
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 in order 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 took 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

The findings of this dissertation broaden the 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

Mission always takes place in particular contexts in which religion, culture, and many other factors play significant roles in people's approach to what matters to them. A thorough understanding of a people group's socio-

cultural practices is therefore a prerequisite to any effective cross-cultural communication of the gospel to them. By investigating the cultural meanings associated with one of the most important rites of passage among the Lobi in Burkina Faso, evaluating them in the light of Scripture, and proposing a biblical and missiological framework for responding to the challenge they pose to Christian mission, this research has the potential to make a significant contribution towards effective ministry and mission.