

**THE SIGNIFICANCE AND RESILIENCE OF THE  
CHINAMWALI INITIATION CEREMONY OF THE CHEWA  
PEOPLE OF KATETE DISTRICT OF ZAMBIA IN THE FACE  
OF SOCIAL CHANGE**

**BY**

**PEGGY MUTALE**

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fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Masters of  
Education in Religious studies**

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## DECLARATION

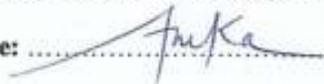
I, PEGGY MUTALE, Hereby declare that this work herein is my own , and that all the works of other persons used have duly been acknowledged and that the work has not been presented to University of Zambia before or any other institution for similar purposes.

Signature..... *Mutale* ..... Date *07.12.2017* .....

This dissertation by Peggy Mutale has been approved as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Master's Degree of Education in Religious Studies (MEd, RS) of the University of Zambia.

**EXAMINER 1**

Name: Prof. Austin Mumba Cheyeka

Signature:  .....

Date: 26/12/2017 .....

**EXAMINER 2**

Name: Dr. Melvin Simuchimba

Signature:  .....

Date: 7/12/17 .....

**EXAMINER 3**

Name: Dr. Judith Ilubala Ziwa

Signature:  .....

Date: 6/12/17 .....

## **DEDICATION**

This piece of work is dedicated to my dear husband Dennis Milanzi, lovely children Shuko, Natasha, Mwenje and Malumbo Milanzi, my mum Monica Musonda and my little sisters, my niece Miyoba and her daughter Taonga for their support.

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## ABSTRACT

The study explored the significance and resilience of Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa of Katete District. In doing so, there was deep interrogation in terms of roles, morals and why Chinamwali initiation has survived in the midst of social changes in the religious cosmology of the Chewa people of Katete district.

The study employed the qualitative approach and used the phenomenological design. This was chosen because of its appropriateness and effectiveness in unpacking the cultural related aspects of the group. Data collection protocol mainly involved the interview guide, focus group discussion guide and the observation checklist. The population comprised of 25 respondents of which 15 were initiators, 7 initiates and 3 headmen. Purposive sampling was used to identify initiators snowball sampling technique was used to identify initiates and extreme case was used to identify the headmen. Data was analyzed by using the emerging themes.

The study established that Chinamwali initiation ceremony plays a major role in the Chewa tradition. Its major role is to transmit values and traditions of the culture from generation to generation. Chinamwali is also believed to help girls in their moral behaviour in the sense that the girls learn to respect elders and how to behave in the community. The study also confirms that Chinamwali initiation has survived in the midst of social changes because it is part of the Chewa cultural heritage and it is a way of preserving social cohesion. Despite some modifications to certain rituals like the beating of drums instead of tins, using sketches instead of drawings, Chinamwali has remained the key mode of transiting cultural values from generation to generation.

The study recommends that, Chinamwali remains the main mode of value transmission from one generation to another and the Chewa religion should promote having two separate initiation ceremonies for puberty and marriage purposes. Bad practices like teaching girls at puberty on how to behave in marriage and providing a *fisi* (man to sleep with the girl) after initiation lessons should be discouraged through adequate sensitization.

**KEY WORDS:** Chinamwali, significance, Chewa, social changes.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>COPYRIGHT .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>LIST OF PICTURES.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Overview.....	1
1.2 Background to the Study.....	1
1.3 Problem Statement .....	5
1.4 Purpose of the Study .....	5
1.5 Study Objectives .....	5
1.5.1 General Objective .....	5
1.5.2 Specific Objectives .....	6
1.6 Research Questions.....	6
1.7 Significance of the study.....	6
1.8 Conceptual Framework.....	7
1.9 Theoretical Framework.....	7
1.10 Operational Definition of Terms.....	8
1.11 Structure of the Dissertation .....	9
<b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Overview.....	10
2.2 African Traditional Religion and the Initiation Rites .....	10
2.3 Studies on different Initiation Rites .....	14
2.4 Chinamwali as the Chewa initiation Rite for girls .....	26
2.5 Social Change .....	33
2.6 Summary .....	34

<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1 Overview.....	35
3.2 Research Design.....	35
3.3 Population .....	35
3.3.1 Target Population.....	36
3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure .....	36
3.4.1 Purposive sampling.....	36
3.4.2 Snowball sampling.....	37
3.4.3 Extreme case: .....	37
3.5 Data collection Methods and Instruments.....	37
3.5.1 Observation Check List:.....	38
3.5.2 One-On -One Interview .....	38
3.5.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide.....	38
3.6 Data Analysis .....	38
3.7 Validity and Reliability.....	39
3.7.1 Validity .....	39
3.7.2 Reliability.....	39
3.8 Ethical Consideration.....	39
3.9 Summary .....	40
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATIONS OF FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>41</b>
4.1 Overview.....	41
4.2 The role of Chinamwali in the religion of the Chewa people .....	41
4.3 Influence of Chinamwali on initiated girls’ moral behavior .....	44
4.4 Survival of Chinamwali in face of social changes .....	49
4.5 Summary .....	52
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>53</b>
5.1 Overview.....	53
5.2 The significance of Chinamwali in the religion of the Chewa.....	53
5.3 Influence of Chinamwali initiation on the initiated girls’ moral behavior.....	57
5.3.1 Moral behavior of initiated girls in the community .....	57
5.3.2 Moral behavior of initiated girls in marriage .....	59
5.4 Survival of the Chinamwali initiation in the face of social changes.....	60

5.4.1	Changes that have taken place in initiation rituals over time.....	61
5.4.2	Survival of the initiation in the midst of social changes: .....	62
5.5	Summary .....	63
<b>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>		<b>64</b>
6.1	Overview.....	64
6.2	Conclusions.....	64
6.3	Recommendations.....	65
6.4	Recommendation for further research.....	66
<b>REFERENCE.....</b>		<b>67</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Period of Seclusion.....	43
Figure 2	Initiators responses on the influence of Chinamwali on the girl’s moral behavior...	46
Figure 3	Chinamwali as part of tradition .....	50

## LIST OF PICTURES

Pictures 1	Namukungwi and the namwali .....	41
Pictures 2	Girl being instructed by the phungu .....	44
Pictures 3	Girls learning how to dance during initiation .....	<b>49</b>

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 In-depth interview questions for initiators .....	<b>72</b>
Appendix 2 Focus Group Discussion Guide for Initiates .....	<b>74</b>
Appendix 3 In- depth Interview Guide for Headmen .....	<b>76</b>
Appendix 4 Observation Checklist.....	<b>77</b>

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

This study focused on the Chinamwali initiation ceremony among the Chewe of Katete district. This chapter will specifically give the background to the study, the Statement of the problem of this research, Research questions, General objective, Research objectives and Significance of the study.

### 1.2 Background to the Study

In his journal article entitled '*What is African traditional religion?*' Awolalu (1976) indicates that,

*When we speak of African traditional religion, we mean the indigenous beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans which is being practiced today in various shades and intensities by a large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be Muslims and Christians.*

Awolalu's definition of African Tradition religion brings out the parameters in which the religion of the Chewa can be located. Moreover, the African traditional religion was a vehicle of teaching moral and spiritual values. From early ages children learnt moral and other societal values by way of traditional religion and other socialization mechanisms, (Mundia, 2015).

Mbiti: 1970; claimed that everybody is a religious carrier. Therefore, we have to study not only the beliefs concerning God and the spirit but also religious journey of the individual from birth to after physical death, and we have to study the person responsible for formal ritual ceremonies. What people do is motivated by what they believe and what they believe spring from what they do and experience. Therefore, belief and action in African tradition religion cannot be separated; they belong to the single whole.

The Chewa with their kindred Maravi the Nyanja and Man'ganja, are a matrilineal, uxorilocal people who share much of the Bantu linguistic and cultural stock, but have distinguished themselves historically from their neighbors by common language, custom and history. The basis of society was a matrilineage, the mbumba, within which the individual found both security and freedom. Free adult women and their brothers stood at the centre of a society system (a

matrilineal system), from which they benefited to a greater extent than did the junior men *akapolo*, (the bond).The senior free women were the guardians of the society's values through their control of the Chinamwali series of female rites of passage. The importance of these ceremonies was indicated by the fact that the public performances of these prestigious and renumerative ceremonies were limited to the village of the chief owning Mzinda, one of the basic attributes of the chiefly authority.

Religion like society was primarily lineage-oriented with the spiritual 'microcosm'. The primary forum for both "communion" and "explanation" prediction and control which Horton identifies as the function of religious theory. Central to this were the mizimu (singular, *mzimu*) the central spirit in common with the living members of the same lineage. The fullest affirmation of individuals' humanity was membership in matrilineage, and the worst possible punishment was banishment from it (Stuart 1979).

The Chewa people deeply acknowledge the existence of the supreme God *Chiuta*. He is understood among the Chewa people, as the Creator of the cosmos. Chiuta emerges as the creator, the source of life and the giver of rain and sun, the one who has been in existence before creation. Another central figure to the traditional Chewa religion was the serpent spirit known as Thunga, who had the ability to fly through the air to the sacred pools where the rain calling ceremony were taking place.

The Chewa also believe that the spirits of their dead relatives survive physical death and remain arrive. At death the spirit leaves the body and flees away like wind or air becomes god-like and goes to live in the spirit world. The ancestral spirits not only protect their people from danger as such disease, drought, famine and witchcraft, but also they punish people when they break traditional moral norms. When descendants perform appropriate ritual ceremonies and through them the *Azimu* will perpetuate their contact with the living through dreams, vision or by means of spirit possession of which only the divine can give an authoritative interpretation

Breugel (2001) asserts that the Chewa believe that just as God created the first ancestors and gave them the power to pass on life to their descendants, so also has he delegated them to look

after these descendants and to chastise them if need be. As such initiation is another way the Chewa people in their religion utilize to pass on life to their descendants.

Adolescent initiation ceremony was defined as some social recognition, in ceremonial form, of the transition from childhood into either adolescence or full adulthood. Ceremonies can take place during a rather long period in biological late childhood or adolescence - any time between 8 and 18 although majority of ceremonies for both sexes occur around puberty. A ceremony must include at least two participants, an initiate and an initiator.

Mtonga (1980) defined initiation ceremony as a form of rite of passage where individuals are transformed from one stage to another, experiencing some status change. This is said to be accompanied with a lot of drama and is characterized by various forms of symbols and rituals.

Additionally, Schlegel and Barry (1980) stated that initiation ceremony was a cultural experience shared by all children of the specified sex, uniformly changing them to the same adolescent or adult status. The ceremony thereby minimizes discrepancies based on wealth, social status, or other characteristics of the initiates or of their parents. Schlegel and Barry (ibid) further suggest that initiation ceremonies express and enhance social cohesiveness. The initiation ceremony also emphasizes sex differentiation. Introduction to the sex-typed category of man or women is typically a prominent feature of the ceremony. A ceremony for either sex serves as a marker for sex differentiation, whether or not there is a ceremony for the other sex. In the societies where both sexes are initiated, the ceremonies for boys and girls are separate and typically differ from each other in several attributes.

It was a known fact that in all cultures, the initiation ceremonies, processes for boys and girls are separate and both sexes are not allowed to share what they are taught despite the fact that generally society as a whole is always expectant to notice the difference after the ceremony.

In the Bemba culture, the girls' first period was solemnized by a rite in which she was doctored with medicine, ritually separated from fire and brought in contact with it again, taught the dangers associated with menstruation. Rasing (2010) contends that every culture has certain ideas about how a man and a woman should behave. This is often more an ideal than reality, but ideas and ways of how a woman should behave were passed on in a nuclear and extended family

and in society. The teaching culminates usually at puberty, in initiation rites for girls and in some ethnic groups also for boys. In the process of conducting the initia=

‘=tion ceremonies, rituals are part of the system and culture.

Similarly, the Chewa people of Katete district conduct rites for girls who reach puberty stage. A girl was instructed to give warning as soon as she experiences her first menstruation. She would tell her grandmother, elder sister, or some friend and the person in whom the girl confided had to tell the mother of the girl that her daughter had “grown up”( *kukula, kuthamsinkhu*) had “fallen down” ( *kugwa pansi*) or had “broken the reed” ( *kutyolabano*). The mother would then tell the husband that “our daughter has wronged us” (*mwana wathu watichimwira*) from then the parents would have to abstain from conjugal relations till after the seclusion (Breugel, 2001).

From the forgoing statement it is actually a mandate for a girl who reaches puberty to report herself to the parents or elders who in turn would ensure the rituals attached to puberty are observed.

According to Reis and Spierenburg states that (2000) Chinamwali, the female initiation ceremony, is the most prominent institution among the Chewa concerned with the fruition of life. In Chinamwali the *miyambo* plural of *mwambo* or customs and traditions are handed down and reformulated in the most explicit way. *Miyambo*, however are not taught discursively but performed and celebrated. Certain procedures informed by received wisdom, are also called *miyambo*, like the little sketches with negative moral outcome enacted by the participants of Chinamwali to instruct the young women about proper behavior. Chimamwali serves to teach the initiate about the behavior she is supposed to display as a grown up woman and full member of her community.

As indicated that initiation ceremonies are a vital part of the society in traditional life. Their main essence is to educate, socialize into adult roles and transmit morals and values of society. In the post-colonial era initiation ceremonies for both girls and boys in Africa have evolved due to the influence of changes relating to religion and modernity. Chinamwali is one of the Zambian initiation ceremonies for girls. It must be understood that the rites have undergone modifications in terms of how they are performed; some rituals have probably even been completely forgotten. In the African Traditional Religion of which the Chewa religion is part, it is said or believed that

indigenous knowledge is also religious knowledge. Therefore this research will focus on the Chinamwali initiation ceremony which is part of the indigenous knowledge, of its significance and resilience, in terms of its moral as well as cultural values and the current status of the practices in today's Chewa religion of the people of Katete District.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Initiation ceremonies are an integral part of the indigenous knowledge of the African people. The ceremonies served and continue to serve a vital purpose of educating the young as they grow from childhood to adulthood. Through the initiation ceremonies and related activities, the transmission of cultural and religious values is done. The Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa people of Katete District is one such ceremony. Since different kinds of rituals might have evolved with the passing of time and the social changes associated with modernity, we do not know how significant and resilient the Chinamwali initiation still is today, hence this study. The Chinamwali initiation ceremony should be explored to understand its significance and resilience in the traditional religion. While most research already undertaken focused on the effects of ritual practice as well as the act of Chinamwali in relation to Christianity, we do not know the extent to which Chinamwali contributes to the religion of the Chewa. There is need therefore for this study to provide more knowledge which may lead to more information and in turn the appreciation of traditional values by today's society. If this study is not carried out, there will be continued inadequate knowledge on Chinamwali and other initiation ceremonies, which may lead to lack of appreciation of traditional values and non promotion of the cultural heritage.

### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

To explore the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony of Chewa people of Katete District in the face of social changes.

### **1.5 Study Objectives**

The study was guided by following the general objective and specific objectives

#### **1.5.1 General Objective**

To establish how the Chinamwali initiation contributes to the transmission of religious and cultural values in the religion of the Chewa of Katete District.

### **1.5.2 Specific Objectives**

- i. To explain the significance of Chinamwali initiation ceremony among the Chewa people.
- ii. To determine how the Chinamwali as preparation for adult life, influences girls, moral behavior.
- iii. To establish why Chinamwali, as part of the Chewa religion, has survived in the midst of social change.

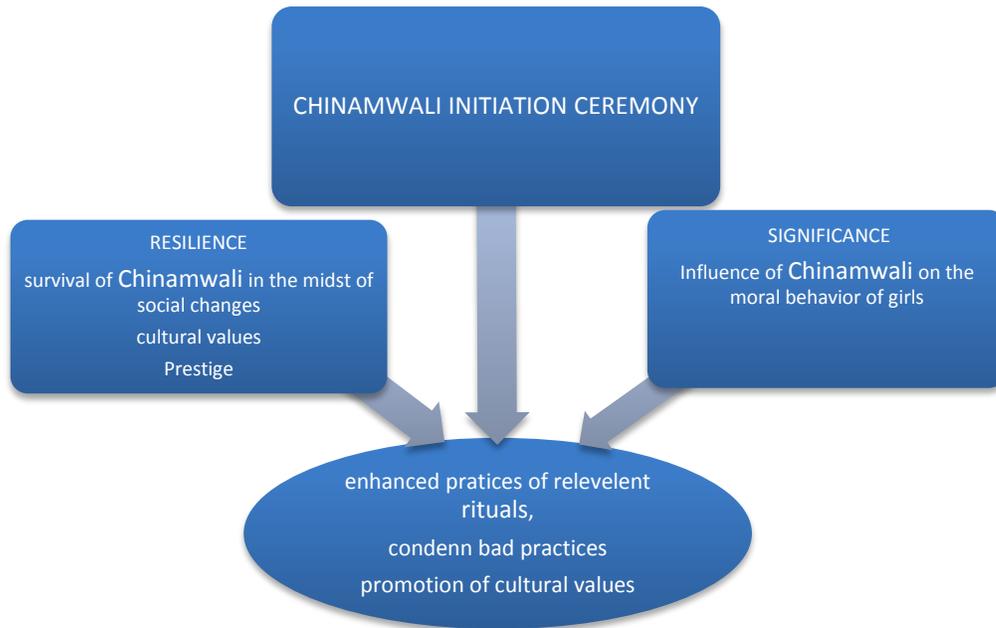
### **1.6 Research Questions**

- i. What is the significance of the Chinamwali initiation in the Chewa religion?
- ii. How does Chinamwali influence the moral behavior of the girl after initiation?
- iii. Why has Chinamwali as part of the religion of the Chewa survived in the face of social changes?

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

This study may benefit the students, researchers and the people of Katete District through its contribution to the body of Knowledge. It may also stimulate further research among upcoming researchers and other scholars in the field of religion and culture. The study may contribute to the promotion and appreciation of the traditional religious values as a result of the vital role played by the ceremony through the education of women and girls or transmission of religious and moral values.

## 1.8 Conceptual Framework



The study was conceptualized based on the current status of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony and how it affects the behavior of girls as well as significance and resilience in the face of social changes. The study encapsulate the institution of initiation rites and the rituals which accompany them within the Indigenous Knowledge Systems, (IKS), which contends that traditional institutions can be reclaimed and revitalized for transformational purposes through a process of verification and validation, and brought into the main stream to influence social, economic and technological development for the empowerment of indigenous people and the world at large, (Serote, 2012).

## 1.9 Theoretical Framework

A theory is a reasoned statement or group of statements which are supported by evidence, meant to explain phenomena. They are a systematic explanation of the relationship among phenomena. Theories provide a generalized explanation to an occurrence. Therefore, a theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories. It is a reasoned set of prepositions, which are derived from and supported by data or evidence (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

In this study the feminist cultural hermeneutics theory developed by Kanyoro (2002) was utilized. The feminist hermeneutics theory is used to approach African cultures with caution or

suspicion to identify the positive aspects and promote them. Mulenga (2013) contended that it is evident that African women's theologies empower African women to critique their culture from within and avoid imposition from without. Mulenga further stated that culture and ritual are crucial for challenging and changing culture and ritual. Feminist cultural hermeneutics therefore, seeks to critique and reclaim aspects of African culture (Mutambara, 2006:181). It seeks to expose harm and injustices that are in society. Putting culture to scrutiny in order to test its liberative potential is therefore necessary. Kanyoro (2002) had shown that while we affirm the need for reclaiming culture in the midst of social change and rational discourse, we should ensure that the cultures we reclaim are analyzed and are deemed worthy in terms of justice and support for the life and dignity of women. This was necessary for my study because it enabled the review of cultural practices and rituals to establish if their religious element, improve morality in girls and modifications in the context of social changes (Kanyoro 2002: 18, 78,). This helped the researcher in establishing whether the ceremony as part of the religion of the Chewa people of Katete District, contributes to the moral behavior of girls after initiation and establish its roles in the Chewa religion. Despite constant social change, Africans look to cultural resources for answers to their numerous questions. Therefore, building on indigenous resources that may empower women in the context of social changes can be a good starting point. Hence, a feminist cultural hermeneutics is important for this study as it is helpful in identifying and explaining cultural values which can empower women through ritual practice in initiation ceremonies.

### **1.10 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Significance:** The importance of something especially when it has an effect on what happens in the future. In this study significance is explained in terms of the role and influence of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony on the girls who experience it.

**Resilience:** the ability of something to return to its original shape after it has been bent, stretched or pressed. In this study resilience means the ability of the Chinamwali initiation ritual to survive despite some changes in the Chewa people's life due to the influences of education, religion and technology

**Chinamwali:** Girls initiation ceremony for the Chewa people in Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi

**Culture:** Customs and beliefs, art way of life of a particular society or social organization.

**Chewa religion:** The belief in the existence of a god or gods and the activities which are connected with the worship of them among the Chewa people.

**Social Change:** Any significant alteration over time in behavior patterns and cultural values and norms. In this study social change means the alterations in the way of the way of life of the Chewa people due to influences of modernity through the Chinamwali initiation ceremony.

### **1.11 Structure of the Dissertation**

The dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter provides the general background of the study which begins by stating the overview of the chapter, the background to the study and the statement of the problem. It further outlines the significance of the study, the purpose of the study, research objectives and research questions. The chapter also elucidates the significance of the study, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks as well as the operational definition of key terms.

The second chapter reviews the literature on the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa people of Katete District in the face of social changes. The literature is reviewed in accordance with themes beginning with the African tradition religion and initiation rites perspective then narrowing down to studies on different initiations rites and Chinamwali as the Chewa people's initiation rite for girls, literature on social change is also included. The last part outlines the summary of the literature.

The third chapter presents the methods that were utilized in the process of collecting and analyzing data. The chapter outlines the research design which was utilized in the research and it further gives information on the study population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments and data collection procedure. The final part of the chapter comprises the reliability and validity issues as well as data analysis, ethical consideration and the summary of the chapter.

The fourth chapter presents the findings of the study. It shows data collected through the interviews and the focus group discussions as well as the observations made by the researcher on the Chinamwali initiation of the Chewa people of Katete.

Chapter five discusses the findings presented in chapter four in line with the themes derived from the objectives. It delves further to link the literature and theoretical framework. Chapter six concludes the study and offers recommendations for the study. The next chapter will review the literature that guided the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Overview**

Chapter two reviews the work related to the significance and resilience Chinamwali initiation ceremony which is part of the Chewa people of Katete District. The chapter focuses on the African traditional religion and initiation, followed by Studies on different initiation ceremonies and well as the different studies on the Chinamwali initiation ceremony.

### **2.2 African Traditional Religion and the Initiation Rites**

Boateng (1983) contended that African traditional education was not only there to be acquired, but to be lived as well. Children acquired education through the maintenance of and participation of socio-political and religious institutions that ensure effective means of communication between the different generations. He further states that intergeneration communication, which he refers to as the smooth transmission and continuous, preservation of the values and traditions of the society from one generation to the other, ensures a peaceful transition from youth to adulthood and creates an understanding the generations of proper roles of each in society. In traditional Africa, intergeneration communication was achieved through a network of tradition institutions and a set of norms, morals and folkways and produced understanding, which was an essential element in cultural growth and stability. This therefore entails that Chinamwali initiation ceremony happens to be one of the institutions through which intergeneration communication took place.

Mbiti (1969) states that the occasion ( of initiation) often marks the beginning of acquiring knowledge which is otherwise not accessible to those who have not been initiated and who are seen as children. The initiates must be prepared for adult life and are given instructions on matters of sex, marriage procreation and family as well as community responsibilities. Mbiti (ibid) further states that through festivals the life of the community is renewed, people are entertained and their tensions find an outlet. Festivals also bring together people as a group, thus strengthening their unity and cohesion. Religious and social values are repeated and renewed through communal festivals. Artistic talents are utilized to the full, in form of art, music drama and oral communication. People seize such occasions to solicit blessings from God or the departed, and there is a general feeling that the visible and invisible world co-exist for the benefit of society. Without them (festivals) African life would be dull, as human life needs so relevant

rituals and festivals to give it both solemnity and laughter. While Mbiti outlines issues of significance and resilience as he approached initiation holistically in his book, he is somehow cosmetic in pointing out the resilience of the ritual. Moreover he used a general approach to all initiation ceremonies by Africans. Therefore, this study endeavors to bring out the Chinamwali initiation ceremony's significance as well as its resilience.

While it is true that initiation provides lessons for sex life in marriage, In contrast Snelson (1970) gives an account of the economic benefits of the initiation to the initiates as well as society. He states that the novice is taught how to make household utensils and equipment which she would use when she got married. Crafts made included things like mats, baskets, brooms pots and many others. Snelson further asserts that the education provided at the initiation ceremony was thorough and well balanced in the preparation of girls for life. He points out that initiation ceremonies are a kind of traditional education that was regarded as one preserving the cultural heritage of the community. Snelson further states that initiation also fosters obedience, unselfishness and endurance of hardships, encourages honesty and self restraint and respect for the rights of others. Snelson points out the importance of initiation to the girls in terms of what they are taught to do in relation to the economic benefits for their future family and society at large, but does not point out issues in areas of sexuality and the taboos associated with them. As such, this study focuses on the holistic approach of the initiation rite but only selects the Chinamwali initiation of the Chewa people of Katete District.

Mugambi (2013) also gave a detailed account on what transpires during initiation ceremonies in the African traditional religion except that his main focus was on the psychological and religious teachings which had an influence on the behavior of the initiate. In his account he states that adolescence marked outwardly by the physical changes of puberty, was another stage at which a rite of passage would be conducted psychologically and religiously for preparation for the next stage of growth in the life of the community - adulthood. During initiation into adulthood the adolescent would be guided through a series of experiences contrived for that purpose, to learn the implications of the puberty changes, one was expected by the community to conduct oneself responsibly, without degrading oneself and one's family. The rite would include a physical ordeal which the adolescent was expected to go through courageously as proof of readiness to leave childhood behind and enter adulthood. In some communities, for instance, circumcision

was practiced as part of the initiation rite. Mugambi further argued that the traditional education which was given was vital for the community maintenance of its self-understanding and for providing every individual with an opportunity to learn. Therefore, in the African cultural heritage, initiation was an inevitable stage for the social development of an individual. Mugambi's study endeavored to show the significance of initiation without paying much attention to its resilience; hence this study seeks to explore both parameters of resilience and significance.

In their paper entitled *The Evolutionary Significance of the Adolescent Initiation Ceremony* Schlegel and Herbert (1980) further suggested that initiation ceremonies can be plotted along an evolutionary line, from simplicity to a complexity of societal organizations. Thus as human beings move from small mobile societies practicing food collection or incipient agriculture at large, sedentary societies practicing extensive or intensive agriculture, we find that the presence or absence of initiation is not randomly distributed nor is there random distribution of the sex undergoing initiation where ceremonies are present. The paper also dealt with aspects of adult sex roles, whether sexuality, fertility or responsibility receive differential attention within the ceremonies according to societal types. Male peer bonding as a direct consequence of the ceremony was related to socioeconomic organization. Data was collected on characteristics of initiation ceremonies with the assumption that different kinds of societies, however they may emerge as types, should have different kinds of initiation ceremonies. The paper was centered on the evolutionary aspect of the initiations and an assessment of the kinds of initiations in different societies for both girls and boys, in the process of evolution. However, even if this comparative study dwelt on issues of fertility, responsibility and sexuality, it did not delve on issues of the ritual's significance and resilience. This is what this study does by basing itself on one kind of initiation ceremony for a particular group of people, the Chewa people of Katete District of Zambia.

However, Rosette (1980) asserts that while the incidence of women's initiation varies in traditional Southern African societies, its structural significance remains constant. Initiation involves the transfer of knowledge and expertise from one generation to another. Preparation of initiates in sexual, familial, and broader social responsibilities, and includes the major structural markers that designate phases of the individual's life cycle. Thus, the symbolic features of the

economic practices and betrothal proceedings may also have an initiatory function. In her work, Rosette compares puberty initiation to economic practices and betrothal as aspects which may bear initiatory functions; she also stresses the fact that despite women initiations in Southern Africa having some differences their structural markers remain the same. The foregoing statement implies that Rosette mostly paid attention to key elements for the girls' initiation ceremonies in Southern Africa. This study however, specifically endeavored to explore the Chinamwali initiation ceremony among the Chewa people with its religious and cultural significance and determine its resilience in the midst social change.

Green (1993) has also given a detailed account relating to initiation rites by utilizing the concept of *Deus Otiosis* (inactive God). Green records that God in Africa was distanced from the moral affairs because the work of moral retribution and the maintenance of essential moral norms normally performed by spiritual agents of much lower standing; by spirits of various sorts, by ghosts and even by human practitioners of spiritual art. This morally vital work is carried out amidst the affairs of the living members of the community and reward and punishment, though mediated by spiritual entities, almost always occur within this life. In this case, it is the duty of God or supernatural being to provide the moral code for the human beings but the spirits and human beings are empowered to provide guidance in such issues. As such, it is during ceremonies like the initiation that the spirits and empowered human beings provide guidance to the novices so that they do not depart from the norms of their society. However, Green did not delineate the different procedures which are followed in the process of imparting these morals. As such this study focuses on the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony to the Chewa people of Katete District.

In a most recent paper, Kyalo (2013) did an analysis of the rituals in African cosmology. He dealt with a comprehensive interpretation of ritual and their meaning. Kyalo argued that one important component of puberty rites is the instruction of the adolescent in the tribe law and the sacred knowledge. Kyalo utilized Mircea Eliade's (1958) ideas that, in the religious perspective, initiation is equivalent to introducing the novice to the mystical history of the tribe. In other words, the initiate learns the deeds of the supernatural beings, who, in the dream times, established the present human condition, and all the religious, social and cultural institutions of the tribe. He further states that to know the traditional lore meant to know the adventures of the

ancestors and other superhuman beings when they lived on earth. The ordeals and instructions of the young were frequently accompanied by the dramatic ceremonial and dance, including the use of frightening masked figures and bull-roarers which emit a roaring sound when whirled through the air and were intended to impress on the adolescents a sense of the tremendum, the sacredness of the occasion which they were never to forget. In his study Kyalo emphasized more on the area of the religious significance of initiation than the cultural and social functions which just he mentioned in passing. This study will focus on the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa with much attention to its social, religious and cultural perspective in line with social change.

### **2.3 Studies on different Initiation Rites**

Arnold Van Gennep (1909) in his book, *Rites of Passage*, denotes rituals marking the transitional phase between childhood and full inclusion into a tribe or social group. Van Gennep defined rites of passage as rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age. Rites of passage generally have three phases which are separation; comprising of the preliminary rites, transition; which is executed during the transitional stage, and comprise the liminal rites; and incorporation into the new world of the post liminal rites.

During the separation stage initiates are physically removed from the mainstream of society and sent to secluded places. This stage involves metaphorical 'death' as an initiate is required to leave childhood behind by breaking with previous practices and routines of childhood. It is a time of physical and psychological stress because the initiates do not know their status in society. The initiates do not know the way of life of the community, they also do not understand the significance of the customs of the community and the future was not clear to them. Separation of the initiates signifies that without being initiated they cannot become accepted members of the society and they are nothing in society. This stage is imperative because it enable the individual to cross the boundary of life without much crisis and stress.

Liminal stage is the second stage which is transitional and usually the longest. During this phase, the initiates pass through a realm that has few or none of the attitudes of the past or the coming stage. The stage involves the creation of tabula-rasa, through the removal of the previously taken forms and limits. Liminality is usually symbolically likened to being in a womb, invisibility, sexless, and to an eclipse of the sun or the moon. The initiate is expected to be passive and

submissive, obeying the instructions and accepting punishment without complaining. Silence is heavily emphasized to the initiates because it was likened to the unborn baby who was speechless and it further symbolizes wisdom. Submissiveness confirms the power and authenticity of older people especially, the ones performing the ritual.

Van Gennep (1977) contends that there are two characteristics that are essential to the rites in this stage and these rites must strictly follow prescribed sequences, where everybody knows what to do and how. Secondly everything must be done under the authority of the master of ceremony or specialized person. This stage implies an actual passing through the threshold which marks the boundary between the two phases. The initiate at this stage is expected to pass a test or prove that she or he was ready for adulthood.

The last stage of initiation is incorporation, which involves re-incorporation of the initiate into the society with a new identity as a new being or an adult. This stage involves a celebration of 'new birth' of an adult and the welcoming of the being back into society. The stage symbolizes the initiate's resurrection and the ancestor's approval of the initiate. The initiate thereafter, is expected to behave according to the customary norms, values, traditions and ethnic standards of the community.

Van Gennep's works on initiation confirm the importance of initiation to every society. It shows that the stages involved would help the initiate, whether boy or girl, to cope with the adult roles and responsibilities. However, van Gennep's concern was mainly on the stages of initiation, and his research did not show the moral value of initiation which this study seeks to establish.

Carsten (1982) focused on the initiation ceremony rites of the Nama people of Namibia and South Africa on the onset of the girls' first menstruation. She is secluded in a small enclosure constructed by the mother with the help of her kinswomen inside the family mat-house. The girl is protected both for her own physical and psychological welfare as well as for the benefit of the group because the Nama regard the occasion as potentially dangerous for everyone. Once inside the enclosure, the girl must observe an elaborate system of taboos while preparations are being made for her ritual feast of meat and milk in her honour. In Carsten's view, the onset of initiation was in line with all other traditions which follow the three aspects of seclusion, liminality and re-integration. From his point of view, it is clear that Carsten's emphasis on the observance of taboos indicated that the girl undergo certain teaching which enable her to observe certain

elaborate taboos which were mostly common in most African traditions. In addition, Castern's work focused on comparing the Khoi-san and the Nama tradition on initiation in relation to the socio-economic milieu of the southern at present and in the past, whereas this research work focused on the Chinamwali initiation of the Chewa in Zambia.

While it is believed that the trend in initiation was to provide sex education in terms of how to satisfy men in marriage, Rooyen *et al* (2006) argued that initiation schools prepare children socially making them ready for communal life. The social education provided was aimed at conformity, indoctrination, and integration of the adolescent into the tribal group's values and societal behavioral norms. Initiation rites were therefore, preserved as the most important channel through which culture was preserved and transferred. The social education provided in initiation rites prepared the initiate for citizenship in the tribe by enabling her to take social responsibilities and obligations. Rooyen *et al* (2006) further asserts that during the phase of preparation for restoration, while in seclusion and waiting on threshold of life, the young girl undergoes her restoration. She was mainly tutored on the secrets of womanhood. These teachings included aspects such as the rules of hygiene and privacy, advice with regard to sexuality, childbirth, health, married life, on how to be a good and loving mother, and the best honored wife. Self respect, self discipline and submissiveness are highly valued and expected of girls. She also learns the appropriate feminine behavior. Moreover, Rooyen *et al* further acknowledged the socialization that the home environment provided as they state that although a child grows up within the group and as such becomes familiar with traditions of his or her particular tribe, it is nevertheless important to realize that during initiation, the typical traditional behavior is specified and instructed in great detail and is strictly demanded from every member of the group. The correct traditional behavior is an important pre-requisite for a person to enter the real Southern Ndebele affairs. For example the teachings include the girls' education on how to deal with one's more profound feelings in the group, by using language, music, dancing, ornamentation, mask, beadwork, and ceremonies. The child's social education also encompasses her preparation for citizenship in the tribe, enabling her to take care of the social obligations and responsibilities. Spiritual education is also provided through teachings on the importance of careful observations of norms, customs and traditions in an attempt to please and worship ancestors.

From the above discussion, one can deduce that some kind of initiation is present in every tradition in almost all African culture, initiation is meant to educate on issues of hygiene, practical skills, respect for elders and generally accepted behavior. It can also be stated that initiation is meant to uphold, transmit and preserve the cultural values of a given society. However, we are not certain on the roles initiation ceremony plays among the Chewa people as well as whether it contributes to the moral behavior of girls and why it has survived in the midst of social changes, hence this study.

Adjaye (1999) stated that every group of *Krobo* young girls in Ghana are taken through initiation rites known as *Dipo* and the perpetuation of *dipo* rests on the basis that it transforms the girl into a woman. Therefore, the ritual resonates with a powerful voice. Adjaye further states that contending *dipo* girls' initiation rites exemplifies Van Gennep's concept of liminality as reformulated and expanded by Turner (1969) that is marginality, statelessness and ambiguity. In his work Adjaye details the ordered sequence of activities that progressively affect ritual transformation. Each media-defined action with its spatial and symbolic resonances, constitute a specific movement both in itself and in the complex processual orchestration towards ritual efficacy.

In his conclusion, Adjaye questions cultural assumptions about *dipo*'s transformation capacity and posits that the ritual both affirms and rejects, legitimizes and undermines, accepts and questions cultural understanding. Adjaye also argues that inherent in *Dipo* ritual action is contested meaning between official and personal versions of reality. Indeed, far from terminating feelings of youth hood, it is contended that the *Dipo* initiates find themselves at a dangerous crossroads the intersection of which is laden with anxiety, uncertainty and ambivalence, with adulthood yet to be attained. While Adjaye's focus was on the initiation ceremony, his particular attention is based on the sequence of activities or rituals other than the significance and resilience of the initiation. He also questions the cultural assumption about the *Dipo* transformation capacity. This study's focus however, is on the Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa in Katete district of Zambia. Its area of focus is on the significance and resilience of the initiation despite social dynamics and how it has affected initiated girls.

In his study on *The Analysis of the Rites of Passage and their Relation to Christianity*, Kasomo (2009) supports Adjaye's ideas indicating that the initiated begins a new life where the ideals

learnt must be put into practice. To bear witness to his/her transformed self, the initiates must demonstrate that he/she has found their essential wholeness as an individual and as a man or woman in the community. Kasomo further sights an example of the *Imbalu* initiation, in which it is believed that the *Imbalu* also instills into the initiates the community's cultural values and ideals to adhere to, defend and propagate for life, these values are handed on in the community setting and they are practiced in the community, with the community and for the community. The *Imbalu* have one foot in cultural beliefs and another in Christian religion. The initiates of *Imbalu* manifest a marked transformation of attitude and behavior different from his earlier one because the society helps him to this with examples, encouragement and sanctions. The conviction that the initiate has emancipated beyond certain childish inferior and impure actions provides the impetus to live up to society's expectations. Kasomo also indicated that the behavior of the initiates is transformed as they undergo the process of initiation. This is so because after undergoing initiation the initiates want to live up to the expectations of society by observing sanctions and adhering to the encouragements offered. Kasomo's study is related to this study in the sense that it emphasizes the ideals of society as the key issues of concern during initiation. It is not known, however, whether the Chewa's Chanamwali offers such sanctions which the initiate are expected to adhere to and encouragements for its initiates to live on. Hence, this research which sought to establish such possibilities.

Van Binsbergen's (2003) work is similar to this study as he gave a detailed account of the initiation ceremony by stating that in Zambia as many other societies, girls' initiation takes place just after a girl starts menstruating for the first time. The novice moves from the passive to active state. This also concerns sexual life, although young girls are taught not to indulge in sexual activities before marriage. They learn that adulthood includes the joy of sexuality and that they can take the initiative in sexual relations with their husband and participate actively during intercourse. The rites include practical and religious or supernatural aspects as well. Spirits also provide the novice with menarche- a sign that she is fertile. Furthermore, Van Binsbergen (ibid) states that initiation rites express and confirm solidarity and unity among women. Norms and values concerning gender, production and reproduction and cosmological ideas are passed on, symbols and rituals contribute to the creation and maintenance of the inclusive cosmology and to the preservation of the social system through repetition. This does not mean that rites are conservative or ignore new elements, but the general world view expressed in them seems to be

maintained. In Van Binsbergen's, study, preservation of values through education on matters of adult life are said to be central in most initiation ceremonies in Zambia, Chinamwali inclusive. He also stated how the changes which occur in the course of time; do not affect the world view of the tradition. However, it is not known to what extent those values influence society and how the changes in terms of the coming of contemporary religion and modern education can influence or affect the cosmological worldview, including that of the Chewa.

Zimba (2016) also adds that for most traditions in Zambia, this meant that when a girl came of age, which usually happened during her adolescent years, she would be handed over to the traditional counselors in order to be initiated into womanhood. This is characterized by teachings which are done in seclusion, and could last a few days to about a month depending on the cultural inclination of the girl. It is during these secluded teachings that the young girl is taught among other teachings, hygiene, respect for elders, lady like behavior and many other aspects related to her gender and age. In some cultures, the girl is taught marriage etiquette as well as how to sexually appease the husband.

The study above dwells mainly on the general perspective of the girls' initiation in the different cultures of Zambia and outlines the teachings that have been done from history which in a way relates to the current study. However, the current study focuses on the initiation ceremony for girls in the Chewa tradition of Zambia.

In an anthropological study conducted by Thera Rasing 1995, in a book entitled *Passing on the Rites of passage, Girls initiation Rites in the Context of an Urban Catholic Community of Zambian Copperbet- Luangwa Township*. The study's aim was to find out what rite of passage mean for the urban women and how the women who participate in women's Church groups were involved in the rites of passage. It focused on the relations established by marriage, the community and its continuity in space across generations. In her study, Rasing explained how initiation rites emphasize power and authority of elderly women and how they teach girls about their power and respect. She further states that hygiene, respect for elders and self-reliance are the major values that are stressed to the girls. According to Rasing, initiation is aimed at socializing the girls on their roles as adults in the community hence fulfilling the social and moral aspects of traditional education.

In another study Rasing (2010) in her book entitled *The Bush is Burnt, the Stories remain, Female Initiation Rites in Urban Zambia* as she focused on the interpretation of the relevance of the female initiation rites in an urban setting among today's modern Christian women contends that every culture has certain ideas about how a man and woman should behave. This is often an ideal than reality, but ideas and ways of how a woman and a man should behave are passed on in a nuclear and extended family and society. This culminates usually at puberty in initiation rites for girls and in some ethnic groups also for boys. Furthermore, Rasing explains that, in these initiation rites teachings about how to behave as a proper woman, as a married woman, are the main issues. This includes all facets of adult life, like how to look after oneself, not to beg (because that would indicate that the husband does not look after the wife), how to deal with menstruation, how to welcome visitors, how to deal with in-laws, how to give birth in a decent way, the importance of the matrilineal, that is the descent from grandmother to mother to grandchild, the line of women, all secrets of sexuality, fertility, respect for elders, and the blood spirit of the ethnic group. Hence it embraces all aspects of life, and the knowledge passed on is often called the lesson of life.

Rasing acknowledge that traditional societies have ways of transmitting their culture especially at the crucial stage of initiation. She also explains how the initiation rites set a basis for adult life by constructing a new identity for a woman. During initiation the novice symbolically crosses the boundary from childhood to adulthood. This is usually accompanied by so many other activities which are meant to welcome and appease the ancestral spirits. Rasing found out that female initiations are linked to gender relations, change in gender relations in the last centuries and decades are examined on the socio-economic, religious and political levels. However, not much is known on how the activities involved lead to the resilience of the initiation despite social change. As such this research study seeks to establish aspects of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa of Katete District which may lead to the resilience of the act despite the era of contemporary religions which mostly condemn traditional values.

Kaunda (2013) did an empirical study and analyzed whether and how the Imbusa initiation rites of the Bemba are used to construct subordinate femininities among married Bemba women of Zambia. The study used two frameworks, the African women theologies, first, because African women theologians draw their sources from the rites, rituals, songs and proverbs. It also used the

status construction within social psychology theory because those in authority in groups define the outcomes and expectations of their group. The mixed method approach was used to understand women's views about ways in which the Imbusa rites contribute to the identity of the Bemba and other Zambian women in marriage. Kaunda's study focused on the initiation rites and how they are used to construct subordinate femininity among married Bemba women. In the same vein, this study's general focus was on initiation rites but its specific focus was on the girl's initiation ceremony among the Chewa, its significance and resilience in the face of social changes.

In his study, Kangwa (2011) of the Indigenous Female Initiation Rites among the Bemba in the Northern Province of Zambia built on the scholarly work undertaken by African women theologians particularly in the last decade, to engage theologians with the subject of HIV and AIDS on the African continent. Their theological insight and analysis provided the critical lenses for the thesis. The objective of the thesis was to offer a gendered analysis of Chisungu initiation rites among the Bemba people in order to retrieve the value of indigenous female initiation rites which can critique female initiation rites patriarchy in the context of HIV and AIDS. Kangwa's study had similar aspects with the current study on the influence of the initiation rites generally on gendered aspects of women roles; nevertheless, his main focus of initiation's contribution to the continuous spread of HIV and AIDS was not of the main interest in this research. This study focused on an exploration of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony, its religious and cultural significance and influence on the young girls of the Chewa people of Katete District.

In another related study, Siachitema (2011) examined the appropriateness of the timing and relevance of what was being taught in initiation rites, to the current challenges facing our adolescent boys and girls such as finishing school, avoiding teenage pregnancy, not contracting sexual transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and AIDS, as well as the demands for the transformation of gender relations. The research study was based on data collected from Zambia's initiation rites and on studies conducted on initiation schools among the Venda of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Siachitema's research was a comparative study and was based on the timing of the ritual performance in terms of when it is done and its significance. However, this study was based on the Chanamwali initiation ceremony and its religious and cultural significance among the Chewa people of Katete District.

In his most recent study Kalunde (2015) also did an investigation of the initiation ceremony's teaching and attitudes of women towards them that contribute to the spread of HIV and AIDS. The study revealed that there are a lot of teachings concerning practice and behavior given neither for nor against these teachings. Some of the teachings were seen as channels through which attitudes influencing risk behavior are born and could enhance the spread of HIV and AIDS. The conclusion was that some teachings given on sex may result in regrettable consequences. In her research Kalunde focused on teachings and attitudes of tutors in initiation ceremonies which would lead to the spread of HIV and AIDS. However, this research was unique because it singled out a particular initiation ceremony for a specific culture and it tried to explore significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation in the Chewa religion.

Contrary to the foregoing study, Maambo (2011) argued that initiated women tend to portray a good behaviour which is acceptable in the traditional society unlike the uninitiated women. Maambo further stated that the educational purpose of initiation was one that had been stressed by ethnographers, who saw in these ceremonies the equivalent of schooling received in Western societies. A very large number of rites did indeed contain periods of instructions and tests of competence for the initiates and this fact certainly tended to support the idea that the purpose of these ceremonies was educational. In support of Maambo's idea, Ngabwa (2015) indicated that rites are a tool for acquisition and learning of habits based on harmony with the spouse, parents, in-laws and other older people in general and mastering of conflict resolution mechanisms. In writing about Chibwelamushi harvest ceremony Ngabwa also stated that most women who underwent *Sikenge* initiation rites change their behavior either positively or negatively.

Richards (1956) reported that Chisungu initiation ceremony for the Bemba girl is practiced because it is a crucial way of preparing girls for marriage and changing her status from a girl to a woman. The initiators strongly believed that during the process of Chisungu, they are changing an alarming condition to a safe one, and securing the transition from a calm but unproductive girlhood to a potentially dangerous but fertile womanhood. The rite is meant to protect the girl from the dangers associated with the physical commencement of adolescence as well as ensuring that she is safe during marriage and child delivery. Richards explains that Chisungu teaches the socially acceptable attitudes of a wife and mother. The initiates are taught how to do their house chores. Besides consecrating the woman's duties in the sense of making them honorable, the rite

is an event for public acceptance of the authorized marriage obligations. Richards continues to state, that Chisungu confers the rights to bear a child because it is believed that before a girl is initiated, it is a taboo for her to fall pregnant since by this time she is not yet blessed with fertility by her ancestors. The Bemba culture highly values fertility and care for the children an essential aspect believed to come from ancestors, chiefs and senior relatives, especially the father's sister.

Richard's study revealed the role Chisungu initiation ceremony played in the Bemba culture in terms of its value in the Bemba's social and religious life. It clearly showed the influences the initiation has on the girl's fertility and care for the children to be born.

Hinfelaar (1994) writing about the Bemba women stressed that in the indigenous Bemba traditional religion, women held social and religious leadership roles as enablers of the domestic cult (*Chibinda wa ng'anda*), initiators of public worship (*Kabumba wa mapepo*), and tutor of the transcendent (*Nachimbusa wa chisungu*). Hinfelaar elaborates on Richards' explanation on the role of women in the Bemba religion. This indicates that the Bemba women could not assume the social and religious roles they assumed until they were initiated.

Another related study on the Bemba by Rasing (1995) indicates that one of the traditional values taught in initiation was the emphasis that when a woman was having her periods, she was in the 'cold world'; this was also a dangerous stage. In this stage she was vulnerable to different kinds of dangers, but even more she was considered dangerous herself, because she was thought to cause illness to people who are vulnerable. This means that it was dangerous for her to have sexual intercourse, to cook or to come closer to children who are not hers.

The foregoing studies on the Bemba's Chisungu initiation ceremony showed the significance of Chisungu in the Bemba culture while the current study tries to establish the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony in the face of social change.

Much of the studies on Chinamwali initiation have been done in Malawi by Longwe (2001) and Zubieta (2010), while most Zambian studies are on Chisungu initiation of the Bemba by Richards 1956, Rasing 1995, 2010 and Sikenge of the Lozi people by Ngabwa 2015. Some studies focused on traditional initiation teachings in comparison with the Christianized teachings, while other studies focused on initiation in relation to HIV and AIDS without paying attention to

the significance and resilience of initiation in the face of social changes, hence the need for this study.

In his journal article '*Female initiation in Zanzibar*' Fair (1996) adds that young women were taught about sexuality, intercourse, fertility enhancement and preservation, how to live peacefully with men and the importance of respecting one's elders.

Walle and Franklin (1996) report that initiation rituals are still widely practiced among the Kaguru of Morogoro District in Tanzania. Young women are introduced to the Digubi dance at the time of puberty and a version of the dance was performed at the time of marriage. This form of traditional theatre served as a function of education and socialization, and the question was raised on how much of reproductive behavior was transmitted in this medium. The researcher's informants suggested that the notion of female dependence standard of behavior are conveyed in the process, but that information on childrearing and postpartum abstinence are transmitted by personal contact with older women at the time of child birth. It showed that through the rituals performed such as the Digubi dance, initiates are socialized and education takes place. However it questions how much reproductive behavior was transmitted through the ritual. As Etienne and Franklin focuses on the education in initiation in relation to the extent of the education in terms of childbearing, this research study particularly endeavored to explore the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony among the Chewa people of Katete District.

According to Macharia's (2012) Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* was a central text in discussions of gendering practices and gendered configurations within Kenyan and African colonial modernity. Macharia's article extends those discussions by focusing on girlhood as an especially vexed category in the novel. Taking Muthoni, the Christian leader Joshua's daughter, as its point of departure, it argues that colonial modernity ruptured concepts and practices of girlhood for girls like Muthoni, who were caught between the limbo of Christian modernity and ethnic cultural practice. Unable to fit neatly within either paradigm, these girls experienced themselves as spectral, material apparitions. As these girls interacted with and moved between Christians and traditionalists, their spectral materialities threatened to dissolve the ostensible distinctions between both groups, rendering gendered and socio-cultural identifications unstable. Macharia's research had a similar aspect of the changes that take place due to the influence of

modernity. The current research focused on the contributions of Chinamwali initiation ceremony to the moral behavior of girls and the values it has on the Chewa people of Katete District.

Herdt (1987) however, focuses on the interpretation of psychological significances of an interlocking set of symbolic figures in male initiation among the Sambia of Papua New Guinea. Herdt placed these ritual figures in their social field and utilized Winnicott's (1971) psychodynamic concept "transitional objects", to connect the related ritual behavior to its psychosocial antecedents in Sambia life. Herdt's focus on the psychological symbols of initiation is quite similar to the aspect of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony which is accompanied by ritual. In essence, this research study specifically dwelt on the particular initiation ceremony of the Chewa in Katete District. It utilized the feminist cultural hermeneutic theory which sought to critique and reclaim aspects of African culture while Herdt's research was based on Winnicott's psychodynamics and among the Sambia of Papua Guinea.

Rigby (1967) recorded Richards study in her brief survey of puberty ritual among Bantu speaking people. Richards (1956) isolated five basic types, the last one of which she called maturation disassociated with puberty. These are rites in which there was a complete separation of puberty rites proper from those of social maturation and Richards cited the Kamba of Kenya as possessing rites of that kind. Among the Gogo of Central Tanzania, rituals of puberty are held for girls only. Initiation rituals of other kinds are held for both sexes. These include among other things the operation of circumcision for boys and clitorectomy for girls. The distinction between puberty rituals and initiation rituals generally made long ago by Van Gennep (1909) was one of the central elements of Rigby's study. In his paper, Rigby focused on the distinction between puberty rites and initiation rites as distinguished by Van Gennep in 1909. In as much as this study was also centered on the initiation, its specific focus as opposed to Rigby is based on the Chinamwali initiation of the Chewa people of Zambia by establishing its significance and understanding how the rituals have evolved with time.

Furthermore, Kachapila's (2006) research demonstrated Nyau with its redefined relations in Chewa matrilineage in accordance with developments that the Chewa witnessed from the mid-nineteenth century. His study established that Nyau allowed men to gain increased importance in both Nyau and the Chewa communities at large; he further asserts that Nyau does not only give power to men but also assures them of continued involvement in the matrilineage. Hence, while

female prestige declined as evidenced by the debasement of women by Nyau, some important aspects of matrilineal systems such as matrilineal marriages were preserved. While Nyau is associated with Chinamwali initiation, Kachapila's main focus was based on gender relations in line with the Nyau and matrilineal relations practiced by the Chewa community, on the other hand this research study focused on the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali girls' initiation among the Chewa of Katete District.

#### **2.4 Chinamwali as the Chewa initiation Rite for girls**

In her study on Chinamwali initiation in Malawi Longwe (2006) investigated the phenomenon which led to the Baptist approach (an approach by the Baptised Church in Malawi *BACOMA* to construct Chilangizo a Christianized Chinamwali) to fail, given initiation for girls was as important. She critically reviewed Chilangizo in the Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA) and assessed its impact on Chewa society. Longwe also sought to establish a new approach which would have to replace Chinamwali and how Chinamwali could be framed for the Chewa girl that is equally Christian and culturally relevant. According to Longwe Christian history showed that the attitude towards traditional customs and practices surrounding life cycle ritual ranged from negative and hostile to positive and acceptance resulting in offering an alternative Christian rituals. The issue of Chilangizo and Chinamwali had been a real pastoral and missiological problem to the Baptist Convention Churches because of the churches failure to understand the meaning of the traditional rites in the light of the mother tongue scriptures. The study aimed at guiding the Church in Malawi and in Africa to engage with more openness with the cultural issues. Studying the scriptures to understand how they re-interpret Chinamwali and its associated meaning should lead to BACOMA churches into an interaction process of discussion, reflection teaching and action. Longwe's study focused on the traditional teachings in Chinamwali compared to the Chilangizo designed by the BACOMA churches and its aim was to guide the church to engage with more openness with cultural issues. This study also focused on Chinamwali, but its central focus was mainly on the resilience and significance of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony to the Chewa of Katete District of Zambia.

In his book *Chewa Traditional Religion* Breugel (2001) stated that fertility depended first on one's standing with the ancestral spirits and on one's observance of *mdulo* or the traditions

concerning sexual activities. Among the Chewa the regulations have taken the form of *mdulo* which entails that sexual activities, sexual fluids and especially menstruation are highly mysterious and powerful and therefore dangerous). This is expressed by the term 'hot' and those that abstain from sexual activities such as the old and children are considered to be cold. According to Breugel, it seems true that during the initiation period girls are tutored on reproductive behavior as well through the observance of *mdulo* taboos .The *mdulo* taboos run from first menstruation through to each monthly menstruation and other sexual fluids related matters. These taboos mostly affected those that were sexually active and if they were not observed, certain ailments would affect people like babies and spouses. Therefore, through *Mdulo* Chinamwali initiates were educated on child birth and reproductive health.

Another study by Minton and Knottnerus (2008) on the Ritualized duties; the social construction of gender inequalities in Malawi was in agreement on the value of Chinamwali. The study states that as a puberty rite of passage, Chinamwali was a ceremony of great importance to the community. The teachings given during the ceremony resulted in shared understanding concerning how particular duties are central to being 'a good Chewa woman'. These special lessons given during a young woman's initiation were to help her become a proper and desirable Chewa woman. If you respected and obeyed your husband you were literally considered to be 'good'. Being pleasing to your husband was an extremely important aspect of the Chewa women's life and directly related to all her other duties.

Zubieta (2010) supports Breugel's idea that there are several activities such as sexual activity, sexual fluids particularly menstruation which makes someone '*hot*' which are considered to be potent and mysterious and thus dangerous. On the other hand, people who do not engage in sexual activities (the elderly and children) and people who abstain from sexual intercourse are regarded as '*cool*'. Sexual abstention was therefore a prerequisite for attending initiation ceremonies because any person who was hot would spoil and put to danger the rituals. The gravity of the taboos concerning blood and sexual fluids is further explained by Oluwatosi (2013) who states that, it was common belief among the adherents of African traditional religion that there was a mysterious power in every blood because of its close connection with the vital life force which permeates all things both animate and inanimate. The belief gave vent to the

idea that when blood was misused it could be dangerous but it could be efficacious when properly and reverently handled.

The foregoing studies imply that, the observance of *Mdulo* taboos played a major role in the religion of the Chewa and one can only see its importance through initiation. Furthermore, in his study on the *Nyau* as practised by the Chewa of Eastern Province of Zambia Mtonga (1980) emphasized that the *mdulo* complex was so strong that people have to refrain from sex during the (period of mourning *Maliro*), when there was a new baby in the home and during the female puberty rites of Chinamwali as well as during the *Nyau* rituals.

Longwe (2003) further recorded that, when a girl experienced her first menstruation, she underwent a ceremony called *chikule* (initiation for puberty) performed for a smooth transition from childhood to adulthood. The belief among the Chewa was that menstrual blood was sacred and that it had mysterious powers of sustaining human life. Proper rituals must therefore be performed and all the taboos observed so that nothing endangers the life of the girls and that of the whole community, should a girl become sterile or should she suffer from *mdulo* (cutting). Whoever noticed the girl's first menses must inform the mother immediately, who in turn informed the grandmother. The chief as the owner of the *Mbumba* was also informed as well as (people) and the one responsible for girls' initiation was informed through his *Anamkungwi* (*traditioanl instructoress*). The taboos to be observed during the girls' menstruation were sexual abstinence for parents until the end of her menses when the rituals were performed. The girl was warned of the dangers of having sex during menstruation. She was instructed on how to take care of the menses linen called *mwele* (sanitary towels). She was also instructed to respect her parents, the elderly people and especially the chief. The studies above related to *mdulo* taboos indicate the role Chinamwali initiation plays in the religion of the Chewa through the rituals performed. Nevertheless, they do not point out specific values for girls in initiation and have not explained why it Chinamwali has survived in the face of social change. This is what the current research sought to establish.

In his (2001) study Breugel further elaborated that when the girl was secluded, she was given instructions on the *miyambo* and was taught the secrets Chinamwali songs. The songs contain this *miyambo* which the uninitiated are not supposed to know or at least not to understand. This

entailed that these teaching contained moral related issues in terms of how girls who were initiated were expected to carry themselves in the society.

While it is true that the trend in initiation was to give instructions in womanly behavior, Yoshida (1993) described the content of the teaching with its methodology in terms of it being presented through songs and dancing and that the teachings can be classified into two types namely, instructions in womanly manners and practical instructions in sex and childbearing. These instructions would in turn enable the initiates to be shaped morally and eventually to fit in the norms and values of their society as adults.

Longwe (2003), stated that a lot of skill is given to the instructions concerning marriage issues as they form the climax of all teachings during the solemn vigil. The teaching performed late in the night when most people are asleep. Procreation in marriage context was a vital role for adult life. The initiate must be instructed so that nothing was left to chance. For instance, preparation for marriage began even before initiation, when young girls were taught the elongation of their labia minora. This was practiced in some African societies where is believed that without the elongated labia minora, the husband would not enjoy sex.

Longwe further, asserted that the significance of sexual activity for the married couple is brought out when a girl is instructed by actually demonstrating what should be done to arouse each other during the actual act, and the clean up after the act. Other tips for successful marriage such as shaving each other's pubic hair, bathing the husband or feeding him are also included in the instructions. Instructions on sexual fidelity in marriage, especially on the part of the wife are demonstrated by dramatization of the instructions.

Furthermore, Longwe (2003) explained that while Chinamwali was the initiation rite during which cultural values are transmitted and the initiates are introduced to new roles in society as adults, the overall symbolic meaning of the ceremony in the Chewa society was that of transition through death and rebirth to a new life. Longwe quotes Schoffelleer (1997, 27) who equated female puberty to death and noted that just as death mark the change from human to spirit, so too did puberty marks the change from barrenness to fertility, from childhood to adulthood and from incomplete to complete. In the foregoing assertion, Longwe tried to bring out the role of initiation on an initiate by indicating its symbolic function of the death of one state and birth of another. Nevertheless, it is not known whether the Chewa in Zambia have a similar belief.

Zubieta (2010) in her study examined the material culture of initiation in central Malawi, eastern Zambia and central-western Mozambique. The White Spread-eagled tradition was a rock art tradition that had been linked to the Che (Chinamwali) a girls' initiation ceremony. Women no longer paint as part of the initiation but they continue to make other objects that they use as mnemonic devices in this ceremony. She further explored the parallels between these objects and the paintings, based on ethnographic accounts and data collected in the fieldwork. Rock paintings were interpreted in this study as part of a range of material culture that had a specific purpose: to create a dynamic cognitive process with which the initiate learnt the important rules of society.

This research explored how the material culture of initiation was used to help in the recall of instructions alongside the intangible aspects of the ceremony such as songs, dances and music. It also explored the ways in which the objects are created, used and disposed of, in the light of memory and secrecy. Various aspects of the use of symbolism in the context of initiation are explored and lastly, an exploration of why the women choose particular images as symbolic carriers of the instructions based on their perceptions of the animal world, the woodland and the village. The research study was done in Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique and its main focus was on the rock painting symbolism, its values and how it reinforces the retention of information despite its lack of permanence. Given the details of the rock painting in Zubieta's study, one can easily tell that its key issues are centered on the symbolic teachings of the drawings and paintings. This also entails that the study was similar to the current study in that it focused on the significance of the symbolic teachings which are more concrete and practical. However, the study does not show any exploration of the significance and resilience of Chinamwali initiation ceremony as a whole in Zambia in terms of what has changed, current status and how it could empower girls.

Munthali and Zulu (2007) examined the timing of puberty and mechanisms through which society prepares adolescents to understand and deal with it in Malawi. Data from the National Representative survey of adolescents and in-depth interviews conducted with adolescents were used in the study. Results showed that the onset of menarche (puberty) in girls and various pubertal body changes in boys can be the cause of joy, excitement or distress depending on how adolescents understand what this meant to them at this critical stage when they start defining and

comprehending their sexuality. The significance of initiation ceremonies in some communities provide an important platform through which programs can reach many adolescents and intervene, particularly in addressing the widely held notion among initiates that attending these ceremonies symbolized one was not a child anymore and could have sex. In as much as this research paper tried to assess the timing and mechanism of puberty stage in Malawi, it did not focus on the significance of the whole Chinamwali and its resilience in the face of social changes. In their findings on what was taught in initiation, the authors indicated that the girls were taken to a special house or area called *Tsimba* for this ceremony and the counseling was done by *anamkungwi* (traditional initiation counselors) who sang songs and taught young women how to dance. The ceremony took up to one month and the initiates were taught three key things at initiation ceremonies namely, respect and obedience, hygienic practice and avoiding sex. During the ceremony girls were also advised to pull their labia.

The above research specified its area in such a way that it dealt with the timing of puberty and mechanism through which society prepares young girls to understand and deal with the puberty stage. This is done by trying to do away with the held notion that whoever underwent initiation was free to engage in sexual activities as initiation meant readiness for such. However, despite establishing that initiation provided education on issues like respect, hygiene and abstinence from sex the use of national data survey could have had its own weaknesses in terms of the reliability and validity of the results of research. As such the methodology applied by Munthali and Zulu might have inadequately assessed the problem. This research study employed a phenomenological design which gave assurance of reliable data in terms of participants' views about the phenomena under study.

In a related study, Kamlongera (2007) also clarified that the *Fisi* (Hyena) culture, a custom practiced in some of the female initiation ceremonies in Malawi derives from a man, called *Fisi*, who was hired to sleep with female initiates to mark the end of some of their initiation ceremonies (in Malawi). She further explains that the ritual is performed during Chinamwali where the man sleeps with girl initiates who at most times are below the age of 14. Authorities within the ceremony convince the girls that it is indeed necessary to sleep with the *Fisi* (man) to mark the end of the Chinamwali. While this focus does not directly discuss the technicalities of statutory rape, it interprets the practice of the *Fisi* as statutory rape. It interrogates the factors that

have aided the existence of this harmful practice and recommends its immediate eradication. The study also argued that there was need for research highlighting girls' experiences of the *Fisi* in order to show the extensiveness of damage caused. The overall objective of Kamlongera's study was to explore the role one particular traditional channel of sex information communication, the initiation ceremony of girls, could play in disseminating information to combat HIV and AIDS. While Kamlongera made mention of the *Fisi* as a harmful cultural practice, her research did not specifically focus on interrogating the whole initiation ceremony process in which *Fisi* culture was embedded to identify the social changes. Instead, she focused on general initiation as a way of sex information dissemination in combating HIV and AIDS and some factors that have aided the existence of the culture. Therefore, this research study explored the Chinamwali initiation by interrogating its past current status in the midst of social changes.

In the quest to understand Chinamwali initiation, The Human Rights Commission of Malawi Report (2005) also recorded that the ceremony begins with the attainment of puberty, that is, it begins when a girl experiences her first menses. In Mzimba District of Malawi, on attaining puberty the girl usually informed an aunty or grandmother about her new experience. The girl was then taken for confinement for the entire period of her menses (usually a week). Elderly women counseled the girl in many matters including how she should take care of herself every time she menstruates; for example, she was advised not to put salt into food, to regularly wash herself and her underclothes, and on the proper way of sitting in the presence of other people. The report showed that the girl was further counseled in good manners especially when interacting with adults; she was expected to show respect to elders. She was told to avoid sexual relationships with men and boys before marriage or risk pregnancy out of wedlock. She was also told to stop playing with girls that have not yet attained puberty to show that she was grown up and must therefore begin behaving like an adult by associating with fellow grown-ups.

In another related study Yoshida (1993) also outlines the procedure followed after a girl has reached puberty. It was explained that during Chinamwali a girl who had reached the age of puberty was secluded in a house for a certain period of time and taught the manners and the accomplishment required for an adult woman. The girl initiated was called '*namwali*' and the other participants in Chinamwali are limited to women who have already gone through the ceremony. When a girl had her first menstruation a tutor (*phungu*) was selected for her from

among the adult women in the village. The tutor educated and took care of her throughout the ceremony. The first word said to the girl after she has been secluded was '*mwakula*' meaning 'you have grown up'. The girl was then taught how to use the piece of cloth during menstruation and told never to let the cloth be seen by men. She was also warned not to reveal to men any of the things she would learn in the ceremony. The content of the teachings were mostly presented through songs, dances, and could be classified into two types, instructions in womanly manners and practical instructions in sex and childbearing. As such, Chinamwali seemed to attract the attention of the adult women in society as well as the men; this was so because of its significance to the Chewa people.

While it is true that contemporary religion and modernity are mostly negative about the traditional initiation rites, Phiri (1983) clarified that it took missionaries a long time to realize that institutions like Chinamwali, through which Chewa girls were prepared in their role as future mothers, were useful and worthy adapting in the context of the church. In particular, they came to appreciate the importance of these rites in offering sex education, emphasizing the spiritual aspect of fertility, instruction in correct behavior, respect for elders and authority and the need to endure physical hardships.

From the various ideas highlighted in the foregoing studies, initiation was portrayed mostly as a way of providing education in terms cultural norms and values. As such, not much has been done to show the value and role of the girls' initiation in respective traditional religions and its contribution to girls' moral behavior after initiation. Most research had been done based on other cultures and mainly focusing on initiation either in general or its processes. It is also note worthy that most research done was based on the various cultures in relation to HIV and AIDS while this stud based its findings on the Chinamwali initiation ceremony in the religion of the Chewa people of Katete District. The main focus was on the essence of Chinamwali, its role in the Chewa society and its moral lesson with the current rapid social changes taking place in the developing countries.

## **2.5 Social Change**

Grancelli (1995) Social changes are associated with transformation in various spheres of human life. Many countries have undergone tremendous changes over recent decades with implications

including restructuring, change in societal value systems, spread of media, technology, change in educational system of population composition.

Bruijn and Dijk (2012), states that Africa has been witnessing rapid changes in the social landscape over the past 10 years. Processes of globalization and the advancement of new technologies have been impacting on the local social networking significantly. This paper moves away from the analysis of networks as defining social space towards ethnography of linking and connections. Bruijn and Dijk focused on the culture of linking and connections in terms of media development while this paper only seeks to see the importance of Chinamwali in the midst of social change.

Furthermore, Greenfield's (2009) new theory of social change and human development aim to show changing social-demographic ecology, alter cultural values and learning environments and thereby shift developmental pathways. Worldwide social demographic trends include movement from rural resistance, informal education at home, subsistence economy, and low technology environment. In conclusion according to Greenfield the social cultural environment is not static either in a developed or the developing world and therefore must be treated dynamically in developmental research. Greenfield tries to embrace the aspect dynamism; she shows that change in culture is inevitable. As such the current research seeks to establish the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation of the Chewa people in the face of social change.

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter tried to discuss literature which is related to the current study on the Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa people of Katete District in Zambia. The literature discussed has shown how initiation generally was used as a way of transmitting values of a particular culture. However, the different literature reviewed does not bring out the aspect of morality of girls after initiation and the religious values of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa people. The literature was divided into three parts namely African traditional religion and the initiation rites, studies on different initiation rites and Chinamwali as the Chewa initiation rite for girls. The next chapter discusses the methodology which was used to conduct this research study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Overview**

This chapter of the dissertation describes the methods applied in carrying out the research. It is organized under the following sections: research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations.

### **3.2 Research Design**

A research design can be considered as a structure of research. It is the glue that holds all the elements in the research process together. A design is used to structure the research, to show how all of the major parts of the research project work together to try to address the central research question (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). This is a research design is a plan on how an investigation will take place. It specifies conditions and optimum research procedures to be followed in conducting a research study (Musabila and Nalaila, 2013). A qualitative research design was found to be appropriate in establishing the significance of the initiation ceremony in the religion of the Chewa of Katete District. The phenomenological design was the suitable design for the study of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony. Orlando (2003) defines a research design as a scheme outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. In the context of this study, phenomenological research design was used. Phenomenological design is a strategy of inquiry which seeks to study a phenomenon by bracketing out one's experiences and collecting and analyzing data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell:2007). Phenomenological design helps to examine the views of people who have experience with phenomenon at hand. As such, by using this research design, it was expected that the researcher would have a clear picture of respondents' lived experience with regard to their beliefs, culture and rituals associated with the girls' initiation ceremony of the Chewa and its religious aspects. The research study also used qualitative data collection methods in order to collect and analyze data based on the participant's attitudes, values and beliefs.

### **3.3 Population**

Population refers to a complete set of elements (persons or objects) that possess some common characteristics defined by the sampling criteria established by a researcher (Msabila and Nalaila 2013). A population can also be a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement. It also refers to the entire group of persons or elements that have at least

one thing in common; It also refers to a larger group from which samples are taken (Kombo and Tromp 2006). The population comprised of all initiates, initiators and the Headmen in Katete District.

### **3.3.1 Target Population**

The target population comprised of four (7) initiates, three (3) headman and (15) initiators making the total number of twenty five respondents. This was the population for whom the findings would be generalized or for which the information was desired (Msabila and Nalaila, 2013). In this case, this study drew participants from Gleya, Mpoto and Chimukule villages in Katete by nature of their roles concerning initiation and initiates. Some information was collected from Tikondane Community Projects which also promotes culture and women programs in Katete District. The project has tutors and initiates drawn from different villages in Katete who showcase the Chewa culture to tourists and visitors at the project.

## **3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure**

A sampling procedure is a plan of how one will obtain or select a sample from a given population before any data is collected. In this research a non-probability sampling procedure called purposive sampling was used. Non- probability sampling techniques are techniques where selection of individuals for a sample does not give all the individuals chances of being selected. In non- probability sampling there is no random selection of individuals or elements. Subjects in non- probability samplings are usually selected on the basis of the accessibility or by the purposive personal judgment of the researcher (Musabila and Nalaila: 2013). Purposive sampling procedure was used to select initiators and the initiates and headmen. Under purposive sampling extreme case technique was used to select headmen and initiators while snowball technique was used to select initiates.

### **3.4.1 Purposive sampling**

Purposive sampling is the sampling procedure which enables you to use judgment to select cases that will enable you to answer the research questions and to meet your objectives (Saunders *et al* 2009). The initiators, initiates and headmen were selected through the use of purposive sampling. Its characteristic of using one's judgment to select cases enabled the researcher to pick those women who had been practicing the duty of initiating girls in Chinamwali initiation of the

Chewa , girls who have been initiated in Chinamwali and headmen who are the custodians of the Chewa tradition.

### **3.4.2 Snowball sampling**

The process of snowball sampling involves the researcher asking the initial subjects to nominate another person with the same trait (Musabila and Nalaila, 2013). The researcher chose the snowball sampling procedure for selecting the initiates since its characteristic of using initial subjects enabled her to select the initiates by asking initiators to locate the girls they have initiated.

### **3.4.3 Extreme case:**

This is a sampling technique that focuses on cases which are rich in information because they are unusual or special in a way (Tromp and Kombo, 2006). The technique was used to select the headman and initiators. As the custodians of traditions, headmen were expected to have rich information on the Chinamwai girls' initiation for their tradition.

## **3.5 Data collection Methods and Instruments**

Data collection refers to gathering of information aimed at proving or refuting some facts (Kombo and Tromp: 2006). Musabila and Nalaila (2013) asserts that data collection involves explaining how you actually carry out your data collection process and which instruments were used and why.

In the process of data collection, interviews were conducted to collect data from initiators and the headman because it is the only way the researcher could collect in depth information. The focus group discussion and observation were used on initiates to enable the researcher to collect valid and reliable data. Data collection methods can be divided into primary and secondary data categories. Primary data collection methods include methods like the use of questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Secondary data collection methods are document analysis, narrative analysis, history inquiries, films, videos and photographs (Musabila and Nalaila, 2013). The instruments that the researcher employed in this research were the observation check list as well as the interview guide. The interview guide and the observation checklist were appropriate to this research because it was a qualitative research which required

the in- depth understanding of the values and culture of the Chewa people of Katete District. The interviews were conducted on the tutors, initiates and headmen while the focus group discussions were conducted only with the initiates.

### **3.5.1 Observation Check List:**

This is a tool that provides information about actual behaviour. Direct observations are useful because some behaviors involve habitual routines of which people are hardly aware (Kasonde Ngandu, 2013). The study used this instrument of data collection because it has some strengths of bringing out information that would not be captured by the interview guide such as behavior. The observation checklist was used to gather information from the initiates as the researcher observed the Chinamwali initiation rites. The information was collected through songs, dances and behaviors based on the spiritual, moral and social aspect of the rite.

### **3.5.2 One-On -One Interview**

This is a method of research used in the social sciences. Semi-structured interviews have the following advantages; they are flexible because they comprise both open and closed ended questions: in-depth information is gathered through open ended questions (Kasonde Ngandu, 2013). The one- on –one interviews were conducted in such a way that there was face to face encounter between the interviewer and interviewees. This instrument was used to gather information from the initiators who were the key informants.

### **3.5.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide**

The tool involves a special type of group in terms of its purpose, size, composition and procedure. A focus group usually comprises six to eight individuals who share certain characteristics, which are relevant to the study (Kasonde Ngandu, 2013). The focus group discussion was held with seven initiates. The discussion has an advantage of producing a lot of information quickly and it is good for exploring the beliefs, ideas or opinions of the participants. Therefore, it was used to probe more information on the resilience and significance of the initiation.

## **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data analysis refers to examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment and making deductions and inferences. It involves uncovering underlying structures, extracting important

variables, detecting any anomalies and testing any underlying assumptions (Kombo and Tromp 2006, 117). The researcher used the thematic analysis since the research was purely qualitative. Themes refer to topics subjects that come up in discussions. This form of analysis categorizes related topics. In using this form of analysis, major concepts or themes are identified Kombo and Tromp (2006). The researcher opted for thematic analysis because the research was purely qualitative and the responses from the respondent were suitably sorted, coded and major topics were classified to come up with major themes and the summary of the findings on the Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa.

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability**

#### **3.7.1 Validity**

Validity of the test is a measure of how well a test measures what is supposed to be measured while reliability is a measure of how consistent the results from the test are (Kombo and Tromp 2006). Therefore to ensure reliability and validity of information, the researcher used various instruments like focus group discussion and interview (triangulation) and member checking as well as expert knowledge in terms of those who had undergone initiation and the tutors who are always present during the initiation rites as well as the headmen who are always informed of what transpires in their villages.

#### **3.7.2 Reliability**

According to (Musabila and Nalaila: 2013) reliability refers to the degree to which the research measurements in a particular design allow consistency in observations throughout the study. The researcher took care of the issues of reliability by using more than one method of data collection (triangulating) which included one to one interview, focus group discussion (FDGs) and participant observation. The research involved three groups of respondents and the three types of data collection instruments enabled the researcher to triangulate. Triangulating both the instruments and participants helped the researcher to ensure that the instruments tested what they intended to test. The researcher therefore trusts that the findings are valid because the responses from the three research instruments were scrutinized to come up with findings which are valid.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

The researcher maintained integrity as data was being collected, presented and analyzed. Where private interests may be affected the researcher assured respondents and other stalk holders about

the security of their privacy. Therefore the participant's consent was of prime importance and the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. The participants were also informed of their right to choose to participate or not to participate in the research. The identity of the participants was also concealed. The researcher also secured the research clearance from the University of Zambia which was used to introduce the researcher and to explain the purpose of the study.

### **3.9 Summary**

The foregoing chapter discussed the method which the researcher utilized to conduct the research. It also explained the population, sampling procedures, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis, validity and reliability of the study as well as ethical considerations. The next chapter will present findings from the research conducted.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATIONS OF FINDINGS

### 4.1 Overview

This chapter will present the findings of the study on the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation Ceremony of the Chewa of Katete District of Zambia. The findings are presented according to the themes from the research findings based on the research questions and objectives.

The findings for all the research questions came from the responses from the conducted interviews on the women who initiated girls and headmen as well as the focus group discussions for initiates and the observation of the actual Chinamwali initiation practice. Mainly responses based on the research questions and objectives were recorded because they were considered to be relevant to the research.

### 4.2 The role of Chinamwali in the religion of the Chewa people

A pictorial presentation of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony as girls were being instructed is presented below.



**Pictures 1** *Namukungwi and the namwali*

When the respondents were asked as to why the Chinamwali initiation ceremony is important to their society, their responses on the role of Chinamwali among the Chewa were almost similar. Respondents dwelt on the value of cultural transmission as the key issues for the initiation of the girls as well as the issues of mdulo and hygiene. One of the respondents said;

*girls are secluded and initiated because it is the duty of the initiator to teach the girls about ( Mdulo) taboos of adding salt,(kuceza cidulo) making soda , issues of hygiene and how to use the sanitary towels ( traditional one). In doing so the girl is given medicine by the mother, the medicine is added to the chicken which is cooked and eaten together with the mpungu without breaking bones. The bones are kept until the girl does her second menstruation. This is done to ensure that the girl is not pregnant.*

The headman from Chimukule village had his own view of the role of Chinamwali being the custodian of the tradition of the Chewa people. He said;

*Chinamwali nicofunikila ngako, koma ngati mwana ali pasukulu osa mupeleka musanga munyumba. Chifukwa mukamuuza vonse va chinamwali maphunziro abwerera pansi. Koma chifunika tiziendesa vintu mwachilungamo.Mwana afunika kulowa chinamwali. Akamulagiza mwana ama khala ndi mwambo . Initiation is very important but if the child is at school it is better to wait for the appropriate time for initiation because the girl may not concentrate on her school work. However, things should be done in the way they are expected to be done. All girls who become of age must undergo initiation because Chinamwali helps them to learn the Chewa traditions.*

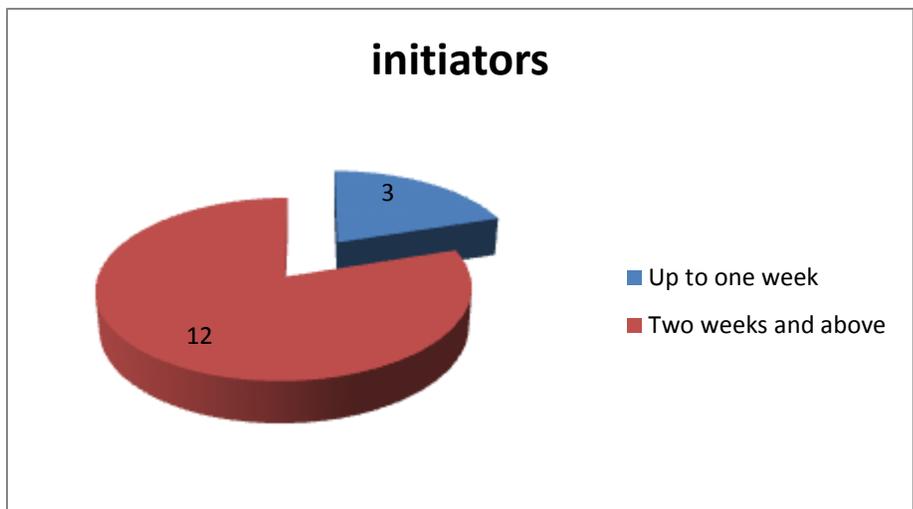
The initiates' views were also not so different from the initiators and the headmen. The initiates also felt that Chinamwali initiation played a big role in transmitting the values of the Chewa tradition and they also believed that it gave them cultural identity. One of the initiates reported;

*It's the parent's desire to have their children (girls) initiated so that they learn the traditions of the Chewa tribe. In initiation we are taught not to add salt to relish when you are having the menstruation periods because this can cause a bad cough to the elders and children. We are also taught to take care of ourselves especially concerning the sanitary towel. The initiator (phungu) who teaches you at puberty will also tutor you when you are about to get married.*

The participants were also asked about the period that is taken in seclusion for each initiation. The seclusion period for girls was also taken to be one of the areas which could contribute to indentifying the role of the Chinamwali initiation by tracing its significance from the period devoted to it. Despite having similar views on the role of the Chinamwali initiation, both the initiates and initiators had varying periods and reasons on the seclusions. One of the initiates indicated that she was only secluded for one week and she was kept in the mother's house. Other initiates stated that during their seclusion period, they were kept in their grandparents' homes.

**Figure 1      Period of Seclusion**

Below is a figure showing the range of time taken for the girls who are secluded



However, most of the initiators indicated that the period of the seclusion depended on the parent's wishes, the period ranges from one week to one month. Of the 15 initiators 12 of them said seclusion took two weeks up to one month while three initiators said that seclusion only took one week. On the other hand, few initiators indicated that the period of seclusion differs due to the different levels of understanding what was being taught especially that initiation involves both oral and practical lessons. The process of seclusion for most participants began when the girl saw her first menses and reported to one of the adult women or grandmother who in turn reported to the mother and headman who were then expected to *gigula* (abstain from sex). The grandmother, aunt or phungu would also remind the neophyte that she has grown up and guide her in the simple hygienic rules and emphasize on avoiding men. It was also reported that nowadays because of the issues of education, girls are secluded when it is convenient especially during the

school holidays. This implies that a girl who begins menstruating during school days will only be guided on issues of hygiene and secluded later when it was convenient. It was also reported by most initiators that the girl was also checked whether she had elongated the labia minora which was said to be essential in her adult sex life.

The initiates and initiator were also asked whether it was their choice to be secluded and almost all initiates and initiators indicated that the parents demanded that they undergo initiation, only a few of them indicated that it was both their choice and the parents' wish for them to be initiated.

### 4.3 Influence of Chinamwali on initiated girls' moral behavior

#### **Pictures 2** *Girl being instructed by the phungu*

Below is a pictorial representation of the *phungu* and initiates as the *phungu* demonstrated how to dance while drums were beaten and songs were being sang.



In the process of finding out how the Chinamwali initiation ceremony influences the girls' moral behavior, the respondent were asked the noticeable differences they observe after girls have undergone the initiation process. The findings on the influence of the Chinamwali initiation on the behavior of the girls were mostly similar but some respondents had different views. The responses concerning changes in morals behavior for girls after initiation were mostly self control, *maendedwe amasinth*( girls change their way of doing things), *makhalidwe* ( how to

live with other people) . However, 14 out of 15 initiators stressed that respect was the key aspect that is inculcated in girls during the initiation period.

The virtue of respect was seen to be expressed through the act of kneeling when greeting people or when receiving or giving out something to the elder as indicated by the initiators and the headman. Another aspect which was mentioned as connected to respect was the act of kneeling while cooking on firewood or the brazier instead of bending. Putting on a *Chitenge* (wrapper) almost always or in the presence of men or the father was another act which was emphasized as a sign of respect. One of the initiators said that; “*siningavale siketi popanda chitenge basi nili fula,*” meaning that it was not morally right to wear a skirt without a wrapper and then you even bend down in front of other people. In line with the same virtue of respect a girl was not also expected to sit on the chair in the Chewa tradition as this showed lack of respect.

During the observations of an initiation teaching session a song was sang for girls which emphasized on respect as one of the key moral values that is transmitted. The song went as follows; “*nkhalapa mpando, nkhalapa mpando, ine amama aniuza kale*” (*my mother has already instructed me to sit on the chair*)

One of the initiators explained that the song taught that even if a mother instructed the child to sit on the chair, she should not accept it since according to the Chewa tradition, sitting on the chair was disrespectful, and moreover the posture of the girls during initiation instructions spoke volumes about respect. The girls were not also supposed to speak until they were allowed to do so. Headman Chimukule also explained that girls who were initiated were expected to kneel down when they met elderly people especially men, on the way.

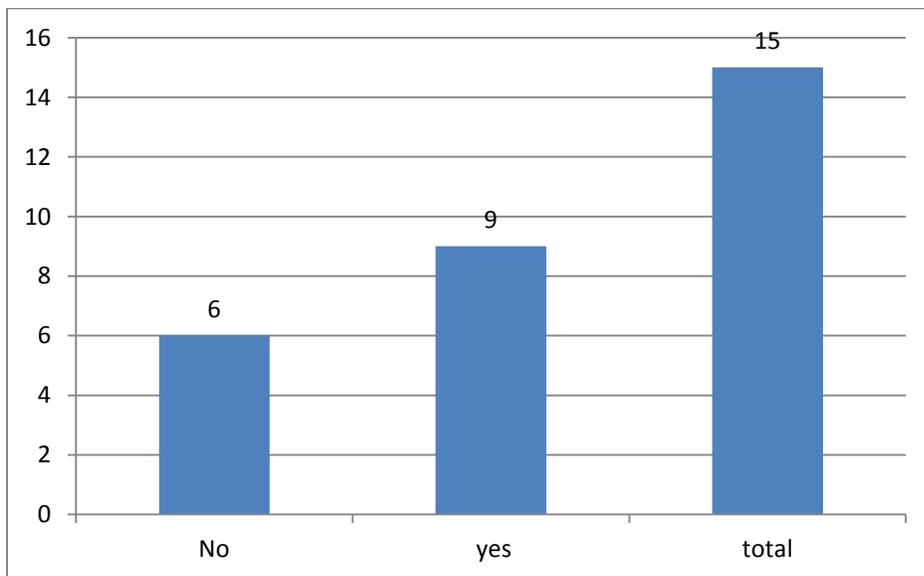
Another virtue connected to respect was that of not refusing when a girl was sent by elders or parents. The initiators expressed this in a song which said ‘*amama otumatuma angokala alibata,*’ literally meaning ‘the child is complaining that that the mother likes assigning chores to children when she is actually doing nothing herself’. This song was accompanied with a demonstration of how the mother moves from one place to another in her yard while she keeps sending her children to do the chores. The initiators stressed that even if the mother or any elderly person was lazy, girls were expected to do the chores whenever they were asked to do so.

However, out of 15 initiators, 6 stated that girls' moral behavior is not influenced by the initiation. One of the initiators said;

*Girls' behavior cannot be changed by the initiation. Some girls fail to change even after undergoing initiation teachings because their parents at home have not taught them how to behave well.*

**Figure 2: Initiators responses on the influence of Chinamwali on the girl's moral behavior**

**Figure 2** shows the responses of the initiators concerning the moral behavior of girls who have undergone initiation.



The headman of Gleya village had his own views on moral behavior. In as much as he had appreciated the value of initiation his emphasize on girls morality in society was in line with the saying 'charity begins at home'. He said

*“Uphungu ufunika kuchokera pa khomo. Makolo sitilugwapo kwenekwene. Teachings or guidance should begin from home or parents as the child is growing up before initiation comes*

The headman of Mphoto village also added;

*aphungu siafunika ku phunsisa ana pa nthawi ya Chanamwali cabe ai. maphunziro afunika kupitiliza. komanso aphungu afunika ambili yakale. Implying that initiator should not only teach girls during seclusion, the teachings should continue even after seclusion and he also stated that initiators should be those who have had experience.*

As such , generally the other major issues which emerged the most pertaining to the moral behaviour of girls in relation to Chinamwali initiation ceremony were issues like helping elderly people who are in need, being properly dressed as per expectations and ensuring that the girl was at home at the expected time and having a sense of responsibility. It was also stated that girls were expected not to touch fire whenever had their menses.

Other areas of moral behavior which were raised were the areas on the expected behavior in marriage. Even though most of the participants insisted that at puberty they only teach lessons pertaining to puberty, in their response on the contribution of Chinamwali initiation to the girl's moral behavior, the respondents indicated that girls who are initiated are able to keep their homes in order and behave well in marriage in terms of having respect to the husband and being faithful to them. It was also noted from the observations that some of the songs sung during the lesson were focusing on issues of marriage. One of the initiators gave an example of a girl who was married without going through initiation. She stated that

*Olowa auza wa mwamuna zonse, osalowa zochita zikala zochocholoka, implying that when a girl has been properly instructed in initiation she will be able to explain and do everything expected by the husband. She further said that one girl was taken to the husband without proper initiation instruction, then the girl exchanged the vessel meant for tobwa (traditional drink) for the husband with the one used when shaving the pubic hair.*

Another initiator in trying to indicate values in initiation went further to explain more on the benefits or values girls acquire especially when they are going into marriage. She stated,

*Girls are taught how to do (tyole), mwambo wa tobwa,na mwambo wakaleza( this implies that girls learn how to show*

*respect to a man according to the chewa tradition (tyole) kneeling for the man in a skillful manner and the tradition of giving tobwa (fermented meal drink) to the husband as well as how to shave the husband.*

The initiators also indicated that a girl who was initiated would have the marriage vessels in place, which should contain a towel or cloth, razor blades, a dish, soap, Vaseline and sometimes candle and matches. It was also stated that these items are expected to be kept in privacy and not expose them to the children and other people around but should be utilized accordingly. Additionally, a song was also sung to show the teachings that girls underwent and the expectations from the phungu for the girl. The song was

*nsanya zani lowela,  
nivine tyani cotele  
acembele zani muone zani lowela*

The song literary means that, the man goes to report to the initiator that lice is troubling him because the wife had refused to have sexual intercourse with him. The teaching in the song was that, a girl is not supposed to refuse to have sexual intercourse with the husband except when she was supposed to abstain regarding *mdulo* taboos. These taboos are in connection with body fluids where old people and children are considered to be ‘cold’ while those who are active sexually are believed to be ‘hot’. In their hot state there are certain instances when they are expected not to do certain things because they might cause the old and children to have *mdulo* (cutting). Such instances are, when a girl was having her menses, when the woman has just delivered, when there is a funeral and when the family has a patient or a child who has just had her first menses.

in their focus group discussion the initiates also indicated that girls’ behavior after initiation was constructively influenced morally by the initiation rites that they underwent. One initiate admitted;

*Before I was initiated, I never used to respect elders, but during initiation I was taught to respect parents and elders, not to use my mother’s wrapper as well as to help elderly people in need. It was also*

*emphasized that I should not enter my parent's bedroom.*

When the girls were asked how the positive moral behavior is displayed after initiation, they indicated that the issue of morality was demonstrated by the act of kneeling, listening to elderly people's advice and putting on a wrapper.

#### **4.4 Survival of Chinamwali in face of social changes**

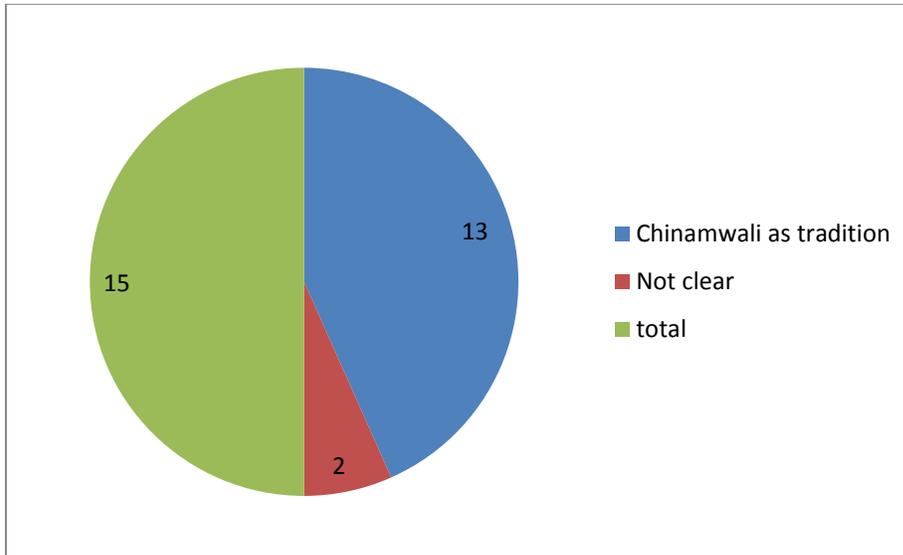
##### ***Pictures 3***      *Girls learning how to dance during initiation*

The pictorial representation below shows the girls undergoing initiation as they observed what their phungu was demonstrating to them through songs and dance.



**Figure 3: Chinamwali as part of tradition**

**Figure 3** shows the responses from the initiators concerning the understanding that Chinamwali is part of the Chewa tradition.



The initiates, initiators and the headmen had common aspects in their responses to the issues concerning the survival of Chinamwali in the face of social changes. For instances 13 out of the 15 initiators indicated;

*Chinamwali ni mwambo wathu wa makolo wo siyilana. Chinamwali is part of our cultural heritage which must be transmitted from one generation to the other.*

In their divergent views some respondents said that the initiation helps to maintain marriage bonds, others said it helps to maintain family unit, and there must be continuity in culture since mens' expectations in marriage are taught in Chinamwali. One initiator said; *“Asikana aphunzira kamangindwe ka nyumba mu chinamwali, zapampasa zotandizila mwamuna”* Girl learn issues concerning the duties of a house wife and matters concerning sex where they are expected to assist a man in bed during sexual intercourse). In confirmation of the foregoing

statement, most of the initiators indicated that many of their students were married and are able to keep their marriages due to the lessons they were taught. Another initiator indicated; “*sicingateke kusiya mwambo wa Chinamwali cifukwa ni mwambo wa chinamwali niwo nkazikika*”. This implies that the tradition was established by their ancestors and it should be followed and respected without questioning.

One of the Headmen, headman Chimukule mentioned *Gule wa mukulu* (the masked dance for men) as one aspect which contribute to the survival or resilience of the Chinamwli initiation. He further indicated that in *Gule wa mukulu* boys are also taught what they expect to see from an initiated woman.

#### **4.4.1 Changes that have Taken Place in Chinamwali in the Midst of Social Changes**

In the process of probing further on why Chinamwali has survived in the midst of social change, the researcher also tried to get views on some changes that may have taken place in the Chinamwali initiation ceremony. It was noted from the responses given that generally no major changes had taken place except some modifications of some kind in many aspects. Some minor changes that were pointed out to have taken place were on matters such as the timing for seclusion which in olden days used to take a much longer period than it does nowadays, areas of sketches or illustrations *vilango* were said to be fading out or were not practiced as before. And that in modern days it takes time to seclude a girl who reaches puberty stage because some girls go to school and seclusion can only be done during school holidays. The other issue was drumming or beating of drums during the Chinamwali initiation ceremony which was said to be new since in the past tins or bottles were used. The *Fisi* culture (allowing a girl to sleep with a man after initiation) was also said to be fading since it was said to be only done by few people in Katete District. The explanation of *vilango* (illustrations or molded vessels and figures) or sketches to the initiates was another aspect which never happened before but has been adopted now. One initiator explained

*Kale kwenze vilango, amai amwana enzo lenga vilango noikamo ulungu mutundu patatu; wofila, wakuda ndi woyela , komanso amai alangiza mwana nomufunsa kuti; ‘namwali udaoonanji?’ musikana anali kuyankha kulingana na zamene aona. ulungu wofila utantauza magazi, wakuda untanza maliro kapena matenda komanso woyera utantauza ukondo. literally meaning*

*some time back the girl's mother draw illustrations which had three kinds of beads within. Then the girl would be asked to mention what she would see and the colour of the beads" the initiator stated that the beads were meant to explain the state of affairs for a girl. The colour black was meant to symbolize dark days for instance during a funeral or when the child is sick (parents are expected to (gigula) abstain from sexual intercourse), it was also meant to inform the husband that it was time for shaving but red symbolized blood (menstruation) and white symbolized purity or clean (end of menstruation, ready for sexual intercourse)*

The initiators stated that the beads were meant to communicate the state of affairs in a matrimonial home. However, such symbolic language is not practical nowadays as couples have resorted to communicating directly by word of mouth rather than using the symbolic language.

#### **4.5 Summary**

Chapter four presented the findings of the research study based on the objectives indicated in chapter one. Data has been presented according to the participant's views which are evidenced in the verbatim, pictures and statistics. The findings showed that Chinamwali initiation plays a role in the Chewa religion especially through the rituals that were performed and the teachings on the observance of *Mdulo* taboos. It was also found that the Chinamwali initiation influenced the behavior of girls to a certain extent and its survival was as a result of the value attached to it in terms of its influence on family life.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

### 5.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. The purpose of this research study was to explore the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony for girls in the religion of the Chewa people. The discussion of the findings will be done in line with the emerging themes under the three objectives of the study. The study's objectives were as follows: to explain the significance of the Chinamwali initiation rite in the religion of the Chewa, to determine how the Chinamwali as preparation for adult life, influences girls' moral behavior and to establish why Chinamwali as part of the religion of the Chewa has survived in the midst of social change.

### 5.2 The significance of Chinamwali in the religion of the Chewa

From the findings in chapter four, the responses from the participants on the significance of Chinamwali in the religion of the Chewa were mostly similar. The respondents dwelt on value of cultural transmission as the key issues for the initiation of the girls as well as the issues to do with the reverence for *mdulo* taboos and hygiene. The salient issues on culture transmission had to do with the norms and values of a society. Like any other society, the Chewa people have those norms and values which are meant to be transmitted from one generation to another. The findings here were supported by Kyalo (2013) who asserted that one important component of puberty rites was the instruction of the adolescent in the tribe law and the sacred knowledge. Kyalo utilized Mircea Eliade's (1958) ideas that in this religious perspective, initiation was equivalent to introducing the novice to the mystical history of the tribe; in other words, the initiated learns the deeds of the supernatural beings, who in the dream times established the present human condition, and all the religious, social and cultural institutions of the tribe.

The Mdulo taboos were said to be connected with fire, blood, salt and sexual fluids. It was also indicated that a girl who began menstruating should not cook, add salt to food, or even have sexual intercourse whether she was married or not, if she did so then other people in the family especially the children would suffer from Mdulo 'a terrible cough'. Longwe (2003) is in agreement with Kyalo as she stated that, when a girl experienced her first menstruation, she underwent a ceremony called *chikule*, performed for a smooth transition from childhood to adulthood. The belief among the Chewa was that menstrual blood was sacred and that it had

mysterious powers of sustaining human life. Proper rituals were therefore to be performed and all the taboos observed so that nothing endangered the girls' life and that of the whole community should she become sterile or should she suffer from *mdulo* (*literal meaning is cutting*). Consequently, it was imperative that whoever noticed the girl's first menses informed the mother immediately, who in turn informed the grandmother, the chief as the owner of the *Mbumba* (people) and the one responsible for girl's initiation was also informed through his *Anamkungwi* (*traditionall instructoress*). Breugel (2001) also supported the analytical frame that Chinamwali is a way of transmitting cultural values when he stated that when a girl was secluded, she was given instructions, the *miyambo* and taught in the secret Chinamwali songs that contained this *which* the uninitiated were not supposed to understand. In line with Breugel's assertion, the study established that the hidden meanings of the songs in Chinamwali were meant to attract every girl who became of age to undergo initiation as well as every parent to have the desire of having their children undergo initiation so that they learn its secrets.

The study further revealed that as a girl experienced her first menses, the procedures that she underwent before seclusion allowed for the elders like parents, phungu and the chief to notice that they needed to abstain from sex activities as per tradition least they make other family members suffer from *Mdulo*. Therefore, it was further revealed that *mdulo* taboos were valued in the Chewa tradition and that it was only after a girl had reached puberty stage that she would be considered 'hot' as such she would need to learn the traditions that go with hotness and coldness through initiation, Breugel (2001) stated that fertility depended first on one's standing with the ancestral spirits; this depended on one's observance of the traditions concerning sexual activities. Among the Chewa the regulations had taken the form of *mdulo*..... (*mdulo* entails that sexual activities, sexual fluids and especially menstruation are highly mysterious and powerful and therefore dangerous). This is expressed by the term 'hot' and those that abstain from sexual activities such as the old and children are considered to be cold. According to Breugel's explanation it can also be concluded that Chinamwali initiation also played a role of preserving ones' fertility in child bearing because through initiation a girl would have been familiarized with taboos associated with blood and learnt how to abide by them. As such the initiate would have secured and preserved her fertility by learning every aspect concerning *mdulo* taboos. It was also imperative to note that as the novice receives the values of their society, they are also

educated on the subject of fertility which was believed to be the concern of the ancestors who were expected to play a religious role.

It was also further established that apart from transmitting the values of the Chewa tradition, Chinamwali also gave the initiates cultural identity. However, cultural identity could never exist without the knowledge of the traditions in that particular culture. It was therefore through initiation that the girls would be socialized in the etiquette of their traditions by the namkungwi or phungu who were believed to be the reservoirs of the traditional knowledge and values. This idea was supported by Mbiti (1969) who points out that festivals (initiation ceremonies) also brings together people as a group, thus strengthening their unity and cohesion. Religious and social values were repeated and renewed through communal festivals. People seized such occasions to solicit blessings from God and the departed. As such, Chinamwali initiation ceremony played a religious role in the sense that as the girls passed through the initiation rituals, the link with their ancestors was established. Moreover, through ritual performance the ancestors were also appeased and venerated. This was confirmed by one of the participants who stated that the tradition of Chinamwali was initiated by our ancestors and we only transit it to upcoming generations.

The findings above were also supported by Kyalo (2013) who stated that to know the traditional lore meant to know the adventures of the ancestors and other superhuman beings when they lived on earth. The ordeals and instructions of the young were frequently accompanied by the dramatic ceremonial and dance- including the use of frightening masked figures and bull-roarers which emitted a roaring sound when whirled through the air- intended to impress on the adolescents a sense of the tremendum, the sacredness of the occasion which they were never to forget.

Rooyen et al (2006) asserted that initiation schools prepare children socially making them ready for communal life. The social education provided was aimed at indoctrination, conformity, and integration of the adolescent into tribal group values and societal behavioral norms. Initiation rites are therefore, considered as the most important channel through which culture was preserved and transferred. The social education provided in initiation rites prepared the initiate for citizenship in the tribe by enabling him/her to take social responsibilities and obligations. This entailed that the initiated girls could only appreciate their culture if they were properly tutored in issues of their tradition. Chinamwali therefore provided the appreciation of self and

culture as well as self confidence to the initiates. As Rooyen *et al* (2006) further stated that self-respect, self-discipline and submissiveness were highly valued and expected of girls. The girls also learnt the appropriate feminine behavior.

The study also established that during the initiation process, the *phungu* had a responsibility to ensure that initiate was not pregnant. This was done by the mother providing a chicken for the *phungu* and the initiate to eat without breaking bones, and then the bones are kept until the initiate experienced her second menses. In line with this the Human Rights Commission of Malawi Report (2005) states that the girl (initiate) was told to avoid sexual relationships with men and boys before marriage or risk pregnancy out of wedlock. In agreement, Richards (1958), also states that Chisungu confers the rights to bear a child because it is believed that before a girl is initiated, it is a taboo for her to fall pregnant since by this time she is not yet blessed with fertility by her ancestors. As such, while initiators ensured that the girls they initiated were not pregnant, the process of ensuring that girls were not pregnant varied depending on families and clans. For most clans and traditions the practice of avoiding cooking and adding salt to relish as girls during their menstruation enabled parents and tutors to ensure girls were not pregnant. It was believed in most traditions including the Chewa that getting pregnant before marriage and especially before the initiation ceremony was a taboo.

To probe further on the role of initiation in the religion of the Chewa people, the aspect of the time spent in seclusion was taken into consideration. The study established that the time spent was not fixed; it totally depended on the family, the *phungu* or the clan of a person among the Chewa people. The study revealed that in the Chewa tradition of the people of Katete district, girls were secluded for a period ranging from one week to one month depending on the wishes of the family. It was further eluded to that the period of seclusion depended on the depth of value transmission according to the satisfaction of the parents, *phungu* or community at large. As such, in instances where an initiated girl did not show a change in behavior after initiation, the parents would recommend for that girl to undergo another seclusion period with the hope of transforming her to the expectations of the community. The finding is in line with the Human Rights Commission of Malawi Report (2005) which indicates that on attaining puberty the girl usually informs an aunty or grandmother about her new experience. The girl was then taken for confinement for the entire period of her menses (usually a week). As such, encouraging

reverence for Mdulo taboos is also another role of initiation because through the observation of such taboo initiates and society enjoy their community life without any ordeals.

### **5.3 Influence of Chinamwali initiation on the initiated girls' moral behavior**

This section will discuss the extent to which girls were influenced in their moral behavior after undergoing the Chinamwali initiation ceremony. As the girls underwent initiation, society intended to impart some values believed to be part of its culture. It is from this point of view that this section would try to explain the moral behavior of girls after initiation. The discussion is divided into two parts, the general behavior of initiated girls in the community and moral behavior in marriage.

#### **5.3.1 Moral behavior of initiated girls in the community**

The study established that girls who were initiated were mostly influenced positively in their behavior. Generally the study revealed that girls were taught to respect elders and parents. It was therefore, established that respecting elders and parents were key in the moral behavior of initiated girls. This respect was exhibited in the way of dressing, (wearing a wrapper at all times) the posture when cooking on the brazier or firewood, the way a girl carries herself in the presence of elders and parents, kneeling when giving or receiving something from elders and avoiding sitting on the chair among other things. In line with the above findings, Rasing (2010) stated that in the initiation rite, teachings about how to behave as a proper woman, as a married woman, are the main issues. This includes all facets of adult life, like how to look after oneself, not to beg (because that would indicate that the husband does not look after the wife), how to deal with menstruation, how to welcome visitors, how to deal with in-laws, how to give birth in a decent way, the importance of the matrilineal, that is the descent from grandmother to mother to grandchild, the line of women, all secrets of sexuality, fertility, respect for elders, and the blood spirit of the ethnic group. (Rooyen *et al* (2006) further add that the girl was mainly tutored on the secrets of womanhood. These teachings included aspects such as the rules of hygiene and privacy, advice with regard to sexuality, childbirth, health, married life, on how to be a good and loving mother, and the best honored wife. Self respect, self discipline and submissiveness were highly valued and expected of girls. Girls also learnt the appropriate feminine behavior.

It was also revealed that initiated girls were seriously warned not to expose anything related to menses especially to children and men. Issues on how to keep their menses cloths, how regular they should take a bath, how to wear the menses cloth and generally how to avoid embarrassment during menstruation.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that due to the intensive lessons the initiates underwent, the values inculcated in girls became part of them and influenced their lives. There was a great difference between the initiated and the uninitiated such that one would easily tell by the way the girls conducted themselves in the community. For instance, the way an uninitiated girl would speak to the elders would differ with the way the initiated girl did. The Human Rights Commission report of Malawi (2005) confirmed that elderly women counseled the girls in many matters including good manners especially when interacting with adults. They were expected to show respect to elders. They were also told to stop playing with girls that had not yet attained puberty to show that they were grown-ups and therefore began behaving like adults by associating with fellow grown-ups.

It was further established that during the Chinamwali initiation ceremony, girls were exposed to some kind of terror or fear was instilled in them by the initiators to ensure that they followed the teachings after the initiation was over. These findings are in line with Kyalo (2013) who explained that the experience the girls underwent during initiation facilitated for positive change in behavior by stating that the ordeal and instructions of the young were frequently accompanied by the dramatic ceremonial and dance- including the use of frightening masked figures and bull-roarers which emitted a roaring sound when whirled through the air- intended to impress on the adolescents a sense of the tremendum, the sacredness of the occasion which they were never to forget. In view of the foregoing ideas and the findings the study established that the rituals which the initiates underwent left them with no choice but to obey the teachings lest they faced the consequences. The presence of the spiritual being in most ritual acts also inculcated fear and awe in the initiates such that they tended to believe and followed most of the teachings. Moreover, girls were also told that if they failed to adhere to the given values of the society they would be taken back into seclusion to face even harsher conditions.

It was however established that some initiated girls were not influenced in their moral behavior at all. Such instances were said to be rare and those girls were believed to have a background of broken homes. Ngabwa (2015) in her study on Chibwela Mushi of the Lala of Zambia noted in

passing that girls who underwent *sikenge* initiation were either influenced positively or negatively. While many girls were influenced positively by the values of initiation in different cultures some girls were negatively influenced. In certain instances girls were influenced negatively in their behavior depending on their experiences during the period of seclusion. For example a girl might be influenced by this culture to become promiscuous or even be traumatized by the experience with the man since it was usually not consensual sex but something forced on the initiate and purported to be demanded by tradition. This was perhaps one of the negative aspects of the Chinamwali initiation. Though the *Fisi* act was said to be fading away among the Chewa of Katete District of Zambia, it was believed to be prominent among the Chewa people of Malawi.

### **5.3.2 Moral behavior of initiated girls in marriage**

This section will focus on the moral behavior for girls in marriage as the findings established that issues of marriage were an important part of the Chinamwali initiation curriculum. Moral behavior in marriage in this case would be treated as those values in the Chewa culture where a woman was expected to adhere to the expectations of marriage life.

The study established that an initiated girl would follow all the traditions pertaining to marriage such as, keeping the husband clean (*mwambo wa ka razer*), *tyole*, the kind of respect shown to man in marriage, providing the traditional drink *tobwa* and ensuring the girl had the marriage vessel and kept it in the confined place. The woman was also expected to keep their differences or the man's weaknesses to herself or share only with the elders especially the phungu who could have provided counsel. It was also established that unfaithfulness was a vice that could not be tolerated from a woman.

These findings are supported by Minton and Knottnerus (2008) who reported that the special lessons given during a young woman's initiation were to help her become a proper and desirable Chewa woman. If you respected and obeyed your husband you were literally considered to be 'good'. Indeed pleasing your husband was an extremely important aspect of the Chewa woman's life and directly related to all her other duties. In addition, Richards (1958) stated that besides consecrating the woman's duties in the sense of making them honorable, the rite was an event for public acceptance of the authorized marriage obligations. Longwe (2013) confirmed that the significance of sexual activity for married couples was brought home when the girl was

instructed by actually demonstrating what could be done to arouse each other, during the actual act, and the clean up after the act. Other tips for successful marriage such as shaving each other's pubic hair, bathing the husband or feeding him were also included in the instructions. Most importantly, instructions on fidelity in marriage especially on the part of a wife, was demonstrated by dramatizing of the instructions.

The study also established that girls were encouraged to elongate the labia minora if they had not done it to the expected standard. The elongation of the labia minora was meant for sexual the satisfaction of the man. Thus Longwe (2003) reported that for instance, preparation for marriage begun even before initiation, when the young girls were taught the elongation of the labia minora. She further pointed that this was a practice in some African societies and the belief is that, without elongated labia minora, the husband would not enjoy sex.

Furthermore, it was believed that, if a girl was not initiated and got married her weaknesses with regards to marriage rituals would manifest in one way or the other. She would portray behavior that is not acceptable in the Chewa society. Additionally it was believed that it was mostly the uninitiated girls who would have children out of wedlock. So the study established that moral behavior in girls who were initiated was also seen from their deeds with regards to what was required of them in marriage life. According to the norms and values in the Chewa religion that would be described as good behavior for a married person. The study further established that the expectations were more on the women's side than a men's side, hence the intensive lessons for girls.

#### **5.4 Survival of the Chinamwali initiation in the face of social changes**

This section will discuss and shade light on the survival of Chinamwali initiation ceremony in the midst of social change. The research study established that the Chinamwali initiation ceremony has been in existence from time immemorial. It has been passed on from one generation to another. Therefore in establishing why the ceremony has survived in the midst of social change, the section will begin by stating some changes or modifications identified to have taken place and later explain the essence of its survival or resilience as a cultural aspect.

#### 5.4.1 Changes that have taken place in initiation rituals over time

The study established that there are quite a number of changes and modifications that have taken place in the Chinamwali initiation rites due to the influences of the contemporary religions like Christianity and Islam, education and modernity. The most notable changes are issues concerning the beating of drums instead of tins or bottles, the drawing of *vilengo* (illustrations) which is fading away, noticing the girl's menses on the onset, use of *mwele* (menstruation cloth), explanation of sketches which was, previously not done and the fading away of *Fisi* culture due to human rights, HIV and AIDS and other STIs. Nevertheless, it was indicated that certain sections of the Chewa in Zambia still practiced *Fisi* culture. Though, it was more pronounced among the Chewa of Malawi. This is in agreement with Kamlongera (2007) who states that *Fisi* (Hyena) culture, a custom that was practiced in some of the female initiation ceremonies in Malawi.

The study therefore established that in as much as certain rituals are fading away or changes are being made to initiation rituals due to modernity, (in terms of social educational and religious aspects), initiation is still maintained by only modifying certain ways of doing things and providing a modern and acceptable way in this modern society. Thus, the main aspects of the initiation ceremony still stand, for instance, the *Mdulo* taboos are still vibrant and influence the life of the Chewa people. This same parallel assertion is supported by Van Binsbergen (2004) who states that initiation rites remain important for women today despite the many social, religious, political and economic changes that have significantly altered the Zambian society. It could therefore, be said that initiation is still an aspect of Chewa society that could not be done away with or phased off.

This means that despite some changes in society like the coming of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and education and foreign religions as some of the key issues among others, modern society still look up to cultural values for survival. It is therefore obvious that certain aspects of culture could be modified and others replaced to suit the needs of modern society without destroying its key beliefs. This further means that there is need for a careful scrutiny of teachings concerning initiation by making use of experts in the knowledge of culture and its value to ensure that proper values are maintained and bad traditions are done away with. It is also important to note that the

findings are in line with the feminist cultural hermeneutics theory by Kanyoro (2002) which seeks to put culture to scrutiny in order to test its liberative potential. In this case aspects of culture like the *Fisi* are being scrutinized to enable girls to experience sex when they are married with their free consent.

#### **5.4.2 Survival of the initiation in the midst of social changes:**

The study established that there were several reasons why the Chinamwali initiation for girls had survived or was resilient in the midst of social change. It was revealed that aspects like family unity, marriage bonds, cultural continuity, and holistic education meant for value transmission from generation to generation, social cohesion and harmony as well as the fact that the initiation itself was part of the Chewa culture were salient aspects which led to the survival of the initiation ceremony. It was also established that as women underwent the Chinamwali initiation, men also underwent the *gule wa mukulu (Nyau)* thus the men's expectations of girls were taught through Chinamwali. The study's findings are supported by Van Binsbergen (2004) who stated that initiation rites expressed and confirmed solidarity and unity among women. Norms and values concerning, gender production and reproduction and cosmological ideas were passed on; symbols and rituals contributed to the creation and maintenance of an inclusive cosmology and to the preservation of a system through repetition. This did not mean that the rites were conservative or ignored new elements, but the general world view expressed in them seemed to be maintained.

The study therefore established that since traditional Chewa society depended on communal life, it was imperative to maintain its value in initiation to enable the continuity of life and harmony in the community. This was so because marriage was at the centre of initiation and all other teachings were there to support it. It was also important to note that the smallest unit in the community was a family which was created through marriage which was believed to be maintained by the values of tradition through the initiation ceremony. This was supported by Phiri (1983) who contended that it took missionaries a long time to realize that institutions like Chinamwali through which Chewa girls were prepared in their role as future mothers were useful and worthy adapting in the context of the Christian church. In particular, the missionaries appreciated the importance of these rites in offering sex education, emphasizing the spiritual

aspect of fertility, instruction in correct behavior respect for elders and authority and the need to endure hardships.

It could therefore be concluded that initiation rites have been resilient despite social, religious, economic, and technological advancements because they impacted more on the family life of community individuals than isolated individuals, so even if one belonged to a contemporary religion like Islam and Christianity, they still had to undergo traditional initiation especially before marriage because society demand that a girl could be considered woman enough only when she underwent traditional initiation.

It is also important to note that, initiation marked the beginning of interaction with the spiritual world. This meant that one would be introduced to the ancestors and would get familiar with them in case of any need. The orientation created the foundation for a relationship with the ancestors who had a lot of influence on the life of the community.

## **5.5 Summary**

The chapter discussed all the three aspects of focus in this study according to objectives of the study. The main areas of concern were the role of Chinamwali in terms of its significance. The study established that cultural identity, transmission of values and reverence for taboos were key roles. The study also established that respect, was one way of identifying the positive change in behavior for girls after initiation. This was demonstrated in ways such as posture when greeting elders, wearing a wrapper and avoiding sitting on a chair in the presence of elderly men. Lastly the chapter discussed the changes that have taken place in the Chinamwali initiation ceremony rites. The study revealed that some changes as well as modifications have occurred due to the influences of western education, contemporary religions and modernity however, the key values of the practice have been retained. The next chapter will present the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Overview

The preceding chapter discussed the findings of the study while this chapter will present the conclusions and the recommendations of the study on the significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony in the face of social changes. The study aimed at explaining the role of Chinamwali initiation in the Chewa religion as well to determine how Chinamwali initiation influences the moral behavior of girls after initiation. The study further endeavored to establish why Chinamwali as part of the religion of the Chewa people of Katete district, had survived in the midst of social change.

### 6.2 Conclusions

The study established that Chinamwali initiation ceremony plays the role of transmitting values and traditions of the Chewa to the upcoming generation by familiarizing the initiates with the aspects of Mdulo taboos. Initiation also enables the initiates to acquire cultural identity and self confidence. Initiation also plays the religious role of linking initiates to their ancestors as well as orienting them on how to take care of themselves during menstruation.

It has been concluded that initiation influences the behavior of the girls who are initiated to a certain extent. Generally girls are obliged to respect elders, parents and husbands when they become wives. These were exhibited mostly in the acts of kneeling, dressing and even the way they interacted with others in the community. Moreover, due to the intensive lessons which girls undergo, the values inculcated in them become part of their lives. However, it had also been concluded that some girls were not influenced in their moral behavior due to the background foundation in their parents' homes. The study also revealed that chinamwali could have a negative influence on girls' behavior depending on their experiences during seclusion. This is so especially for those Chewa people in Zambia who still believed in the practice of the *fisi* culture. The experience may have led to promiscuity or traumatic conditions in the initiated girls who experience the *fisi* practice.

The study also concluded that marriage lessons were relevant to initiation since they contributed to the women's behavior in a home. This entailed that lack of the education in marriage issues

would lead to unacceptable behavior since expectations were more on the women's side than the man's side. For instance the elongating of the labia minora, keeping a marriage vessel and using it as purposed.

Furthermore, the study concluded that in as much as certain rituals were fading away or changes are being made to initiation rituals, the Chinamwali would still be maintained because it is believed to be tradition of the Chewa people which promoted social cohesion, family unity and marriage bonds. It could also be concluded that the Chinamwali initiation was the phenomenon which would remain important for women today despite the religious, social, political and cultural changes because of the value attached to family life in almost all African traditions.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

- i. The study recommends that, the roles of Chinamwali initiation should be the transmission of appropriate cultural values, promoting the appreciation of culture and strengthening the religious link between the ancestors and the current generation through observations of Mdulo taboos.
- ii. The tutors and traditional leaders should ensure that rituals which are performed during the Chinamwali initiation ceremony should take into consideration the social changes that are taking place in society without taking away the essence of the initiation. As such the study recommends that the rites should be explored to ensure best practices are maintained in line with the current standards of society since change is inevitable.
- iii. Stakeholders such as chiefs, headmen and concerned citizens should advocate for the end of certain rituals which may not contribute positively to the well being of society at large. Rituals like the performance of *Fisi* (hyena) culture which could negatively affect the behavior of girls in society should not be promoted.
- iv. The study also recommends that since initiation has more of the positive impact on girls, girl should be taught at separate times, for instance, when they have reach puberty, and the second initiation should come when they are getting married. At puberty, girls should only be instructed on issues related to puberty, at the time of their marriage they should be instructed on marriage issues. Therefore, the Chinamwali initiation should also have separate instructors for puberty rituals and marriage rituals to avoid providing

inappropriate teachings for a particular stage. This will mean having a deliberate policy to have separate initiators for puberty and marriage. The study further recommends that, the tutors for Chinamwali initiations should form groups through which they could formulate standard teachings for initiation and also review their lessons where need be, in order to fit the current generations and the modern times. This would provide a balance in that the best of modernity and the best of tradition would make the teachings even more valuable.

#### **6.4 Recommendation for further research**

- i. A comparative study of the Nyau for boys and Chinamwali for girls should be conducted to establish their religious significance in the religion of the Chewa of Zambia.
- ii. Another study on how the Chewa society promotes its cultural heritage should be conducted.

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## Appendix 1

### In-Depth Interview Questions for Tutors or Initiators

#### THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

#### DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE AND RESILIENCE OF THE CHINAMWALI INITIATION CEREMONY OF THE CHEWA PEOPLE OF KATETE DISTRICT OF ZAMBIA

#### IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL CHANGE-

Dear Respondents

I am a student at the University of Zambia carrying out a research on the “**The significance and Resilience of Chinamwali Initiation Ceremony of the Chewa people of Katete district of Zambia in the face of social change**” Please help me to understand and appreciate your values and traditions even more by responding to this interview. All information that is collected in this study will be treated confidentially. While results will be made available to the research supervisors, you are guaranteed that neither you nor any other personnel in your community will be identified in any report of the study.

1. How old are you? (     )
2. For how long have you been a tutor? (     )
3. Approximately how many girls do you initiate per year? (     )
4. Do you think initiation is important in our society today?
5. What important rituals are performed during Chinamwali?
6. What is the recommended period of initiating a child? (     )
7. Are there any changes that have taken place in Chinamwali? Yes / No. If yes, what are those changes? Give at least three
8. How has initiation contributed to the moral behaviour of the girl
9. Are there any differences between the girls who have been initiated and those who not? If yes, mention three differences
10. Is Chinamwali part of the Chewa religion?

11. How is it part of the Chewa religion?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

## Appendix 2

### Focus Group Discussion Guide for Initiates

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**  
**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**  
**THE SIGNIFICANCE AND RESILIENCE OF THE CHINAMWALI INITIATION**  
**CEREMONY OF THE CHEWA PEOPLE OF KATETE DISTRICT**  
**IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL CHANGE-**

Dear Respondents

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia carrying out a research on the “**The Significance and Resilience of Chinamwali Initiation Ceremony of the Chewa People in the face of Social Changes-Katete District**” Please help me to understand and appreciate your values and traditions even more by responding to this interview. I intend to get the views on how Chinamwali has been conducted from its inception and what changes have taken place as well as the values it holds. All information that is collected in this study will be treated confidentially. While results will be made available to the research supervisors, you are guaranteed that neither you nor any other personnel in your community will be identified in any report of the study.

1. How old are you? (     )
2. When were you initiated?     (     )
3. Was it your choice to be initiated in Chinamwali? Yes/ No .if No, who influenced you to undergo initiation?
4. How long was your initiation? (     )
5. Has the initiation made any impact in your life?
6. How did you feel after initiation?
7. What are some of the things you have learnt from being initiated?
8. How different are you from those who are not initiated?

9. Why do you think the chinamwali initiation ceremony should remain part of the Chewa culture?
10. What do you has changed in initiate?
11. Is Chinamwali part of the religion of the Chewa?
12. How is it so?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

## Appendix 3

### In-Depth Interview Guide for Headmen

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**THE SIGNIFICANCE AND RESILIENCE OF THE CHINAMWALI INITIATION**  
**CEREMONY OF THE CHEWA PEOPLE OF KATETE DISTRICT OF ZAMBIA**  
**IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL CHANGE-**

Dear Respondents

I am a student at the University of Zambia carrying out a research on the “**The Significance and Resilience of Chinamwali Initiation Ceremony of the Chewa people of Katete District in the face of Social Change**” Please help me to understand and appreciate your values and traditions even more by responding to this interview. All information that is collected in this study will be treated confidentially. While results will be made available to the research supervisors, you are guaranteed that neither you nor any other personnel in your community will be identified in any report of the study.

1. What is the name of your village?
2. For how long have you been the headman?
3. How often do you have Chinamwali initiation ceremony in your village?
4. Why is it important to conduct Chinamwali initiation ceremony for girls?
5. Is there anything that you feel is not being done during the initiation?
6. What do you think should be done to improve the practice?
7. In which way does the Chinamwali initiation help girls in terms of their behaviour after initiation?
8. Is Chinamwali part of the Chewa religion? How is it so?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

## **Appendix 4**

### **Observation Checklist**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**THE SIGNIFICANCE AND RESILIENCE OF THE CHINAMWALI INITIATION**  
**CEREMONY OF THE CHEWA PEOPLE OF KATETE DISTRICT OF ZAMBIA**  
**IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL CHANGE-**

Researcher introduces herself and explains the purpose of the research and its relevance to the participants.

Key areas of focus;

1. The rituals performed during the Chinamwali initiation and the procedures that are followed
2. The behavior of the initiates (*namwali*) during the process of initiation.
3. the lessons that will be emphasized