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TITLE: WHAT ARE THE ATTITUDES AND VIEWS OF THE PEOPLE REGARDING THE NZILA SECT? A CASE OF KATUYA VILLAGE IN SENANGA DISTRICT.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife Akatwala and my children Kozwana, Namakau, Inonge and Mwakamui for their tolerance and patience during the long period of time I was away from them with my studies at the University of Zambia.
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 ABSTRACT

This study, conducted on a case model or approach using in depth interviews on 18 subjects, investigated the existence of the Nzila sect among the Lozi ethnic group in Senanga District of Western Province of Zambia. This was done in a bid to determine whether the sect is still useful or not, decreasing or increasing in terms of membership and popularity. It was found that while the sect was undergoing a noticeable decline in the recent past in terms of its influence and grip on the people due to socio-economic and religious factors, the Sect manifested a relatively high degree of resistance to extinction although undergoing a decline. There is a pronounced in and out movement between the Nzila sect and the recent established Christian Pentecostal churches. The basic reason accounting for this movement is the dissatisfaction people have with either the Nzila or Pentecostal Churches in failing to offer more lasting permanent solution to their social problems especially sicknesses. From this observation, it appears that the reason for the decline in membership and popularity is more psychological than the socio-economic and religious factors.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Religious change and its associate factors in Zambia is a subject that has received scholarly attention in the academic circles in recent years. The changes have sometimes led to the rise of new religious groups or the decline of others. These new religious groups to which the Nzila sect under this discussion falls, have been dubbed Independent African churches.

In pre-colonial times Independent churches or sects were labeled as reactionary political movements dissatisfied with the practices of the European missionaries. After independence, socio-economic factors were cited as the well springs of their existence. Daneel (1970:4) alludes to the healing issue as the basis of their large memberships. This was the case with the Nzila sect in the early years after its inception. The sect thrived in an environment that was already permeated by Christian influence. Is this still the case in the twenty first century? The accounts that follow in this document are yet to determine this observation.
1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Nzila Sect is another form of a cult of affliction associated mainly with the exorcism of evil spirits. This cult made its first appearance in the 1960s in the Western Province of Zambia. It was founded and led by a man called Rice Kamanga, or Chana I, a Mbunda immigrant from Angola who got established in Kalabo district. Chana I, a leper, subsequently suffered from a mental illness soon after his return from Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) in the 1940s. His mysterious mental recovery, attributed to divine intervention, gave him credence to treat his first set of twelve patients. These later formed a clique of his first disciples; hence the name ‘The Twelve Society.’ Chana later moved to Mongu and established his headquarters there at a place called Lwandui. Other places like Senanga and Kaoma became centers of the Nzila sect’s field of operation.

Soon after its establishment in Western Province, the Nzila sect, specialising in the treatment of mental problems associated with the possession by evil spirits, later spread rapidly to other parts of the country. Labour migrations facilitated the establishment of the sect along the line of rail especially in Livingstone and the Copperbelt. The Society drew a fairly large following behind itself in Zambia in the 1970s, with some followings as well in such countries like Zimbabwe and Botswana (Van Binsbergen 1981:201) By 1966, it was already registered with the Registrar of Societies thus gaining government recognition. It must however be pointed out that the sect was predominantly embraced by the Lozi speaking ethnic groups, hence its heavy presence in Lozi stronghold areas such as Livingstone outside Western Province.

It should be noted that when speaking of the Nzila Sect, this does not include other closely related forms of spirit possession cults such as Moya (spirit) or Bituma whose founders are different from that of Nzila. Another notable feature about Nzila is that it is predominant among the minority Mbunda and Luvale ethnic groups which belong to the main Lozi ethnic group. Chana himself was a Mbunda. However Nzila is a cult of affliction in that it is joined by the people healed from some kind of illness. It is a sect in that it is registered religious organization with an established doctrinal system and a large membership.
The Nzila sect has been in existence in Zambia especially Western Province, for almost four decades now as a medico-religious society. However, with the dawn of the 1990s, noticeable changes in the social acceptance of this sect have been more pronounced. The 1990s were also a time of turmoil for the country. Economically, the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) left most people living in abject poverty. Socially, the effects of HIV/AIDS pandemic and related diseases worsened the lives of many people. Religiously, the country witnessed an unprecedented growth in religious organizations especially the Faith-Spirit Healing Churches.

It is against this background that the research sought to re-evaluate and examine the current popularity of the sect to ascertain its usefulness and relevance when juxtaposed with the past history.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
The purpose of the study was to investigate and assess what the current attitudes and views of the people regarding the Nzila Sect are in terms of its usefulness and relevance. Earlier on Muntemba had indicated that “Nzila’s definition and perpetuation came to be based not just on adepts within the cult but also on public opinion” (Muntemba, 1972b:11). This was at a time when the sect appeared as if it was declining because of coming in contact with Christian healing churches around the 1970s. It is against this premise observed some thirty years ago that a re-evaluation in the light of the present century when Christian healing churches (Pentecostal/ministries) are mushrooming every day, was needed.

2.1 OBJECTIVES
1. To evaluate whether there are any perceived changes in public opinion regarding the usefulness of the Nzila sect.
2. To investigate whether Nzila members had any observed changes within the sects activities in recent years.
3. To assess whether the Nzila sect was numerically increasing or decreasing in popularity among the people in the present generation
4. To investigate whether the advent and increase of the Independent Christian churches/ministries had any perceived impact on the Nzila sect.
5. To investigate whether socio-economic changes within the society had any perceived impact on the sect.
CHAPTER THREE

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious systems in the world are not static but are dynamic in nature. This implies that religions or cults undergo some changes when there are changes within the social structures within which they operate. According to Johnson (1977:150), “most modern religious movements whether...prophetic cults or separatist churches have been evaluated and explained by social anthropologists in terms of social change.” Such scholars have cited the political, economic and social factors as basis upon which to understand the nature and existence of religious or cult systems. This implies that even peoples’ acceptance or rejection of the religious or cult systems can be explained in relation to the change in the social structures.

In his monumental work, Reynolds (1963:153) gives an elaborate historical account of the origin and development of the Nzila sect, also known as the “Twelve Society, specialized in the treatment and cure of bindele, one of the modern Lunda-Luvale...traditional ailment resulting from possession by ancestral spirit...” The twelve were the earliest disciples of the founder of this society or cult who were cured from the evil spirits. Rice Kamanga, or best known as Chana I established his society first in Kalabo, then later in Mongu and Senanga, with Mongu becoming the headquarters. According to Reynolds, the cult attracted a large following of people suffering from possession of evil spirits most of whom were female (1963:134).

It is clear from the above cited viewpoint that female patients in the Nzila Sect were in the majority. Elsewhere in Africa, similar findings due to mashave possession have been reported among the Budjga-one of the Shona tribes found in Southern Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Murphree, 1969:53). While labour migration, prestige for identification with the cult, or a means of partial escape from intolerable domestic conditions have been cited as reason for this phenomenon, Reynolds’ accounts in the Nzila case have remained unexplained. My study has attempted to assess whether this female preponderance is till in existence in the twenty first century. Some possible reasons accounting for this have been advanced.

Another significant issue raised in Reynold’s findings relate to the financial obligations required of those to be cured. According to Reynolds, “the charge for treatment is high, but it is not
much higher than that for the treatment of less popular, more mundane ailments," (Reynolds, 1963:138). Commenting on this issue, Van Binsbergen (1981:200) observes that payment is normally in the form of livestock; a cow, a few pigs or goats, but frequently a fairly substantial sum of money has to be paid. [A patient] must also bring a beast to slaughter for the feast...

Considering the economic position of the country at that time when the economy of Zambia was relatively strong as compared to the present, the study has endeavored to establish whether peoples' attitudes on this matter are still the same. Reynolds (1963:138) observes that such financial obligations were readily acceptable to the people at that time.

While Reynolds' accounts give the origin and development of Nzila sect, he does not however give the statistics of the society or sect at its beginning. This issue is investigated in detail by Van Binsbergen. According to Van Binsbergen (1981:201), the Nzila sect extended to other parts of the country especially along the line of rail including the Copperbelt. Additionally, he also observes that the sect had extended its tentacles to such countries like Zimbabwe and Botswana. As a result of this, Van Binsbergen (1981:201) alludes that the Nzila sect had a large membership of about 96,872 by 1972 from both its internal and external statistics. This is a colossal figure, and it shows the popularity that the sect enjoyed from the general public at that time. Additionally, both Reynolds and Van Binsbergen observe that apart from Mongu, Senanga was the second most important place where the Nzila sect found wide acceptance. Elsewhere outside Western Province, Livingstone in the Southern Province proved to be another strong hold of the Nzila Sect (Muntemba, 1972b:11). The implication of this is that Nzila has more followers from the Lozi ethnic group. Whether Nzila is still popular among the aforementioned ethnic group, and Senanga in particular, a research conducted more than thirty years ago by Van Binsbergen is an issue to be revealed in the findings of this report.

Another point of interest that Van Binsbergen observes related to the esteem with which people considered the sect in terms of offering solutions to their health problems. This aspect strengthened the spiritual position of the sect inspite of its contacts with the early faith and spirit healing churches or Pentecostal movements (Van Binsbergen, 1981:206). From the earlier accounts of the Nzila sect, it was observed that this movement arose a as a cult of affliction
because of the existing social and health problems, in this case mental health problems of which Chana himself had been miraculously cured from. In this view, then, Nzila acted as a panacea to the prevailing social-medical problems. Social or medical problems are sometimes cited by scholars as reasons why most people would join a religious body, or cult of affliction. It should however be noted that there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of faith and spirit healing Christian churches or Pentecostal Movements at the dawn of the 1990s. In Zambia, this has been exacerbated by the declaration of the country as a Christian nation. On the other hand, the increase in health related problems and the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in particular has impacted negatively on the masses leaving them in a quagmire of hopelessness. The usefulness and relevance of the Nzila sect to the people in this generation under this kind of scenario is very important.

Dillon-Malone (1983:471) has equally provided useful information regarding the functional roles of the independent African churches to which the Nzila sect belongs. According to Dillon-Malone, “the Nchimi and Mutumwa Churches of Zambia today are part of a much wider medico religions movement which is rooted in an indigenous spiritual healing tradition undergoing continual change” He also observes some notable practices, among these churches such as the wearing of white clothes as a sign of identity. Reynolds has observed the same practice among the Nzila sect. In view of the already cited issue of economic change, it is essential to analyse whether this practice of identity is still prevailing as well as being a source of motivation for adherence to the sect.

The Mutumwa Churches are relatively new and young in existence as compared to the Nzila sect. However, contrary to the financial obligations required by the Nzila, the Mutumwa churches require very moderate fees and this makes them attractive to the masses (Dillon-Malone, 1983). To what extent the popularity of the Mutumwa Churches has extended over the Nzila is yet to be determined by the research findings.

In their historical accounts of the Nzila founder, both Reynolds and Van Binsbergen state that Rice Kamanga or Chana I had been to Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia). It was only when he came back that the new sect or cult was set up in Zambia. This was after his recovery from mental illness, (Van Binsbergen, 1981:206). It seems that the Nzila sect shares some similarities
with the *Mashave* afflicting spirits found in Zimbabwe. Gelfand (1962:90) lists some of the *Mashave* practices that have some European undertones such as desires to adopt the European pattern of dressing and eating, as well as the use of some English words in the healing practices. This point has been alluded to by Reynolds (1963:135) concerning the Nzila sect. Similarly, the Nzila sect has been observed to be strict on their diet (Van Binsbergen, 1981:201).

In my earlier exposition, I cited Reynolds as linking the Nzila sect practices to the *Mahamba* of the Lunda-Luvale origin. Concerning the Lunda-Luvale, they believed that the *Mahamba* were “The spirits of the Europeans that fly about at night afflicting the Africans” (Turner 1968:61). According to Turner, Tuberculosis was believed to be caused by the *Mahambas* of the Europeans. This then implied that African cure system of using herbs, and not European drugs, was needed. The Nzila sect having similar beliefs as the *Mahamba*, has a strict focus on herbal treatment. Gray (1978:95) on the other hand talks of flexibility of the African to the assimilation of new concepts.

Closely related to the above issue is the impact of social changes taking place in other similar religious or cult system. According to Shorter (1980:47), there is an observed trend of spirit possession influence to decline when coming in contact with the Charismatic praying groups – Pentecostal Churches. Smith (1922:166) made similar predictions regarding the decline of the African religious systems in their contacts with Christianity. However, other research findings among certain ethnic groups have revealed no susceptibility to any change despite the presence of Christianity. This is true of the Budjga where the advent of Christianity has not led to a decline in the *shave* possession (Murphree, 1969:53). This view point is equally echoed by Muntemba who observes that the Nzila sect received an even greater mass demand on public opinion after it suffered what appeared to be a temporary decline in population due to its contact with Christianity (Muntemba, 1972b:11). This observation is what has necessitated the title of this research paper. Is this still the case in the twenty first century? The findings are yet to settle this.

What has been presented from the foregoing literature reviews are scholarly accounts of the Nzila sect including other view points of cult systems elsewhere in Africa. It must however be observed that these research findings require re-evaluation due to the passage of time. The
Nzila sect was popular due to the solutions it provided to the social dilemmas then in existence but societies are dynamic in nature. To what extent these scholarly accounts remain valid in the wake of global changes in the twenty first century is yet to be ascertained by the research findings based on the study of the Nzila sect in Senanga. Although the study was conducted with a relatively small population, the results could be a representation of the general trend of the sect wherever it exists. The focus of this paper now shifts to these research findings.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study may be useful in attempting to re-evaluate the earlier research works and findings of Reynolds, Van Binsbergen and Muntemba, which have been in existence for more than three decades now. It is hoped that the findings from this study will provide current information regarding the position of the Nzila sect. It is also hoped that the findings of this study may be useful when extended to other sects and cults of affliction which may be undergoing similar changes as that of the Nzila sect. The findings may also benefit both the scholar of religions, the Religious Education teacher and students of religious studies regarding the dynamics of religions. The findings may also contribute to the body of existing literature since there are only very few studies done on this topic.

4.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Bindele
As used in this paper, this refers to the Mahambas or spirit possession believed to be of European origin.

Bituma
A cult of affliction similar to Nzila but whose founder is Simbinga.

Cult
Refers to a system of religious worship dealing with misfortune especially the possession of evil spirits.

Faith-Spirit healing Churches
This refers to the modern charismatic religious bodies involving the use of prayers only for healing patients without any herbs. They will be used synonymously with the Pentecostal Churches.
Mahamba
In this study, this refers to the possession by evil spirits, causing intense physical and mental affliction of the patient. These spirits are associated with the Lunda-Luvale cults of affliction as investigated by Turner (1965).

Mashave
This is similar to the above spirit possession except that it is associated with the Zimbabwean cults of affliction studied by Gelfand (1962:90)

Moya
Another cult of affliction like Nzila but has Moya as its leader.

S.A.P.
Structural Adjustment Programme

Sect
As used in this report has reference to the founder of Nzila’s Christian background and subsequent break away from Christianity (S.D.A.) to establish Nzila Cult.

Twelve Society
This refers to the nick name given to this sect after the treatment of the first twelve patients who later became the disciples to the founder.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0  METHODOLOGY

5.1  RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, the qualitative approach using structured questions was used. The questions were merely to assist the interviewer; in depth questions were used to elicit more deep-rooted information from the respondents.

5.2  POPULATION

Earlier on in the proposal, the intention was to interview about 25 people: active Nzila members and those that were once Nzila members but are no longer in the Nzila sect were to add up to 20 members, and the remaining 5 members was to comprise those who have never been members of the sect. However, it was not possible to reach this number because of the problems in identifying who was an active member of the Nzila as well as former Nzila members. In this respect then, a total number of 18 respondents was sampled. More female respondents than males were interviewed. These were within the age range of 25 to 60 years old.

5.3  SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sampling technique that was chiefly used was that of convenient sampling in which the basis of information about the active Nzila members and former Nzila members was achieved by asking where those prospective respondents could be found and located. After interviewing the first respondents, it become easy for other respondents to be located. However, the former Nzila members were very instrumental in helping the researcher to locate the active Nzila members who in some cases were not easily identifiable.

During the period of study, 18 respondents were interviewed: 6 members from each of the 3 groups namely: Active Nzila members, former Nzila members, and independent observers. Among the active Nzila members, 5 females and 1 male were interviewed, while respondents from former Nzila members included 4 females and 2 males. Those members from the
independent observers (group) included 3 females and 3 males. These respondents were conveniently sampled.

5.4 STUDY AREA

The area where the study was conducted was Katuya village in Senanga district. It should be pointed out that the majority of those interviewed were mostly illiterate or semi-illiterate. Only 5 respondents were literate in terms of completing formal schooling or otherwise.

5.6 DATA COLLECTION

In depth information recorded as raw data was accessed by the use of the guided structured interviews that the researcher used. These were of two types:

(i) Interview guide A was the main research instrument for the active Nzila as well as former Nzila members. This research instrument had 10 basic question items which served as guides only since this was an in-depth case study.

(ii) Interview guide B was for the respondents who had never been in the Nzila sect but were simply independent observers to the activities of the sect in the area. They either knew or did not know anything about the activities of the sect. The research instrument used (guide B) had 9 basic items.

The information from the respondents was carefully recorded in the researcher's file.

5.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data was critically analysed by way of sorting, arranging and grouping similar information into major themes. These major themes formed the frame work on which basic issues recorded were clustered. The research instruments outlined earlier on facilitated this process. Since the number of the respondents was relatively small, the work was analysed manually.
5.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was basically designed to be a case study, as such it has not considered cases outside the area of confinement

5.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. This study was purely qualitative. Due to time constraint, it was not possible to supplement it with some quantitative data which could have proved very useful too. The study was conducted during the vacation, over a period of only three weeks, hence it could not capture more underlying responses from many respondents.

2. Most of the respondents especially those belonging to the Nzila sect were not found in one village but were scattered in many distant villages far from the main establishment of the Nzila sect.

3. Lack of funds especially where payments were demanded proved a serious drawback. The researcher had to part away with his own pocket money since he was not in way funded by his sponsors – MOE- Western Province.

4. Appointments with the prospective respondents were usually done in the mornings while most of the actual interviews were conducted in the afternoons. One had to be careful not to overstretch the time in view of the major afternoon family and personal activities.

In some cases, the respondents were afraid of the presence of the interviewers thinking that they were being interviewed by Police Officers (C.I.D. Section). The interviewer had to clarify such misconceptions of identity.

5. Lack of the knowledge about the Nzila sect’s ethics and code of conduct almost proved too dangerous for the researcher. According to the Nzila sect’s set up and structure, permission has to be sought from the leader before ordinary members can be
interviewed. However, after apologising and seeking forgiveness, the research continued.

6. The study was based on a case approach model as such it lacked wider representation and participation since only 18 subjects were interviewed.
CHAPTER SIX
6.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

After analysing the recorded data, the following issues emerged out and formed the major themes upon which perceived attitudes and views were to be based:

6.1 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

It was generally observed by most of the respondents among the former Nzila members and the independent members or observers that the Nzila sect was on the decline in terms of membership. It was observed that the sect was strongly upheld by those who had grown up in it or had parents who were adepts to it and found it difficult to break the family ties that had bound them together for a long time. Some respondents had living examples of some nearby Nzila congregations which had ceased to function. Former Nzila respondents projected the total membership of the Nzila sect in Senanga to about 100 members only or slightly above that. This was also confirmed by the active Nzila respondents.

When the active Nzila members were investigated on their membership, a handful of them admitted that the sect was decreasing in membership. This trend had been more pronounced at the sect’s annual gatherings conducted at the end of every June (30th June). Whereas there used to be multitudes of adepts at such meetings, this was no longer the case. The 2004 annual meeting had roughly about 350 members in attendance. This was far too small considering the fact that this meeting comprised members from three districts of Western Province. At the local Nzila congregation, the weekly attendance was on the average of between 40 and 50 members.

Some of the reasons advanced for this decrease in membership included long distances to be covered by most Nzila members. Most of these were too old to walk such long distances. Some respondents in the Nzila were of the view that the rules and regulations in the sect had become less strict, hence occurrences of some members absconding. However, more of the respondents from the independent observers and those once in
Nzila were of the view that the sect had been greatly weakened by the intrusion of the charismatic (Pentecostal) churches. These churches attracted a lot of followers because of their stress on healing. The active Nzila members admitted this view point but stated that members went to these churches but later came back again after failing to get the healing they were looking for.

6.2 ECONOMIC FACTORS

All the respondents among the former Nzila members and the independent group cited the Nzila modes of payments as being too colossal for an ordinary poor person. The least an ordinary patient was required to pay was a total number of 6 hens and 6 cocks while a full overnight session of treatment for the affluent patients ranged from one goat to one head of cattle.

While such financial obligations were needed, respondents, especially those who had once been in the Nzila claimed that they never got healed. They were of the view that the hospital was reasonable in their payments. Some of the views expressed included the following:

- If most people around this place cannot afford a decent meal, what more of an animal that Nzila usually demand.
- If you are not careful with the facts of the Nzila all your heads of cattle will be finished one by one and yet you will not be healed.
- If you want poverty, try the Nzila sect. The people (Nzila) are just interested in people's animals.

Nzila members on the other hand claimed that they only charged a minimum of K15,000 for their services which in their view was quite reasonable.

6.3 USEFULNESS AND RELEVANCE OF NZILA

All the 6 active Nzila respondents stated that they had joined the Nzila after being cured from the various illnesses they had, as such the sect was very helpful. On the other hand although Nzila claimed to heal most of the diseases, it didn’t have such views where
HIV/AIDS cases were concerned. Adepts were of the view that they only relieved the patients of their stressful conditions. The following were some of their views:

- **Nzila treats mental problems fairly well.**
- **Nzila has living testimonies of people who had stayed for longer periods without children but such got twins when they came to Nzila.**
- **Some church leaders secretly bring their patient sot the Nzila.**

While the above is true of the Nzila members, all the 12 respondents in the other two groups had some misgivings about the sect. Firstly, the respondents observed that the patients who had undergone the Nzila therapies were never completely healed. Secondly, the taboos and other regulations imposed on the patients did more harm to the patients than the adepts thought. Lastly, they accused the Nzila of having more interests on financial gains. Nzila’s claim on accepting HIV/AIDS patients even when it is known that the disease is incurable only shows their interests on financial gains. Respondents from the two groups had negative attitudes towards the Nzila on this matter. The sect was not useful. However, all the 6 respondents from the former Nzila members admitted joining the Nzila due to their sicknesses although they claimed not to have been healed.

### 6.4 COMMUNITY APPRECIATION

In terms of community appreciation of the Nzila services, most of the respondents (11 in total) from the two groups observed that the community at large didn’t consider the Nzila services useful. The respondents revealed that the sect was labelled ‘the demons’ sect’. Nzila members equally observed that the sect’s services were no longer considered useful as it used to be in the past. Most of the members (mostly widows) were shunned by members of the community; only close family members socialised with them. The patients were stigmatised under the label ‘Ba madimona’ (those possessed by devils). Clearly this shows the community’s negative perception of this sect.
On the other hand some independent observers cited pretense among some individuals as the reasons why they joined the sect. The accused such individuals of being hypocrites as the following views show:

- *We have incidences of women who claimed to be under possession but when such women were whipped by their husbands, they ran for their lives.*
- *How possible can it be that an individual under spirit possession can run away when someone shouts “snake!”*
- *Most Nzila patients have a tendency of wanting to eat alone under the pretext of following their rules and taboos.*
- *Many women joining Nzila because that is the easiest way of stopping their husbands from being polygamous or being promiscuous, it is possible for someone to disclose secrets under the influence of the evil spirits.*

The general view here was that Nzila was another way of evading social problems. The community disapproved these individual practices.

### 6.5 ADVENT OF PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES/MINISTRIES

The respondents from the Nzila sect expressed knowledge of the existence of the Pentecostal churches. Additionally, the respondents expressed knowledge of some of their members getting attracted and going to these churches. However, the members were of the view that there were marked noticeable movements of people getting in and out of these churches back to the Nzila sect. Accordingly, the sect had recorded about 42 cases of members re-admitted to the Nzila sect. In their view therefore, the Nzila sect would remain strong as it had been before.

Most of the respondents from the other two groups claimed that the Christian churches (Pentecostals) were viewed positively by the community in that they cured the people from their sicknesses as well as exorcising the evil spirits (demons), unlike the Nzila sect. These churches also demanded only free will offerings. Their perception was that these would entice more members from the Nzila sect, only the illiterates and poor
people living in the remote areas where these churches have not penetrated would still continue in the Nzila sect.

6.6 FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE NZILA.

The respondents in the two groups other than the Nzila doubted whether the Nzila would have any significant impact on the community as it once had in the past. They anticipated that as the churches continued to increase in the area, the general populace would get enlightened and hence forsake the traditional ways of going to the Nzila sect for treatment. In their view, the hospitals and new churches offered more lasting solutions to their social problems. The active Nzila respondent, on the other hand, stated that as long as people continued to exist with their social problems of sicknesses, Nzila would still be useful. They considered the hospitals and the churches to be ineffective in assisting people hence the criss-cross movement between the hospital and the churches on the one hand and the Nzila sect on the other.

6.7 OTHER PERCEIVED NZILA PRACTICES

The former Nzila members cited the unhealthful practices in modes of treating patients as some reasons for their dissatisfaction with the sect. They also accused the Nzila leaders of living comfortably while their subjects, mostly poor widows, lived in poverty. The money accrued from the treatments of patients was used to advance the education of the children of those Nzila leaders.
CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The results just presented in the last chapter help to highlight some of the most observable developments in the activities of the Nzila sect in as far as public opinion and attitudes are concerned.

7.1 PUBLIC VIEWS ON NZILA’S MEMBERSHIP.

The observations by the two groups other than the active members of the Nzila sect were of the view that despite their knowledge of the existence and activities of the sect, the sect was declining in terms of membership. This point of view was equally observed by the sect’s adepts who cited the annual meeting as where this observation was mostly noticeable. The weekly meetings were reported to be characterised by irregular attendance patterns.

While the members of the Nzila sect cited long distances to be covered and the nature of some members as being too old to walk, these reasons are disputed on the ground, that the sect had had aged members within its ranks in the past and yet there are no reports of such members failing to attend the annual or weekly meetings. This observation also applies to long distances. The public opinion then on this point is a valid one. Elsewhere in Africa, the activities of similar cult groups, (those of *mashave*) are reported to be “more clandestine and exclusively nocturnal than previously reported” Murphree, (1969:52). Under limitations, it was reported that some members of this sect were only identified after being directed to them by the former Nzila members. This shows that they are not as pronounced as they used to be in the past.

7.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS NZILA PAYMENTS

Economic factors were among the many objections that the respondents cited as being unreasonable in the Nzila practices. Respondents were of the view that demanding animals at this time when the economy is considerably poor was not fair. There seems
to be same grain of truth in this viewpoint because the Nzila sect is predominantly found in the rural areas. Senanga itself is a rural district and cases of poverty are more pronounced in rural areas than urban. However, this observation is weak in some respects in that with the onset of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Zambia, most of the hospitals are under fee paying systems. It may be observed that Nzila was very popular in the 1970s when the economy of Zambia was relatively strong. It is doubtful whether people were mainly attracted to the Nzila sect by economic factors. People pay money because of the gains they expect from something. Thus it may be argued that people have negative attitudes on the Nzila sect not necessarily on the economic factors but on its usefulness.

7.3 VIEWS ABOUT NZILA'S USEFULNESS AND RELEVANCE.

Prominent among the reasons advanced why the Nzila sect was declining was the value people attached to it in terms of usefulness and relevance. Generally, the usefulness that people had attached to the sect in terms of offering solutions to their social medical problems had weakened. The sect did not completely heal the patients and therefore people in the community attached more relevance to the hospitals and the charismatic (Pentecostal) churches that were seen as excelling in this direction. People were dissatisfied with the Nzila and adopted negative views towards it. In cases where Nzila attempted to treat HIV/AIDS cases, the subsequent deaths that followed were attributed to the unskilful ways of subjecting patients to harsh treatment processes.

The advent of the Pentecostal churches such as the Bread of Life International, Apostolic Faith Mission and Evangelical Church of Zambia towards the end of the 1980s has reduced the influence of the Nzila sect on the people. While Murphree (1969:53) observes that “the advent of Christianity has not led to the decline in shave possessions among the Budjga (people of Zimbabwe),” it seems that this has been the opposite in the case of the Nzila sect. The Christian churches (Pentecostals) seem to have drawn more people to themselves. The youth in particular are reported not to belong to the Nzila sect. This could largely be attributed to the stigma associated with the Nzila members who are usually referred to derogatorily as ‘Ba madimona’ (those with
demon). The charismatic nature and fear of the social stigma associated with the Nzila seem to be the valid explanations why the youth are not found in the sect and why the majority of the members are mostly elderly people especially women.

To what extent are the cited reasons under the study’s finding really responsible for the perceived negative attitudes and views about the Nzila sect from the people to warrant a decline in popularity? It has already been observed that the Nzila sect was once vibrant in most parts of Senanga but this has not been the case at the dawn of the 1990s. The research findings clearly confirm that the Nzila sect is negatively viewed and that it has declined considerably in its membership. While the socio-economic and religious factors are among the variables that have impacted negatively on the sect, it seems the decline in popularity is much more psychological in nature. The following view points in the analysis of the study findings help to clarify this point.

It has been admitted by the Nzila sect members and the other non Nzila groups that the advent of the Charismatic (Pentecostal) Christian churches has exacerbated the decline of the sect in terms of membership. While this religious factor has been stressed, there was a generally agreed view that there was a marked noticeable movement of people going in and out the Nzila sect. People went to the Pentecostal churches for healing. Those who did not get the expected healing turned back to the Nzila sect again. This aspect is more psychological than religious. People are charmed by what they perceive to be the reality (healing from the churches) but get deluded after failing to meet their expectations. Because of this criss-cross phenomenon, it has rendered the Nzila sect to be resistant to total extinction.

Another significant point that shows the psychological nature of the perceived negative views towards the Nzila is exhibited by the fact that there are no young people in the Nzila sect. However, this was not the case at its inception. According to Muntemba (1972b:11) the Nzila sect won public opinion (including the youths). It is mostly unlikely to find a disease that segregates patients and sexes. Public opinion on this matter showed that there were more females than males, with an absence of young people. There were more people at the Christian churches including the youths. The
observation made earlier that the charismatic nature of the new churches and fear of social stigma makes youths shun Nzila is indeed valid and confirms why the psychological more than the religious or economic factors seem to be the researchers’ observations. It should also be recalled from the earlier accounts that most of the public views concerning the Nzila sect’s membership was that it is heavily dominated by the females. While this trend has continued in the existence of the Nzila sect, the sect has lost much of its grip on most of Lozi ethnic group members. Most of the former Nzila members interviewed were Lozis who had left the sect and joined the new churches. On the other hand, most of the active Nzila members interviewed were Mbundas or Luvalues belonging to the minority ethnic groups and most of these were widows. While social factors are responsible for group cohesiveness, the psychological factor is more pronounced. Some Lozis may no longer want to associate themselves with a cult of affliction where the majority are the minority ethnic groups. Nzila’s founder is a Mbunda. Additionally, most of the active members are illiterate as has already been alluded to in the early accounts of the study.
CHAPTER EIGHT

8.0 SUMMARY

The findings from the study show that the community generally has negative attitudes towards the Nzila sect. The sect is considered less helpful and less useful where the healing of the community’s sicknesses are concerned. People’s negative attitudes are brought about by the fact that besides its perceived inability to offer lasting solutions to the community’s social and psychological problems, the sect is exploitative in nature.

As a result of these perceived negative attitudes towards the sect, the sect is on a decline in terms of membership due to the dissatisfaction people have. However, while the socio-economic and religious factors cited above for the decline in membership of the sect may be valid to some extent, a psychological explanation for this development seem to be more valid. The community seems to waver between the Nzila and the Christian churches/ministries as to which can offer lasting solutions to their sicknesses and psychological problems the community seems to battle with. There is a criss-cross movement among some members of the community in their pursuit for solutions to their perceived social problems. This observed phenomenon makes the psychological explanation more valid.

8.1 CONCLUSION

The scope of the study has been to evaluate and assess what the perceived attitudes and views of the people regarding the Nzila sect are in Senanga district. It has been found that the Nzila sect is negatively viewed, a fact attested by the nick name ‘Those possessed by demons’. This has impacted negatively on the society - resulting in low membership as compared with the past.

In this respect then, the objectives of the study have been achieved in that:

- There is a numerical decline in the membership of the sect confirmed by irregular weekly attendances and low turn outs at annual gatherings.
People in the community no longer widely consult the Nzila sect for their social and psychological problems as they used to do in the past.

The community seems to have adapted to the modern institutions such as hospitals and Christian churches – seen to offer desired expectations.

The youths no longer want to associate themselves with a sect that is under general public stigma.

Nzila is strongly held by the old women most of whom are widows. These tend to have similar social problems are remaining together in the sect acts as psychological buffer to their problems. It is a way of identifying with one another.

The in and out of Nzila movements in search for a complete healing is in itself psychological. This is because of the belief systems attached to spirit possession. Where much beliefs are not in existence, individuals are not likely to respond to rites of exorcism (Meadow and Kahoe, 1984:130). This may explain why Nzila is mainly found among the people in rural areas and not among the rich people.

Furthermore, Nzila is losing its grip on the majority Lozi ethnic group when this was not the case at first. The sect is mainly embraced by the Mbundas and Luvaes. Again this is just psychological because there is no disease that can segregate ethnic groups.

It could also be true that most women joined the Nzila sect to evade incidences of polygamy. Elsewhere in Africa, Malawi in particular, some research findings have observed this development (Peltzer, 1987:48).

Taboos and other restrictions tend to instill fear. Once the fear of consequence, appears to be not certain or is not there, people are free to break the taboos and rule. This may explain why people who once were in Nzila severed their relationship with the Nzila sect thus resulting in its decline. This issue is also psychological.
In as far as the future of the Nzila sect is concerned, it may only be speculated and conjectured that it is most unlikely that the Nzila sect may be completely overtaken by the advent of the new Christian churches. The churches' observable practice of exorcising evil spirits appears to be similar to that of the Nzila sect in that not all members get satisfied with the churches on this matter hence the propensity to get back to the Nzila sect. Evil spirits exorcism appears to be an adapted version that somehow serves a psychological function. Gifford (1992:70) and Shorter (1980:47)'s predictions of Christian (Pentecostal) churches completely fragmentating and causing the decline of African Independent churches (including spirit possession and other cult system) appear therefore to be partly correct, but decline is not extinction.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE A

(NZILA AND ONCE NZILA MEMBERS)

1. How long ago have you been in the Nzila sect? How did you find yourself in the sect? Are you still an active member?

2. Are there any noticeable changes in terms of the number of patients at the time you were joining the Nzila sect and now? What are these changes?

3. In terms of age groups which age group is in the majority? What could account for the disparities? Which sex group is in the majority?

4. What type of diseases are treated by Nzila sect? What of HIV/AIDS – has the Nzila sect been helpful?

5. How affordable are the Nzila treatment payments? How much?

6. In your view, does the community appreciate the services rendered by the Nzila sect? What is the relationship like?

7. Are there some Christian churches in your area involved in healing practices? Do people get cured, and what has been the impact of this on the Nzila sect?

8. What is the relationship of the Nzila with the political leaders in your area?

9. How well attended are the annual gathering (30th June meetings) of the sect? When you compare attendance would you say the Nzila is increasing or decreasing in terms of membership?

10. What in your view is the future of the Nzila sect? Is it getting popular or not?
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE B

(NON NZILA MEMBERS)

1. Are you aware of the existence of Nzila in your area? How long have you known it?

2. Do you know of someone who belongs to the Nzila sect? How committed to the Nzila sect is that person?

3. What is your general perception regarding the Nzila sect – do people consult it when they are sick? What of those suffering from HIV/AIDS?

4. In your view, does your community appreciate the services of the Nzila sect?

5. In your opinion, what is the general attitude of people towards the payment for treatment for the Nzila patients?

6. Are there some Christian Churches involved in healing people in your area? How long have they been in existence?

7. What sex group seems to predominate in the Nzila Sect? Are there some young people that you know who are Nzila patients?

8. What in your opinion is the current position of the Nzila sect in terms of members in your area? Has this been the case all along?

9. In your opinion, do you think the sect is helpful in assisting people? What are the general attitudes of your community towards the sect?