

**THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY AND MODERNITY ON THE BURIAL
CUSTOMS OF THE NDAU PEOPLE OF RUSITU CHIMANIMANI**

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ABSTRACT

The research focuses on the impact of Christianity and modernity on the Ndau burial customs of Rusitu, Chimanimani. This research was born out of the realisation that United Baptist Church Zimbabwe (UBCZ) members who profess to be Christians turn back to their traditional customs, in this case, burial customs. The research sought to find out the impact of Christianity and why in the first place the Ndau people were convinced by missionaries to convert to Christianity, abandoning their traditions. Data regarding Ndau people's understanding of burial customs was collected using in-depth semi-structured and focus group interviews. It was analysed using the discourse analysis. This research is qualitative in nature and the aim was to develop an understanding of how the world is constructed, in this case the Ndau world. The major findings showed that the Ndau were more attracted to the civilisation brought by the Europeans who brought the UBCZ in Rusitu than the Christian gospel message preached by the missionaries. Therefore, according to this research, UBCZ members go back to their burial traditions because the church has proved to be unable to meet the essential needs of the Ndau people. Recommendations are for the church leaders to help the church understand what it means to be Christian and how issues to deal with Ngozi (avenging spirits)/ misfortunes which are believed to come if they fail to bury their dead properly can be understood and dealt with, without practising religious syncretism.

Key Words: Syncretism, Burial Customs, Ndau People, African Tradition, Missionary, United Baptist Church Zimbabwe (UBCZ)