua Project considers them to be an unreached people group. If more Lobi are to be won to Christ and become mature disciples, their real-life situations need to be understood and addressed both biblically and missiologically. A well-planned ethnographic study is helpful in reaching this goal. Biblical and missiological principles derived from such a process can also be generalized to other cross-cultural mission contexts.