

## When Weekly Worship is Not Enough

### The Tanzanian Adventist *Makambi* Celebration – an Example of Inculturation “from Below”

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#### Zusammenfassung

Die *Makambi*-Feier der tansanischen Adventisten ist ein interessantes Beispiel für einen spontanen Inkulturationsprozess. Die Christen, die dieses jährliche Fest feiern, hatten es zwar von westlichen Missionaren geerbt, reinterpretierten es dann jedoch theologisch. Seine folkloristischen Elemente, der darin enthaltene demokratische Raum und die Schaffung eines alternativen Kirchenjahres mit *Makambi* als Höhepunkt trugen allesamt dazu bei, diesem Fest eine Bedeutung einzuräumen, die weit über die hinausgeht, die dem *Camp Meeting*, seinem Pendant in anderen Regionen der Welt, gegeben wird. Bemerkenswert ist auch, dass dieses jährliche Ereignis eine institutionalisierte Ergänzung, ein Gegenstück und eine Intensivierung des wöchentlichen Gottesdienensterlebens darstellt.

In most religious movements, the regularity and constancy of worship represented in weekly cycles, daily devotional acts, and a spirituality that pervades life as a whole is complemented by recurring religious activities which take place less frequently, most notably annual ceremonies. Because of their extraordinary, intense, and at times extended nature, these observances often assume an important role in the life of the movement's adherents. Furthermore, some of them typify the particular ethos inherent in a faith. This article discusses the emergence and the characteristics of such a celebration: the Tanzanian Seventh-day Adventist *makambi*. After outlining the origin and development of this practice, central aspects of *makambi* will be expounded, and finally I will attempt to interpret the rise of this observance to an indispensable act of worship among Adventists in Tanzania.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Insights and materials presented here stem from two lines of research. (1) Personal observation: I participated in three *makambi* celebrations and had preaching assignments in three other *makambi* in

## 1. The Historical Background

*Makambi*<sup>2</sup> is the Swahili word for “camp meeting,” a practice introduced to Africa by Adventist missionaries in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In North America, camp meetings had flourished among Methodists and many other groups during the major part of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> They had also been used by Millerite Adventists in promoting their apocalyptic teachings (Perry 1994), and in some areas of North America, Seventh-day Adventists, the heirs of the Millerites, soon organized their own camp meeting as well. In spite of reservations concerning the emotionalism and disorder that was at times experienced at conventions of this kind, the denominational General Conference recommended in 1868 that camp meetings be held everywhere. Ellen White, the movement’s prophetess, and her husband, James White, the most important church leader, featured prominently in many such meetings throughout the 1870s, the dreaded emotionalism did not erupt, and the meetings remained popular well into the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

In Tanzania, where Adventists operated in two regions since the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they experimented with camp meetings in one northern area, Pare, since 1926. Seven regional meetings were officially launched in 1938.<sup>5</sup> From that year onwards, they were held annually and were given a Swahili term.<sup>6</sup> The *makambi* celebrations soon caused quite a stir in several communities with an Adventist presence. By the late 1940s, those at Utimbaru, Utegi, and Ntusu at Lake Victoria each attracted one thousand participants and more, and at Majita, numbers swelled to five thousand in the same period.<sup>7</sup> Thus, at each of these places those attending the meetings amounted to twice or three times the number

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three different regions of Tanzania. (2) Historical research done for my doctoral dissertation: Höschele 2005. Apart from investigating publications, minutes, and correspondence related to Tanzanian Adventism, numerous interviews were held which supplied significant information on *makambi*. I wish thank Dr. Daniel Heinz for his constructive criticism and suggestions regarding this article.

<sup>2</sup> Singular: *kambi*. Both the singular and the plural are used to denote the occasion, although the plural is usually preferred. *Kambi* is the Swahili transliteration and translation of “camp” and is also used in other contexts like this English word. Translations from Swahili in this article have been done by myself.

<sup>3</sup> On the history and context of 19<sup>th</sup> century camp meetings in North America, see Brown 1992 and Eslinger 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Schwarz 1979, 40–41, 158–159. Seventh-day Adventists apparently conducted the first truly denominational general encampment in 1867; see Brown 1992, 41.

<sup>5</sup> *Seventh-Day Adventist Church* 1978, 4. „Missionarsbriefe,“ *Adventbote*, Vol. 44/18, 15 September 1938, 280. In neighbouring Kenya, camp meetings had begun in 1932, and the enthusiasm experienced there apparently prompted church leaders to start them on a large scale in Tanzania as well.

<sup>6</sup> I mainly use *makambi* in this article for three reasons: (1) this term is the one actually used among Tanzanian Adventists, (2) it implies an Africanization not only of the word but also the related concept, and (3) it demonstrates that a practice of foreign origin could actually become fully African although some elements remained similar – just like the word itself, which is adapted from English.

<sup>7</sup> *Southern African Division Outlook*, Vol. 45/19 (15 October 1947), pp. 2–3, 8; Vol. 45/22 (1 December 1947), p. 2; *Review and Herald*, Vol. 126 (27 October 1949), p. 1.

of church members. From the 1950s onwards, the number of locations steadily increased, and it became a sign of maturing church work for congregations of a given area to be granted permission to conduct a meeting of their own. So popular did *makambi* become that their relative importance in Tanzania far surpassed that of camp meetings in North America and other regions of the world.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Key Dimensions

The fascination that *makambi* exerted upon African participants throughout the decades of their existence can be summarized with one word: “enthusiasm.”<sup>9</sup> The intense emotions experienced by church members were fuelled by a mix of popular activities, evangelistic elements, teachings on relevant subjects, and intense feelings of fellowship. One outstanding characteristic of the meetings in the early decades was that people lived together in temporary huts made out of sticks and grass during the few days of the event. This feature, which marked the liminal situation of the celebrants, was obviously not upheld in the many towns where Adventism is active at present, but it may be found even today in a few rural areas. Food was and is prepared as a community, which provided ample opportunity for interaction, fellowship, and hospitality extended to visitors.

Throughout the decades, *makambi* was a popular event. This was clearly visible in the kind of activities that accompanied the festivities. Women often prepared special dresses for the gathering or wore uniforms such as white garments. Highlights were the reciting of memorized verses, singing and choirs, Bible quizzes, slides shown by missionaries, and the dramatization of biblical stories. At times even competition games with songs, memorization, and the like took place.<sup>10</sup> Some leaders viewed these entertainment-like elements as dangerous diversions from the spiritual nature of the occasion,<sup>11</sup> but in fact they were crucial facets of *makambi*. They popularized the Adventist type of Christianity, which otherwise could have seemed rather austere at times, for such elements were traditionally not very conspicuous in worship services. The *makambi* success story thus shows that occasions that combine worship and entertainment elements had a powerful potential for religious mobilization.

<sup>8</sup> In North America, a whole conference usually conducted only one meeting in the 1950s. See “Camp Meeting,” in Neufeld 1966, 193. For an analysis of the impact of camp meetings in the Pacific before World War I, see Goldstone 1986, 128–140.

<sup>9</sup> Maxwell 1975, 133. A descriptive account of camp meetings in Kenya which shows close resemblance to those of Tanzania is found in Nyaundi 1997, 131–146.

<sup>10</sup> “Mkusanyiko wa Kambini, Suji,” 1939, 1949, 1950; “Kusanyiko la Kambini, Nyasimba,” 1938, North East Tanzania Conference Archives, Suji Materials (hereafter SM) 85; Maxwell 1975, 133; Nyaundi 1997, 138–139. Although some of the materials cited here talk about camp meetings in Kenya, the same elements were prevalent in Tanzania.

<sup>11</sup> “Putting a Spiritual Revival into Our Camp Meetings,” *Ministerial Association Exchange*, Vol. 5/5 (1961), 8–9, SM 71.

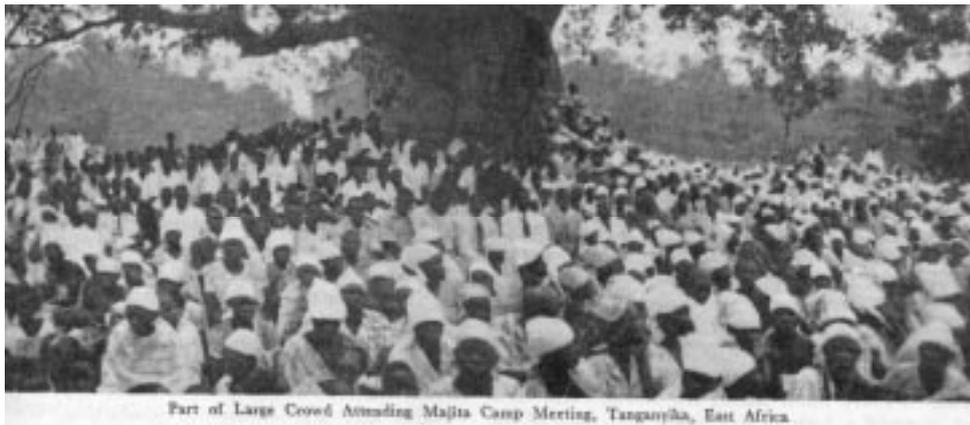
The most important official emphasis of the programme, like that in the weekly Adventist Sabbath worship, was laid on teaching. According to the American prototype, topics comprised doctrine, prophecy, devotional speeches, and various facets of the church's work, including Sabbath School, literature, education, health and temperance, as well as special sessions for youth and children. A three-day *makambi* programme in the 1940s outlined the following items:<sup>12</sup>

	Thursday	Friday	Sabbath
7:00–8:00	Devotional Prayer Bands	Devotional Testimony Meeting	Devotional Prayer Bands
8:00–9:00	- - - - - B R E A K F A S T - - - - -		
9:15–10:00	Workers Meeting	Workers Meeting	Sabbath School Teachers Meeting
10:00–11:00	Department: Sabbath School	Department: Mission Volunteers	Sabbath School
	Children's Meeting	Children's Meeting	Children's Sabbath School
11:15–12:30	Preaching Service	Preaching Service	Preaching Service
12:30–2:00	- - - - - L U N C H - - - - -		
2:30–3:30	Parents Meeting	Bible Study on Tithes and Offerings	Evangelists and Colporteurs Symposium
4:00–6:00	Department: Education	Opening Sabbath Short Study	Closing Sabbath Short Study
6:00–7:15	- - - - - S U P P E R - - - - -		
7:15–8:30	Preaching Service Or Lantern Lecture	Preaching Service Or Lantern Lecture	Preaching Service Or Lantern Lecture

In later years, family matters and teachings for men, women, boys, and girls were introduced as well. These, together with the enthusiastic and revivalistic preaching, constitute the major attraction of *makambi* still today. A good number of non-Adventists actually attend the meetings specifically for the purpose of hearing the “family life teachings” or participating in youth meetings. These gatherings commonly take place in groups separated according to gender and age: youth – married – “retirees,” the latter two groups gather separately because those who still get children usually cannot talk about sexual matters in front of their parent generation. In a society where sexuality is still something of a taboo, these topical meetings are among the few opportunities for people to discuss such vital matters in a serious manner. Moreover, the fact that they are linked with worship activities implies that a holy space is created which allows for a freedom of expression that is almost impossible outside this church sphere. Thus, *makambi*

<sup>12</sup> “Camp Meeting” in Neufeld 1966, 194; “Suggestive [*sic*] Campmeeting Programme,” n.d. [1940s], SM 22.

meetings serve as a means of sanctifying the whole life and pervading it with its



Part of Large Crowd Attending Majita Camp Meeting, Tanganyika, East Africa

Majita Camp Meeting, 1949<sup>13</sup>

influence. In this respect, the celebration is a parallel to the Adventist Sabbath worship services, especially the Sabbath School, which constitutes a forum for discussion separated from the work days yet related to life questions.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, *makambi* differs from weekly worship in that there is even more emphasis on practical issues and explicit room for topics of general interest.

A second major purpose of *makambi* was and is evangelism. Certainly the sheer mass of people present must often have been impressive for anybody who hesitated to join the Adventist faith. This atmosphere was used as an occasion for calling people to enter the hearers' class and, in more recent decades, to be baptized.<sup>15</sup> Obviously, many responded. Even among the regular church members, the display of a unified church community helped many who had become weary or indifferent to experience the *makambi* period as a time of spiritual renewal. Moreover, the meetings were designed as a prime opportunity for former Adventists to "return home," which they did in significant numbers.<sup>16</sup> At such a large convention, it was relatively easy for "backsliders" (as they were commonly called) to be reinitiated, for a new beginning could be made quickly and officially

<sup>13</sup> From Sparrow 1949, 1. This was a camp meeting that five thousand persons attended.

<sup>14</sup> On the Adventist Sabbath School in a similar context of another African country, see Keller 2004, 89–112.

<sup>15</sup> Schlehuder 1947, 8. From the late 1960s onward, instant baptism became an increasingly common practice, and since the 1990s, it is a common procedure not to delay baptisms except in very particular cases.

<sup>16</sup> "Putting a Spiritual Revival into Our Camp Meetings," 8–9, SM 71. At Majita, for instance, as many as 46 former believers came back to the church in 1949; see *Review and Herald*, Vol. 126 (27 October 1949), p. 1. This feature continues up to the present; wherever I preached or participated in *makambi*, a couple of persons in the baptismal group, at times a dozen or more, were former Adventists who desired to be part of the church again. Re-joining the church is effected by re-baptism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in many regions of the world.

without assuming the shameful position of a penitent sinner in a local church. Thus, in a way *makambi* became an extended sacrament of renewal and repentance, a ritual space that allowed individuals to be re-incorporated into the group in clearly defined steps. Moreover, these persons even earned some prestige by playing a major role in the final stages of the meeting, since the neophytes' baptism was celebrated as a visible sign of God's power and presence.

Different from weekly worship, the *makambi* mood was a unique and somewhat paradoxical mixture. Apocalyptic expectation blended with an almost opposite feeling of being blessed to an extent that people did not want the event to end. This ambience is perhaps best captured in a popular song composed for the occasion in the 1940s. It said:<sup>17</sup>

*Adventists in Tabernacles*

1. We have come to the [feast of] tabernacles<sup>18</sup> to receive blessings knowing that Jesus will be close to us.

*Chorus:* We do not know if we will meet like this [again],  
but we hope to meet in heaven.

2. We have come here to confess that we have fallen, and we depend on Jesus' blood for salvation.

3. The signs of the moon, the stars, war, famine, difficulties and increasing evil proclaim the great day [of Jesus' second coming].

4. One work remains: to preach the Gospel; let us give ourselves today, brother, so that the Lord may come soon.

As this song shows, *makambi* contained a whole array of elements just like weekly worship: the expectation of blessings, confession, eschatological hope, and exhortation for dedication to God in every day life. Yet it should be noted that this festival not only repeated ordinary church activities but powerfully reinforced them; whatever was part of ordinary weekly ecclesiastical life now occurred again in an intensified way.

### 3. Preliminary Interpretative Considerations

Two lines of interpretative reflection may be interjected at this point; they both deal with the capacity of an imported religious activity.

(1) In spite of its American origin, *makambi* soon fulfilled the role of a functional substitute for traditional African rituals, even if this role may not have been

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<sup>17</sup> "Camp Meeting Song 1948" (original in Swahili), SM 85. The song was probably composed by missionaries; still, it aptly expresses the mood of Africans who participated in the meetings.

<sup>18</sup> On the interpretation of *makambi* as the Feast of Tabernacles, see the section below: Developing a "Makambi Theology".

adopted consciously.<sup>19</sup> With its wide array of components, the event corresponded to aspects of several types of traditional African communitarian rituals:<sup>20</sup> seasonal rituals because of its occurrence once a year and territorial rites because of its regional nature. Furthermore, it contained elements of rituals for the initiation into specific groups in the baptisms that were conducted as a climax of the celebration, as well as initiations of office holders in the common practice of ordaining pastors at such an occasion.

It should not come as a surprise that some African Instituted Churches celebrate ceremonies similar to the Tanzanian Adventist *makambi*,<sup>21</sup> that the East African Revival Movement organized large conventions of a similar kind (Sundkler 1980, 125), and that other denominations at times experimented with comparable celebrations.<sup>22</sup> With such remarkable parallels, one is compelled to argue that *makambi* constituted a notable aspect of Africanizing the Christian faith which Adventists brought in natural dynamics of an appropriation by the ordinary believer.

(2) In the literature on the camp meeting in American history, two major interpretations have been proposed: (a) the concept that the phenomenon arose at the American frontier and thus represented a “wild” type of religion tamed by settlement, and (b) that camp meeting revivalism was a way of integrating different groups in a changing and divided society.<sup>23</sup> While both arguments certainly contain some truth, the Tanzanian *makambi* fits the second explanation better. In the absence of a “frontier,” changes and division in society can best account for the popularity of an annual get-together in which these very changes and divisions were relativized by a religious atmosphere, by common spiritual activity, by messages directing the faithful towards transcendence, and by advice on Christian life given to all participants.

In fact, the *makambi* celebration typifies the very democratic spirit, which, according to the second interpretation, made camp meetings so popular in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. While European and American missionaries carried the main load of preaching for many years, Africans made the event their own from the very beginning. Tanzanian pastors and other leaders gave the morning or evening

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<sup>19</sup> A functional substitute fills human needs connected with previous practices. Traditions may have been quite different from the substitute, but if the *function* of the substitute is similar, it may be acceptable and possibly even more successful than traditional elements. See Nida 1954, 247, 264.

<sup>20</sup> A list of typical African communitarian rituals is found in Shorter 1998, 64. Most of the rituals which were not reflected in the *makambi* celebration concern family matters and were either christianized by the churches or continued in some secular form.

<sup>21</sup> Isaiah Shembe’s *amaNazaretha*, for instance, have two annual festivals, one in July and one in January; the latter is also referred to as the “Feast of Tabernacles.” Other Zionist churches also have festivals that resemble this celebration. See Sundkler 1961, 198–199.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the Christian folk festivals initiated by the Berlin Mission among the Bena in Southern Tanzania in 1933; see Fiedler 1996, 157–163. These folk festivals had a less explicitly Christian character but resulted in a significantly enhanced popularity of Christianity in that region.

<sup>23</sup> Ellen Eslinger is a proponent of the second view; see Eslinger 1999 for an overview of the discussion.

devotions. The responsibility for organizational and auxiliary activities, such as local steering committees, building the huts, leading the congregational singing, caring for visitors, cooking, children's and youth activities, and timekeeping, lay in the hands of Tanzanians from the outset.<sup>24</sup> Thus, like in the Sabbath worship, the majority of church members usually participated in some way, only that *makambi* intensified this principle through even more options of involvement.

Intensification may even be seen in the actual duration of the event and the number of people involved. While almost all preachers were missionaries and eminent African leaders until the 1960s, all pastors began to be involved from the 1980s onward because of the ever increasing number of meeting locations.<sup>25</sup> So important did the event become to Tanzanian Adventists that they decided to double what had been a three-day pattern to a six-day schedule in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>26</sup> By doing so, they created an Adventist "holy week" of some kind and ensured that every *makambi* celebration included a Sabbath as a climax, which made the yearly and weekly worship cycles coincide. *Makambi* had become the annual peak experience of Adventist church life in Tanzania.

#### 4. Developing a "Makambi Theology"

Ironically, the very importance thus attributed to this meeting also created a vacuum, for the *makambi* celebration lacked a definite theological basis in spite of its popularity. As many other aspects of church life, such as church buildings, literature, or the Adventist Sabbath School and indeed many worship patterns associated with weekly meetings, it had been designed with its practical outcome in mind, not as a response to some biblical reference.<sup>27</sup> Yet through the years a "makambi theology" developed, which is today widely accepted among East African Adventists<sup>28</sup> although it is not part of the heritage of nineteenth century Adventism.<sup>29</sup> In this theological concept, the annual *makambi* celebration is equated

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<sup>24</sup> "Makusanyiko ya Kambini, Mamba," 1940; "Kusanyiko la Kambini, Nyasimba," 1938, SM 85.

<sup>25</sup> See the sections on camp meetings in the Minutes of the North-East Tanzania Field, 1960–1971, SM 3.

<sup>26</sup> The original American pattern was a ten-day meeting, while in Kenya, it was a five-day to one-week meeting; see "Camp Meeting" in Neufeld 1966, 194; Nyaundi 1997, 134.

<sup>27</sup> Camp meetings are not held universally among Adventists. In Europe, for instance, they never gained much influence although they were held at a few places such as Germany and Norway. See Schwarz 1979, 216.

<sup>28</sup> Even Nehemiah Nyaundi, a Kenyan Adventist theologian, argues that the "Adventist practice of camp meetings derives its origin from the Bible"; see Nyaundi 1997, 131–132. I also encountered this view among Adventists from both Kenya and various parts of Tanzania.

<sup>29</sup> No official Adventist publication demands the observance of the Jewish festivals found in the Old Testament; rather, they are considered "a shadow" according to Colossians 2:17; see "Sabbaths, Annual (ceremonial)" in Neufeld 1966, 1129–1130. Recently, a leading Adventist theologian who is now retired, S. Bacchiocchi (1995–1996), privately published two volumes on these festivals in

with the feast of tabernacles in the Old Testament (Interviews; Höschele 2005, 187).

This popular thinking arose from two sources. One was the attempt of church leaders to make the ceremony more plausible to church members by linking it with parts of the Old Testament at least rhetorically. The second was a misunderstanding among the common believers. They concluded that the references to biblical texts, which were meant as mere analogies, constituted a call for obeying a divine command. In the early 1940s, for instance, appeals were made to Adventists to participate in the *makambi* celebrations by quoting Deuteronomy 16:16, “Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God.”<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the obvious parallel between the Israelites’ living in huts for their feast of tabernacles and the Tanzanian Adventist custom of doing the same for theirs was exploited to the extent of calling East African camp meetings *sikukuu ya vibanda*,<sup>31</sup> “feast of huts,” from the same period onward.

Thus, church leaders inadvertently gave it the status of a religious ceremony similar to the weekly day of worship or, among other Christians, Christmas or Easter. The consequence was that the Adventist faithful in Tanzania interpreted the practice as the observance of a biblical prescription that was universally held by the denomination,<sup>32</sup> which was, of course, not the case. Yet such a conviction was understandable given the Adventist emphasis on other items conspicuous in the Old Testament, such as the Sabbath commandment and dietary laws, and the denomination’s emphasis on biblical foundations for church practices as opposed to mere church traditions.

A peculiar Tanzanian idea that originated from this popular *makambi* theology is what can be called the “Adventist church year.” When Tanzanian Adventists got used to viewing *makambi* as the spiritual climax of the year, they created the concept that the new year of the church begins after this festival.<sup>33</sup> This notion was derived from a text commonly cited at the beginning of the convention, Zechariah 14:16, where an eschatological celebration of the feast of tabernacles is prophesied to take place “year after year.”<sup>34</sup>

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which he suggested how they could be included in a church calendar. However, there was massive disagreement with his position.

<sup>30</sup> 1946 Camp Meeting leaflet, SM 85.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the song quoted above, “Waadventista Vibandani” (“Adventists in Tabernacles”); see “Camp Meeting Song 1948,” SM 85.

<sup>32</sup> In 1961, Adventists at Lake Victoria asked for holidays for attending a camp meeting and explained, “it is a custom of the SDA religion and its followers in the whole world to meet every year to do invocations of praying to God for three days every day from morning to evening.” See Wazee wa Baraza Nyamwigura et al. – Executive Officer North Mara Tarime, 21 August 1961, Tanzania National Archives, 544/M6, No. 3.

<sup>33</sup> This was repeatedly asserted in conversations that I had with church members during my six-year stay in Tanzania.

<sup>34</sup> The full verse 16 says, “Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.”

This concept is important in comparison to the liturgical year observed by other denominations. As some African Instituted Churches (e.g., Mazambara 1999, 225), Seventh-day Adventists never adopted the traditional church calendar with its peaks at Easter and Christmas;<sup>35</sup> therefore, they do not have any officially endorsed annual festivals. Rather, their church calendar relates to major facets of denominational activities.<sup>36</sup> In Tanzania, many missionaries did celebrate Christmas, but in later years, the celebration of the day was abandoned and came to be



*Makambi at Mwanza, 1970s*<sup>37</sup>

strongly opposed. African church leaders were in the forefront of attacking the Christmas custom as a pagan institution, and although it has never been officially forbidden, among Adventists its public commemoration ended in the 1950s.

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<sup>35</sup> Adventist families commonly celebrate Christmas in many regions of the world, and even churches often conduct some kind of programme during that season. Yet different practices and views have been advanced in the church, and there have always been some Adventists who reject the observance of Christmas and Easter. The reason is, in analogy to the Adventist rejection of Sunday as a day of worship, their supposed pagan origin and, in the case of Christmas, what they considered the “frivolity and extravagance, gluttony and display” of this celebration in “the world.” See “Easter” in Neufeld 1966, 357, and “Christmas” in Neufeld 1966, 248.

<sup>36</sup> The traditional Adventist church calendar is a list of Sabbaths and weeks of the year to be used for the receiving of offerings for, promotion of, emphasis on, or study about various church departments and specific purposes. This plan goes back at least to 1918, when the General Conference voted some special offerings and special days of emphasis; see “Church Calendar” in Neufeld 1966, 260.

<sup>37</sup> From my own archives.

Today, Christmas is not officially celebrated anywhere in Tanzanian Adventist churches, and the majority of the members oppose its observance.<sup>38</sup>

How did this change come about? Certainly it was easy to discard only what had never gained strong roots among the people. When African leaders became more influential in the 1940s and 1950s, they could easily persuade the majority to abandon this rather foreign thing. Most important, a logic was followed that resembled the assumption that *makambi* should be equalled with the feast of tabernacles. The annual Christmas celebration lacked a clear biblical basis and was therefore viewed by some as a continuation of pagan predecessor feasts. Thus, one could easily use its non-observance to illustrate the Adventist principle of strictly adhering to biblical teachings. *Makambi*, thus, replaced the major feasts of the general Christian calendar and mutated to the culmination of the ecclesiastical year comparable only with the combined Christmas and Easter celebrations in other denominations. From a merely functional device, it had become the culmination of the year which did not need any rivals, and thus functioned as the annual equivalent of weekly worship.

## 5. The Significance of an Annual Worship Event

In an appraisal of the Tanzanian Adventist *makambi*, one must, first of all, appreciate the manifold aspects that it encompasses: the spiritual peak experience, African communitarianism, the Adventist preoccupation with teaching, the particular services provided for different groups of people, the evangelistic impact, the function as a substitute for traditional celebrations, the “democratic” nature of *makambi*, the biblical references, and the function of the event in an alternative church calendar. It is the combination of these elements that made the event so vital for the Christians who celebrated it.

The fact that this originally American religious practice became a characteristic element of an African church implies that a relatively smooth transition took place in which Tanzanian Adventists made the ceremony their own quite naturally. Several factors can be identified that contributed to the rapid triumph of *makambi*:

(1) The most basic patterns of a religious ceremony can resemble each other even in different cultures given the similarity of human needs. Annual events apparently correspond to a basic structure in the life of humans, perhaps even more than shorter cycles.

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<sup>38</sup> At Ntusu Mission, the season was used for evangelistic presentations and celebrations in the 1930s; see Drangmeister, “A Young Girl Travels to Africa,” Manuscript, n.d., p. 11 (in my possession). In Pare, Christmas was celebrated as a big feast in the 1930s and 1940s in which cows were slaughtered and the meat was distributed to the people according to interviews; see Höschele 2005, 189.

(2) Rural living and the tradition of some religious enthusiasm were parallels between nineteenth century America, where the camp meeting arose, and twentieth century Africa. They probably contributed to the eminence of the practice in both contexts.

(3) The fact that *makambi* brought together a large number of people from different groups in a rapidly changing society aptly expressed the Christian ethos of Adventism and fulfilled an important need of Tanzanians.

(4) The “theologizing” of the camp meeting as *sikukuu ya vibanda* was an attempt to give a religious meaning to an originally merely functional tradition. This shift enhanced the weight of the ceremony and made it even more plausible in a context where biblical references were taken very seriously in the justification of elements in church life.

(5) As a surrogate for traditional Christian celebrations in the absence of the customary ecclesiastical calendar, *makambi* could even develop into the focal point of an alternative church year.

(6) Altogether, the *makambi* practice emerges as a result of a creative process of spontaneous inculturation, of an Africanization of an Adventist Christian custom “from below.”<sup>39</sup>

(7) On the basis of “*makambi* theology,” the celebration became a full-fledged act of worship, an annual ritual observed in a similar way as the weekly cycle of Sabbath celebrations.

This last point deserves further reflection, for Seventh-day Adventists traditionally emphasized the weekly cycle with the Sabbath as its climax. How did it happen that this tradition was complemented by another cycle? How was *makambi* construed to be “worship” in a manner similar to activities on the day designated in the Ten Commandments? Apart from the factors above, which describe the dynamics in the development of *makambi* as such, three aspects of the relationship between *makambi* and the Sabbath may enlighten this process.

(1) *Makambi* serves as a *supplement* to the weekly worship cycle. In the absence of a well-elaborated sacramental theology, it is not very difficult to fill this vacuum with the creation of an annual celebration which contains several sacramental elements and an unofficial yet ritualized sacrament of renewal. Moreover, regularity and constancy is certainly sought for by some religionists, but not by all; others may prefer more spontaneous outbursts of religious experience. Hence, the fifty-two small peaks of religious activity per year are not enough. The need for a medium which enabled a different quality of religiousness is met by the *makambi* atmosphere with its emotional mood and the space for popular and entertaining

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. André Droogers’s discussion (1977, 443–456) of “spontaneous Africanization” as opposed to “artificial Africanization” imposed “from above”, i.e., either foreign or national church leadership.

components. Thus, such an annual worship opportunity clearly contains dimensions which are complementary to weekly worship. At the same time, it does not relativize the importance of more frequent religious services but lays emphasis on other matters and thus, in the minds of worshippers, fulfils another function.

(2) This does not mean that *makambi* becomes a rival to church meetings on Saturday in any way. Rather, it is also construed to be the yearly *counterpart* to weekly services. With many of its emphases, it corresponds to Adventist activities on the Sabbath: teaching, evangelism, fellowship, and rest from every day work all make the event a Sabbath-like festival. It is not surprising, then, that *makambi* was given some theological foundation beyond Adventist tradition. The creation of an East African Adventist “holy week” as a parallel to the denomination’s holy day constitutes a sanctification of praxis which bears testimony to the creative capacities of the Christians who celebrate this event.

(3) As a supplement to weekly worship, *makambi* typifies discontinuity; as a counterpart, it demonstrates continuity. In a third aspect, both continuity and discontinuity are present: intensification. This aspect is visible in almost every element of the celebration: *makambi* is a week and *contains* a Sabbath but is a *different* week altogether; it contains teaching, but in an extended, diversified, and enlarged framework, and the whole spectrum of worship activities is reinforced. The very quantity of days and the number of participants make the event quite impressive as it swells towards its climax and as the emotional atmosphere prevails until the end. Thus, *makambi* may be conceived as an extended Sabbath experience. Even the nature of the presentations, the extraordinary visitors, and the mass participation add to the quality of the occasion, making it special though in principle representing nothing more than an ideal Sabbath. I suggest that this is the decisive feature of *makambi*: it repeats, replicates, and reinforces much of what is done in the Adventist Sabbath, but it intensifies it in a unique way. Thus, *makambi* is an act of worship, it resembles the weekly day of adoration, but it is more, deeper, broader, and stronger, and thus different again.

How do these three aspects of the relationship between *makambi* and weekly worship relate? At a first glance, they may seem to contain some contradictory tendencies, but in a holistic culture, this was certainly not felt to be the case. Rather, a differentiation of practices helped to diversify church life. Similarity *and* dissimilarity with other practices contributed to the success of *makambi* – it fits into the Adventist type of spirituality and yet added something new to it. Since the event took several days, different tendencies all had their place. What was common to all these three aspects, however, is that they form part of the Tanzanian Adventist feeling that “weekly worship is not enough.”

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