

ISLAM AND UBUNGOMA: CASE STUDIES OF MUSLIM SANGOMAS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that my work is **ISLAM AND UBUNGOMA: CASE STUDIES OF MUSLIM SANGOMAS IN SOUTH AFRICA**. I have indicated and acknowledged all the sources I have used or quoted using complete references.



.....
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18 October 2025
DATE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the intersection of traditional African spirituality and Islam in South Africa through the lens of Muslim sangomas. The study focuses on Ubungoma, a form of divination and healing deeply rooted in the traditional beliefs of South Africa's indigenous peoples. Even though Ubungoma is generally not associated with Islam, it has also been adopted by many Muslims in South Africa, who struggle to reconcile their Islamic faith with their traditional African upbringing. The thesis employs case studies to examine the experiences of Muslim sangomas who face challenges in integrating Ubungoma into their Islamic beliefs and practices. Through interviews and ethnographic observation, the thesis explores how these individuals negotiate the tensions between their Islamic identity and the traditional African beliefs associated with Ubungoma. The study examines the relationship between Islam and culture, specifically in the social and cultural context in which these individuals practice Ubungoma and how their Muslim identity influences their practice. The thesis will thus offer further insights into the complex interplay between religion, culture, and identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

Keywords: Ubungoma, Islam, Muslim Sangomas, South Africa, Stigmatisation, Religious Syncretism, Post-Apartheid, 'Urf (customs), Islamic Shamanism, Healing. Hadith, Quran, Ukuthwasa, Ukuphahla

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Glossary

Amamdlozi ancestor (plural)

Amathwasa Initiates

Amfufunyane Types of Evil Spirits

Amagobongo herbal mixtures

Gobela, A trainer in Ubungoma

Isangoma spiritual healer

Imphepho *Sage is a frequently used herb in spiritual rituals and for purifying the air in a household. It is believed to ward off harmful spirits and omens.*

Indumba is a space dedicated to the ancestors and used as a shrine.

Isigodlo is a Nguni word meaning a king or a Shamanic / Sangoma healing space or healing room.

Ithala (An upper area storing specific ritualistic horns, blades, etc.)

Idlozi ancestor (singular)

Imimoya Spirits

Ithwasa (sing.) Initiate

Ithonga Ancestors/ those who are asleep.

Ubizo: Calling to become a spiritual healer.

Ubungoma is an innate calling and gift from the ancestors that an individual is born with.

Ukufihlwa is burying an ordinary citizen.

Ukutshwila: Burying a member of the royal family.

Ukulapha to heal.

Ukuthwasa is a spiritual calling and initiation process for individuals whose ancestors chose to become healers or diviners.

Ukuvuma ukufa. Once one has confirmed that they have ubizo, there is a process called ukuvuma ukufa or invuma kufa (literal translation: accepting death).

Ukuphahla means communicating with your ancestors to seek help, ask for guidance or forgiveness, or give thanks.

Umsamo: A unique and sacred place

Islamic terminology

‘Āda Individual and communal customs

Fiqh: Islamic Jurisprudence

Ḥarām Impermissible

Ḥalāl Permissible

Ḥadīth “A recorded saying, action or tacit approval of the Prophet Mohamed (saw)”

Uṣūl al-Fiqh: The principles or foundation of Islamic Jurisprudence.

Madhāhib(pl.) The Four Islamic jurisprudential schools of thought in Islam (plural form)

Qur’ān Central religious text in Islam

Sharī‘ah Islamic Legal System

Uşūlīyūn (pl.) Scholars of Islamic Jurisprudence

‘urf Qawli Customary usage of language

‘urf ‘Amali *Physical* application of customs in a particular communal set-up.

‘urf Customs or culture of the people

CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa is located at the southernmost tip of the African continent, with approximately sixty million people. It is a nation rich in cultural diversity, shaped by diverse ethnic and religious groups. The country has 12 official languages, and its population comprises people from diverse backgrounds, including indigenous African groups, South Asians, Europeans, and individuals of mixed race.

Despite the influence of Western colonialism and Christian missionary activity in South Africa, traditional African spirituality has endured in many parts of the country. A belief in a supreme being characterises African traditional religions, the worship/ veneration of ancestors, and the use of divination and healing practices. These practices are often complementary and integral to many Africans' lives. One such traditional African belief system is Ubungoma, a form of divination and healing deeply rooted in the beliefs of the indigenous people, the largest group in South Africa, renowned for their rich cultural heritage, including music, dance, and traditional beliefs. Ubungoma involves using divination tools such as bones, shells, and stones to communicate with ancestral spirits and diagnose and treat illnesses. It is a complex knowledge and practice system requiring training and initiation (*ukuthwasa*).

Although not associated with Islamic culture, Ubungoma has been adopted by some Muslims in South Africa, creating a new form of religious syncretism. This phenomenon highlights a complex interplay between religion, culture, and identity in a post-Apartheid society whose history of oppression has shaped how people navigate their identities. Furthermore, the practice of Ubungoma among Muslims in South Africa demonstrates how individuals can assert their cultural and spiritual heritage and resist dominant Western knowledge and healing practices.

The study focuses on Ubungoma, an African traditional healing practice, and how the beliefs and practices associated with this healing intersect with Islam, by exploring the case studies of Muslim sangomas. This chapter presents the methodology used to research this relationship (Islam and Ubungoma), detailing the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and the study.

1.2 Description of the Study Problem

The practice of Ubungoma remains a foundational cultural pillar across all indigenous ethnic groups in South Africa, from the Zulu and Xhosa to the Sotho and Venda-speaking peoples. This cultural continuity persists even as individuals within these groups embrace Islam; as Sitoto observes, the emerging Black Muslim sector "proudly boasts representation" from every principal language group in the nation (Sitoto, 2002).

This demographic reality is made possible by the historical flexibility of Islamic law, which supports the intersection of indigenous practices and Islamic faith. Far from requiring believers to discard their heritage, Shariah has traditionally fostered a "unity in diversity," harmonising universal norms with local expressions (Abd-Allah, 2014). This relationship is best understood through the metaphor of a crystal-clear river, as alluded to by Abdullah. While the water of Islam remains pure and universal, it takes on the colour of the "bedrock" of indigenous culture over which it flows. Just as Islam became distinctly Chinese in China or Malian in Mali, in South Africa, the faith flows over the bedrock of indigenous traditions like Ubungoma. By allowing the religion to become "functional and familiar at the local level," Islamic jurisprudence enables South African Muslims to cultivate stable identities that are both authentically African and deeply rooted in their faith.

Thus, naturally, the Black Muslims of South Africa would also not be required to forgo their pre-existing cultures and would find support in Islamic law to maintain these. However, while pre-existing cultures find support in Islam, specific practices may be viewed by certain sectors of the Muslim community as in tension with the core Islamic teachings or common interpretations. This tension raises the central research question: How do indigenous converts to Islam in South Africa navigate Islamic beliefs within their pre-existing cultures?

The research problem revolves around the intersection of traditional African spirituality and Islamic beliefs. This co-existence raises critical questions about how individuals navigate these two disparate systems and how this reconciliation shapes their religious and cultural identity formation in a post-apartheid society.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to explore how Muslim sangomas navigate between the practices of Ubungoma and their Muslim beliefs. These practices need to be explored within Islam's broader rubric of healing. Healing, seen as simultaneously spiritual and physical, plays a central role in Muslim communities worldwide. Ubungoma is primarily concerned with the art of healing at both psychic and physical levels. Thus, locating Ubungoma and Muslim sangomas within such healing practices in the wider Muslim world is crucial. These healing practices in Muslim communities tend to be associated, though not exclusively, with Şūfī rituals and traditions. Thus, this study will explore such healing patterns unfolding in Africa. In addition, given that Ubungoma shares several connections with shamanism, the study will draw on academic work on Muslim shamans in Central Asia to shed further light on the practice from an Islamic perspective.

Finally, the original fieldwork comprising interviews with Muslim sangomas will provide a detailed examination of their life trajectories and their personal reconciliation with Islamic doctrines. Through this multifaceted approach, this thesis aims to make an original contribution to the study of Islam in South Africa.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

Islam is a monotheistic religion that emphasises the oneness of God and the importance of prayer and religious practice, while Ubungoma is a form of divination and healing that is deeply rooted in the beliefs of the indigenous people; it involves the use of divination tools such as bones, shells, and stones to communicate with ancestral spirits and to diagnose and treat illnesses. This has led to a situation in which traditional African practices are viewed with scepticism by some Muslim and Christian scholars. Gathogo asserts that Traditional African healing practices, such as Ubungoma, are often seen as polytheistic or animistic (Gathogo, 2025). In his works, such as *Ihya al-Sunna wa-Ikhlad al-Bid'ah* (Revival of the Tradition and Suppression of Innovations), Uthman dan Fodio, a Fulani scholar and founder of the Sokoto Caliphate in West Africa, attacked practices such as sorcery, divination, consulting mediums, and offering sacrifices to spirits or ancestors. He considered these acts of *shirk* or infidelity (Dan Fodio, 1793/2013). Further, Ngubane provides the following regarding how Zulu Muslims view the practice of Ubungoma and ancestors: As he said, some people see the Islamic theological principle of *tawhid* as unequivocally rejecting the notion of intermediaries between the realms of the living and the deceased. Hence, within the Islamic faith, any form of relationship between the living and the deceased is strictly prohibited and regarded as a form of idolatry. Islam places great emphasis on the belief that Allah is devoid of any partners and is the sole entity deserving of adoration or veneration. Furthermore, they would see a syncretism of Islam and Zulu indigenous religions, especially the notion of seeking aid from the ancestral spirits, as violating the doctrine of the "oneness of Allah" (Ngubane, 2003). There are other views, and arguably, the majority does not see a relationship between the living and the dead as contradicting *tawhid*. In his seminal work, *Notions That Must Be Corrected*, Sayyid Alawim Muhammad bni Al-Maliki provides a detailed framework for understanding *Tawassul* (intercession/seeking a means). His primary objective in the book is to demonstrate that *Tawassul* is a matter of "means" rather than "ends," and thus does not conflict with the core Islamic tenet of *Tawhid* (Oneness of God). One of the themes of his book is correcting the notion that *Tawassul* is valid only if the person is alive. Al-Maliki posits that the soul (*ruh*) is eternal, and that death does not remove the "status" or "blessing" God has granted a person. The distinction between "alive" and "dead" in this context is a physical one, not a spiritual one, regarding their standing with Allah (Al-Maliki, 1985/2008). Thus, the opening collection of endorsements from respected Islamic scholars worldwide establishes the book's credibility as a definitive resource. This broad scholarly consensus highlights the work's reliability and its alignment with mainstream thought. Based

on the above, not all Islamic scholars view interaction with those who are deceased as impermissible. Despite these differences, some within the indigenous South African Muslim community still adhere to traditional African beliefs and practices alongside Islāmic teachings. This has led to a unique group of people identifying as Muslims and as traditional healers (sangomas) and incorporating Islamic and conventional African beliefs and practices into their healing methods. Muslim *sangomas* have faced criticism and opposition from other Muslims, who view their practices as conflicting with their religious beliefs. However, they may also find support within the Islamic tradition and in similar practices in other parts of the world.

Thus, the objectives of the study are :

Within this context, the objectives of this study are:

- a) To explore how Muslim sangomas practically navigate between traditional practices and Islamic monotheism within a global rubric of healing.
- b) To provide a detailed examination of life trajectories and personal reconciliation with Islamic doctrines through original fieldwork.
- c) To explore the extent to which the Islamic jurisprudential concept of 'Urf (custom) can serve as a conceptual mechanism to reconcile the theological and practical tensions between Islam and Ubungoma.
- d) To conduct a comparative analysis of how Muslim communities across Africa and the global Ummah have historically and conceptually navigated the interface between Islamic doctrine and indigenous spiritual practices.

The central question of this thesis is: How do Muslim practitioners of Ubungoma navigate between their role as sangomas on the one hand and their adherence to Islam on the other?

Moreover, the supplementary questions are :

- In what ways does the "racial coding" of Islam in South Africa (as primarily Indian or Malay) impact the social acceptance and religious legitimacy of Black Muslim sangomas within the broader Ummah?
- How are Islamic symbols, such as the Quran, Arabic prayers, or Sufi-inspired dhikr, physically and symbolically incorporated into the traditional healing space (the ndumba) to create a unique hybrid healing methodology?

- Does seeing Ubungoma as a way of healing rather than a separate religion facilitate integration into Islam?
- How have Muslims in Africa and other parts of the world dealt with similar challenges when trying to balance local traditions with Islamic beliefs?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to deepen understanding of Ubungoma Islam in South Africa by exploring how Muslims who are *izangoma* navigate the intersection of their religious beliefs and traditional healing practices. It will provide new insights into an area that is not extensively covered in the existing literature. By interviewing Muslims who are *izangoma*, the research will examine how they integrate their faith with traditional healing, manage potential conflicts, and are perceived by their communities.

The topics of Islam and the South African tradition of Ubungoma are largely unexplored. The key text on the subject is a booklet by Imaam Ismail Ngqoyiyana titled *African Traditions. God Revealed Religions*. His work explores the role of ancestors and the process of becoming a traditional healer, drawing comparisons with these indigenous practices and beliefs in both IsiZulu and AmaXhosa culture. (Ngqoyiyana, 2005).

One notable point about the booklet is that the author translated the *izangoma* (traditional healers) as “witch doctors” in English. He adopts an opposing stance, refuting it through a religious (Qur’ān and Bible) scriptural analysis. His position is that such practices are not permitted within Islam and Christianity. Furthermore, he views ancestral reverence as tantamount to worship, which he argues violates the core teachings of both Islam and Christianity. The booklet sheds some light on the basic practices of Ubungoma and Islam, but it lacks primary research and knowledge-related issues, which weakens its reliability and usefulness. Its primary weakness is its inability to obtain valid views from credible sources within the Ubungoma practice. The author failed to engage with respected traditional healers, academics, and elders who have conducted ethnographic work on Ubungoma. In my view, this omission creates a critical void and an incorrect analysis of the practice of Ubungoma.

Furthermore, the booklet relies on newspaper articles to practice, and examines the Ubungoma practice, particularly those that address healers who misrepresent it. The biggest challenge with newspaper articles and journalistic reports is that often, they focus on

sensational stories rather than providing deep academic analysis. Thus, it is hoped that this study will fill such a void.

In addition to the above, the study on Ubungoma, Islam, and Sangomas in South Africa is significant because it offers multiple contributions. Firstly, the research contributes to the existing knowledge on the above topics and provides a deeper understanding of how Muslim Sangomas navigate the intersection of their religious beliefs and traditional healing practices. This perspective has yet to be explored extensively in the literature, making this research an essential addition to the existing knowledge base.

Secondly, the study promotes cultural understanding and respect for diversity. By highlighting the importance of artistic practices and beliefs and how they can coexist with religion, this research may help to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding traditional healing practices. This may increase respect for diverse cultural practices and beliefs, promoting greater social harmony and inclusivity. Thirdly, the study has policy implications for regulating traditional healing practices in South Africa. By providing insights into how traditional healing practices can be integrated with modern healthcare, this research's findings may inform policies and guidelines that support their integration into the mainstream healthcare system. This may improve access to healthcare for communities that rely on traditional healers, ensuring that patients receive the care they need.

Finally, the study contributed to the professional development of healthcare professionals. By increasing their knowledge and understanding of traditional healing practices, healthcare professionals may be better equipped to interact with patients who use them and to provide more culturally responsive care. This may lead to more positive attitudes towards traditional healing practices among healthcare professionals, improving their interactions with patients who use these practices and improving healthcare outcomes for diverse communities in South Africa. In summary, this study is significant as it contributes to existing knowledge on Ubungoma, Islam, and Sangomas in South Africa, promotes cultural understanding, has policy implications, and supports the professional development of healthcare professionals. By shedding light on the complex intersection of religion, culture, and healthcare in South Africa, this research offers actionable insights that enhance the well-being of communities and individuals.

Promoting Cultural Understanding:

The study contributes to promoting cultural understanding and respect for diversity. It highlights the importance of cultural practices and beliefs and how they can coexist with religion. The study's findings provide insight into how traditional healing practices can be integrated with modern healthcare. Promoting cultural understanding and respect for diversity is essential to any society. In South Africa, where traditional healing practices are integral to cultural heritage, respecting and understanding them is imperative. This study on the intersection of Ubungoma, Islam, and Sangomas in South Africa contributes significantly to this goal by shedding light on Muslim Sangomas' cultural practices and beliefs. The study further highlights the importance of cultural practices and beliefs and how they can coexist with religion. Many people in South Africa rely on traditional healing practices, including Ubungoma, to address their health concerns. However, some of these practices may be seen to conflict with Islamic beliefs. This study identifies how Muslim Sangomas reconcile these beliefs and practices, and how they can be respected and valued alongside Islamic teachings. The study's findings provide insight into how traditional healing practices can be integrated with modern healthcare. The South African healthcare system combines modern Western medicine and traditional healing practices. However, the medical community often sees conventional healing practices as inferior or unscientific. This has led to a lack of integration between the two systems, resulting in patients receiving inadequate care. By understanding how Muslim Sangomas integrate their practices with their religious beliefs, the study provides insight into how traditional healing practices can be integrated with modern healthcare practices within both systems.

In addition, the study helps to address the stigmatisation of traditional healing practices. The medical community and the wider society often view traditional healers with suspicion and mistrust. This stigmatisation can make it difficult for traditional healers to work effectively with medical professionals and for patients to receive the care they need. By highlighting the cultural and religious significance of traditional healing practices and how they can coexist with religion, the study can help to reduce stigmatisation and promote greater understanding and respect. Promoting cultural awareness and respect for diversity is crucial for building a more inclusive and harmonious society. This study on the intersection of Ubungoma, Islam, and Sangomas in South Africa has contributed significantly to this goal by promoting a greater understanding of traditional healing practices, highlighting the importance of cultural practices and beliefs, providing insight into how traditional healing practices can be integrated with modern healthcare practices, and reducing the stigmatisation of traditional healers.

Policy Implications:

The study had policy implications for regulating traditional healing practices in South Africa. The findings informed policies and guidelines for integrating traditional healing practices into the mainstream healthcare system, thereby improving access to healthcare for communities that relied on traditional healers. Integrating traditional healing practices into the mainstream healthcare system was an important policy issue in South Africa. Many people in the country relied on traditional healers, including Sangomas, for their healthcare needs. However, the regulation of traditional healing practices had been a contentious issue, with some traditional healers being accused of exploiting vulnerable patients and providing ineffective or harmful treatments.

This study on the intersection of Ubungoma, Islam, and Sangomas in South Africa contributed to integrating traditional healing practices into the mainstream healthcare system. By providing insight into how Muslim Sangomas navigated the intersection of their religious beliefs and traditional healing practices, the study helped identify ways to integrate traditional healing practices with modern healthcare practices in a way that was respectful of both systems. For example, the study helped identify areas where traditional healing practices could complement modern healthcare. Traditional healing practices were particularly effective in addressing health concerns that were not effectively treated by modern medicine, such as mental health issues or chronic pain. By identifying the areas in which they were most effective, policies and guidelines were developed to support their integration into the mainstream healthcare system.

In addition, the study helped identify ways to regulate traditional healing practices to ensure patient safety and quality of care. Traditional healers were subject to different regulations than medical professionals, leading to inconsistent standards of care and potential harm to patients. By understanding how Muslim Sangomas integrated their practices with their religious beliefs, the study helped identify ways to regulate traditional healing practices that respected cultural and spiritual practices while ensuring patient safety and quality of care. Furthermore, the study helped to promote greater collaboration between traditional healers and medical professionals. Traditional healers were often mistrusted by medical professionals, and vice versa, resulting in patients receiving inadequate care. Policies and guidelines were developed to support the integration of traditional healing practices into the mainstream healthcare system by promoting greater understanding and collaboration between the two systems.

Overall, the study on the intersection of Ubungoma, Islam, and Sangomas in South Africa had the potential to have significant policy implications for regulating traditional healing practices. By providing insight into how Muslim Sangomas navigated the intersection of their religious beliefs and traditional healing practices, the study helped identify ways to integrate traditional healing practices with modern healthcare, regulate them to ensure patient safety and quality of care, and promote greater collaboration between traditional healers and medical professionals—this improved access to healthcare for communities that relied on traditional healers in South Africa.

Professional Development:

The study contributes to the professional development of healthcare professionals, particularly those working in South Africa. It increased their knowledge and understanding of traditional healing practices, which improved their interactions with patients who used them. The investigation into the intersection of Ubungoma, Islam, and Sangomas in South Africa furthered the professional development of healthcare providers. By increasing their knowledge and understanding of traditional healing practices, healthcare professionals were better equipped to interact with patients and provide more culturally responsive care.

Culturally responsive care was essential to healthcare, particularly in diverse countries like South Africa. Healthcare professionals had to understand their patients' cultural practices and beliefs to provide effective and respectful care. However, traditional healing practices were often stigmatised within the medical community; healthcare professionals frequently lacked understanding of these practices, leading to mistrust and inadequate patient care.

The study on Ubungoma, Islam, and Sangomas in South Africa increased healthcare professionals' knowledge and understanding of traditional healing practices. By exploring how Muslim Sangomas navigate the intersection of their religious beliefs and traditional healing practices, the study challenged stereotypes and misconceptions. This led to more positive attitudes toward traditional healing practices among healthcare professionals, thereby improving their interactions with patients. Furthermore, the study provided healthcare professionals with insight into the unique needs of patients who utilise traditional healing practices. Because traditional healing practices often addressed health concerns that modern medicine did not effectively treat, such as spiritual and emotional well-being, understanding the complementary nature of these systems allowed healthcare professionals to provide more holistic care.

1.6 STUDY APPROACH AND DESIGN

The study initially used purposive sampling to select Muslim Sangomas practising Ubungoma in South Africa. Other participants were identified through snowball sampling, where initial participants recommended others who met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were Muslim Sangomas willing to share their experiences practising Islam and Ubungoma.

1.6.1 Sampling Technique Description

As mentioned, this study employed a combination of Purposive and snowball sampling to recruit the participants. This approach was selected to target a specific population and can help reach hard-to-reach populations effectively.

Purposive Sampling: A non-random sampling method where a researcher deliberately selects individuals based on specific characteristics central to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). This study employed this method to ensure the inclusion of information-rich participant cases capable of providing deep insights into the intersection of faith and traditional practice. To meet the research objectives, participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: Self-identification as a practising Muslim Sangoma.

- a) Professional identity and training: Participants were required to self- identify as practising Muslim Sangoma who have completed the full traditional initiation process (ukuthwasa).
- b) Thematic Relevance: The candidates possessed lived experiences in navigating the dual spiritual identities of Islam and Ubungoma.
- c) Informed Consent and engagement: Participants demonstrated a willingness to engage in detailed, semi-structured interviews regarding their personal and professional trajectories.

Snowball Sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that relies on referrals from initial participants. The first participants were identified through online platforms and community

organisations. After their interviews, these individuals were asked to recommend others who met the study's criteria, and their personal networks were asked to recommend others who met the inclusion criteria. Five participants were interviewed. This method is advantageous when studying hard-to-reach populations or groups that are difficult to access through other means. (Charlie Parker, 2019).

However, there are some limitations to using purposive and snowball sampling. First, the sample may differ from the larger population, as participants are selected based on specific criteria. Additionally, there may be biases in the selection process, as participants may recommend individuals who share similar experiences and perspectives.

To address these limitations, the researcher took steps to ensure the study's rigour and validity. Diverse recruitment methods were used to reach a broad range of participants across key demographics, including geographical areas, age, gender, and educational qualifications. The interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred language to ensure they were comfortable sharing their experiences. The researcher also employed rigorous data analysis, which involved making sense of the interview data and identifying common themes and patterns. In conclusion, the study used purposive sampling to select Muslim Sangomas practising Ubungoma in South Africa. The participants were identified through snowball sampling(as indicated earlier), where initial participants recommended others who met the inclusion criteria. This sampling method allowed the researchers to select participants most relevant to the research question and with the necessary knowledge and experience to provide valuable insights.

1.7 STUDY SETTING, STUDY POPULATION, SAMPLING AND SAMPLE SIZE

The geographical setting for my research was in my home region of Gauteng and other provinces where the participants/interviewees are located. The participants were accessed via live interviews and electronic platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp. Participants were chosen from various cultural groups, including AmaZulu, AmaXhosa, BaSotho, VhaVenda, and Tsonga. If. Participants included both males and females. In the case of a minor, parental consent was obtained (none were included in this study).

Where individual interviews are planned, it is realistic to limit the number to five, one from each tribal group, where possible. Where a questionnaire is issued, there are no such time restraints, which can lead to qualitative results.

My goal for the semi-structured interviews is to select an individual from each group who represents a mix of gender, age, social class, and roles within the culture/tribe.

While the recruitment strategy aimed for broad inclusivity in the practitioner community, the scope of the study was intentionally restricted to adult participants. The decision was informed by the sensitive nature of the intersection between Islamic practice and traditional healing, which required a high degree of emotional maturity and legal autonomy on the part of the respondents. To mitigate risks associated with the participation of vulnerable populations, only individuals aged 18 and older were eligible. This bypassed the requirement for parental or guardian consent and ensured that all participants could provide independent, informed consent.

1.8 DATA COLLECTION METHOD(S) PROCEDURE AND ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES.

The study used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or over the phone, depending on the participant's preference. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview questions focused on the participants' experiences practising Islam and Ubungoma, as well as their spiritual beliefs and practices. The primary data collection method used in the study was semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed for flexibility and spontaneity in the questioning process while ensuring that all participants were asked similar questions about their experiences practising Islam and Ubungoma. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researchers to collect rich, detailed data on participants' spiritual beliefs and practices.

1.8.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Purpose: To explore participants' experiences and perceptions related to practising both Islam and Ubungoma

The approach allowed for flexibility and spontaneity in the questioning process while ensuring that all participants received similar questions.

Participants were Muslim Sangomas practising Ubungoma and those who had undergone the ukuthwasa (training) process in South Africa.

Data Format: Audio recordings of interviews transcribed verbatim.

Interview Questions: Open-ended questions elicit information about participants' experiences practising Islam and Ubungoma, as well as their spiritual beliefs and practices.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face or over the phone, depending on the participant's preference. This approach allowed the researchers to accommodate participants' comfort levels and schedules. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, meaning they were transcribed exactly as spoken. This allowed the researchers to analyse the data accurately and reliably.

The interview questions were designed to elicit information about the participants' experiences practising Islam and Ubungoma, as well as their spiritual beliefs and practices. The open-ended questions allowed the participant to elaborate on their responses. The interview questions included topics such as:

- i) How did you become a Muslim Sangoma?
- ii) How do you balance your Islamic beliefs with traditional healing practices?
- iii) How do you use your spiritual beliefs and practices to help your clients?
- iv) How do you see your role as a Muslim Sangoma in your community?

These questions were carefully crafted to explore the participants' experiences and perceptions of practising Islam and Ubungoma. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to share their experiences in their own words, yielding rich, detailed data for analysis.

Overall, using semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method enables the researchers to obtain detailed, nuanced insights into the experiences of Muslim Sangomas

who practice both Islam and Ubungoma. The approach enabled the researchers to explore the complexities of the participants' spiritual beliefs and practices and gain insight into their experiences as healers in their communities. Using audio recordings and verbatim transcriptions ensured the data was accurate and reliable, allowing for in-depth analysis and interpretation.

1.9 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data collected through semi-structured interviews with Muslim Sangomas in South Africa who practice Islam and Ubungoma. The thematic analysis involved a systematic approach to identifying recurring patterns, themes, and categories in the transcribed data. The analysis began with familiarisation, where the researchers read the transcripts to understand the content. Next, the researchers identified initial codes or phrases that captured the essence of the data. These codes were then organised into categories that represented similar themes.

Using an iterative process, the researchers refined and modified the codes and categories until they had a comprehensive set of themes representing the data. The themes were then organised into a coherent narrative that reflected the participants. This study's thematic analysis provided a rigorous and systematic approach to analysing the data. By identifying patterns and themes in the data, the researchers could gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of Muslim *Sangomas* who practice both Islam and Ubungoma. Additionally, the method involves comprehensive data analysis to ensure that all relevant information is captured and considered.

However, there are some limitations to thematic analysis that must be considered. The method relies heavily on the researcher's skills and expertise, which may introduce bias or affect data interpretation. Additionally, identifying themes can be time-consuming and labour-intensive. In conclusion, the use of thematic analysis in this study provided a rigorous and systematic approach to analysing the data collected through semi-structured interviews. By identifying patterns and themes in the data, the researcher could gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of Muslim *Sangomas* who practice both Islam and Ubungoma.

1.9.1 Methodological Approach Description

Ethnography. This approach involves fieldwork to observe and participate in individuals' daily practices and beliefs within the communities where Islam and Ubungoma intersect. Ethnographers aim to provide a detailed and holistic account of how these two belief systems coexist and intersect in individuals' lives.

Historical Analysis. This approach involves examining the historical development of Islam and Ubungoma, and their interactions and influences over time. Historians aim to contextualise how these two belief systems have intersected and how this history has shaped the present. By examining the historical context in which Islam and Ubungoma emerged, researchers can better understand how they have influenced each other over time. This approach also provides insights into the political, social, and economic factors that have shaped the intersection of Islam and Ubungoma.

Textual analysis is another approach to investigating the intersection of Islam and Ubungoma. This method involves analysing written documents, including religious texts, historical accounts, and other relevant materials. Through a textual analysis of Islamic and Ubungoma texts, researchers can gain insight into how these belief systems intersect and their similarities and differences. This approach provides information on how religious authorities have interpreted and responded to the intersection of Islam and Ubungoma over time. However, a significant challenge emerged during this phase: the literature is remarkably thin. While scholars have written extensively on Islam and *Ubungoma* as separate entities, they have rarely documented them as a unified or overlapping practice. This study directly addresses this paucity of written material. Because the official "canon" often overlooks these dual identities, the primary data from my interviews become even more critical; they serve to fill a documented silence in the academic record, providing a voice to a phenomenon that has, until now, remained largely unwritten.

1.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study examines Black Muslims' idiosyncratic challenges in South Africa, particularly informed by their experiential and intellectual commitment to Islam and Ubungoma. It seeks to understand the lived realities and interpretative framework of Muslim sangomas (exploratory), while critically assessing the implications of their practices for theological discourse, cultural

inclusion, and social inclusion(evaluative). Further, the research explores how Muslim sangomas integrate ancestral respect and spiritual healing within a coherent Islamic framework.

Central to this integration process is the concept of *ʿurf* (custom), the ongoing negotiation of tradition. This recognises that Islamic law has incorporated local customs over time, if they do not contradict core Islamic beliefs. Thus, *ʿurf* provides an overarching theoretical framework, grounded in indigenous knowledge and Islamic principles, that can be utilised to explore the integration between the two systems. As will be seen throughout our study, the question of integration is a critical one for Muslim practitioners of Ubungoma, who seek to remain faithful to both their Islamic beliefs and their cultural realities as Black Muslims.

This theoretical framework is detailed in Chapter 2, the intricate relationship between Islam and culture. The detailed exploration of the principle seeks to uncover and understand how Islam interacts with and influences cultural expressions by delving into this subject, exploring topics such as the proof of *ʿurf* from scriptures, types of *ʿurf*, and how the four major schools of Islamic jurisprudence view the concept of *ʿurf*, conditions of *ʿurf* and its application in the modern context. The objective is to shed light on the complexities and dynamics that arise from this interplay. Islamic beliefs and principles intersect with cultural practices in profound ways. It examines and analyses these intersections, drawing on the teachings of the Qurʾān and the Sunnah (the example and teachings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him), as well as the works of scholars and researchers in the field. As will be seen, these interactions can specifically be applied to three areas:

1. **Theology:** The study will engage with potential theological tension, such as viewing the practice as furthering the concept of innovation (*Bidʿah*) and associating partners with Allah (*shirk*). These concerns often resonate within a conservative interpretation of Islam and will be examined through the standpoint of Muslim sangomas and relevant theological discourse. Additionally, Ubungoma might be located through the *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* (the higher objectives of the law) as fulfilling life, lineage and mental health. Through this lens, sangomas may find meaningful connections or a lack thereof between Ubungoma and Islamic beliefs, with *ʿurf* acting, or potentially acting, as a lens by which to evaluate these connections.

2. Black African Muslim Praxis (BAMP):

Black Muslim Praxis is anchored in the intellectual, spiritual and lived experiences of African indigenous Muslims in South Africa. It navigates their journey into Islam while confronting and challenging historical and contemporary marginalisation. This framework challenges the dominant narrative by exploring: The historical trajectory of Black Muslims in South Africa, their interaction with other Muslim groups domestically (Indians and Malay Muslims) and internationally, their negotiation of cultural identities which is how they affirm their cultural heritage within Islam, the predominant Islamic tradition (Şūfī, Tablighi and Salafi) that influences them, and the broader socio-economic and political role they play in society. Of necessity, the concept of '*urf*' plays a critical function in this negotiation with their realities, both at an intellectual and at a lived level.

This frame is built upon three interconnected conceptual anchors: Presence, Translatability, and Becoming.

Anchor 1: Challenging the “Invisible Presence” (Raciality)

The first layer of BAMP addresses the racialised landscape of South African Islam. Gabeba Baderoon provides a critical lens for understanding the marginalisation of Black Muslims. She argues that Islam in South Africa has been “racially coded” as primary “Malay” or “Indian,” rendering the Black Muslim an “invisible presence” (Baderoon, 2014). For the Black Muslim, the journey into Islam is a constant struggle for authenticity. “BAMP asserts that “Muslim-ness” is not the property of any specific ethnic group. By navigating a domestic landscape where their identity is frequently questioned, practitioners engage in the praxis of sovereignty, dismantling the “Malay/Indian” monopoly to affirm that one can be fully indigenous and fully Muslim.

Anchor 2: “Translatability” and the Authority of '*Urf* (Cultural Translation)

The second pillar utilises Lamin Sanneh's concept of “translatability” as a mechanism for cultural survival. Sanneh posits that when a faith is translated into the vernacular, it empowers the host culture rather than erasing it (Sanneh, 2009). BAMP utilises the Islamic legal concept of '*urf*' (custom) as a critical tool in this translation. By engaging with Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne's (2008) work on the Timbuktu manuscripts, this framework

connects local South African struggles to a broader continental heritage of sophisticated Islamic scholarship. Here, *urf* is not viewed as a theological “weakness” or “compromise.” Instead, it is a legitimate legal and spiritual instrument that allows Black practitioners to negotiate socio-economic and political realities such as family rights and obligations within a post-Apartheid state.

Anchor 3: The Philosophy of “Becoming” (Self-Understanding)

Finally, BAMP is defined by rejecting “conversion” as a static, one-time event. Souleymane Bachir Diagne (2018) provides a novel interpretation of African Muslim identity as a continuous process of “becoming” (Diagne, 2018). This anchor explains how black Muslims engage with various Islamic traditions; Black Muslims act as agents who synthesise these influences with their African “repositioned” within a wider Islamic ideological order. This allows Black Muslims to maintain a relational identity rooted in their indigenous heritage while maturing in their Islamic faith.

Black Muslim Praxis (BAMP) serves as a robust theoretical framework for understanding the intersection of faith, race, and indigeneity within the South African Islamic context. It moves beyond simple notions of “conversion” to present a dynamic model of religious identity that is anchored in three critical conceptual pillars: Presence, Translatability, and Becoming.

Reclaiming Presence: The framework effectively dismantles the “invisible presence” of Black Muslims by challenging the racial coding of Islam as a primarily “Malay” or “Indian” property. It asserts a “praxis of sovereignty,” allowing Muslims to be fully indigenous and fully African simultaneously.

The Authority of *Urf*: By utilising the concept of translatability, BAMP positions the Islamic legal tool of *urf* (custom) not as a theological compromise, but as a legitimate instrument for cultural survival. This allows for the negotiation of socio-economic and political realities such as family rights and obligations within a post-Apartheid state.

The Philosophy of Becoming: Finally, BAMP redefines African Muslim identity as a continuous process of “becoming”. This allows Black Muslims to act as agents who synthesise various Islamic traditions, be they *Şūfī*, *Tablighi*, or *Salafī*, with their African roots.

In the study of Islam and its intersection with indigenous African realities, including concepts such as Ubungoma, BAMP provides the necessary language to describe how practitioners maintain a relational identity. It connects local South African struggles to a broader continental heritage of Islamic scholarship, ensuring that the host culture is empowered rather than erased by the faith. Ultimately, Black Muslim Praxis offers a sophisticated lens to view how indigenous Muslims navigate, challenge, and affirm their heritage within a global religious order.

3. **Healing:** One of the primary practices of Ubungoma is healing, with foundational functions such as diagnosis, divination, medicinal practices and treating mental illnesses that are related to spiritual possession and other issues, making health a crucial dimension of understanding how Black Muslims deal with diseases that are associated with Ubungoma both as initiation sickness and the practice of healing people in general. Thus, the support or non-support for such healing in *‘urf* forms a vital part of the Black Muslim, and particularly Muslim sangoma, experience.

Thus, the foundational understanding of *‘urf* is crucial for comprehending how aspects of Ubungoma might be perceived or integrated by Black Muslims and, as mentioned, may be applied as an authentic, indigenously Islamic, and theoretically grounded framework that, we believe, is amenable to a sensitive, phenomenological understanding of the topic under discussion.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The study adhered to ethical principles and guidelines throughout the research process. Their consent was obtained before the interviews. were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and their personal information was kept confidential. The study also adhered to the ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, as outlined by the University Ethics Committee. Research ethics are fundamental to ensure that scientific research is conducted with integrity, honesty, and respect for the participants' dignity, rights, and welfare. The study described in this statement adhered to ethical principles and guidelines throughout the research process. This ensured that the participants were treated respectfully and that the results were valid and reliable.

One of the ethical principles that the study adhered to was informed consent. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the risks and benefits of participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. This allowed the participants to make an informed decision about whether to participate in the study.

In addition, the study ensured that the participants' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. The participants were assured that their personal information would be kept confidential and that their names would not be used in any reports or publications. This was particularly important because the study involved sensitive information, and the participants may have been hesitant to participate if their privacy was not assured.

1.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study had several limitations that could have affected the research findings. The sample size was small, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other Muslim Sangomas practising Ubungoma in South Africa. The study also relied on self-reported data, which may be affected by social desirability bias. The study did not include participants who had stopped practising Ubungoma, which may have provided additional insights into the experiences of Muslim Sangomas in South Africa. The study's limitations are factors that could affect the study. In this case, the survey on Muslim Sangomas practising Ubungoma in South Africa had several limitations that could affect the study's outcomes.

The first limitation is the small sample size, which could affect the generalisability of the findings. The study's results may not represent the entire population of Muslim Sangomas practising Ubungoma in South Africa due to the small sample size. A small sample size increases the risk of sampling error, potentially leading to biased or inaccurate results. The research intended to include interviews with 12 Muslim Sangomas, but many declined to participate. Their reason for withdrawal included: fear of stigmatisation, the belief that Ubungoma is a private family matter not to be discussed publicly or in research papers and lack of permission from the ancestors.

To mitigate this limitation, future studies could use a larger, more representative sample. An adequate sample size is crucial to obtaining accurate and reliable research results. A sample size that is too small can increase the risk of sampling error, leading to biased or inaccurate findings. The study on Muslim Sangomas practising Ubungoma in South Africa is limited by its small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the results. The small sample size means that the study's findings may not represent the entire population of Muslim Sangomas practising Ubungoma in South Africa. A small sample size can introduce sampling error, distorting the study's findings. Sampling error occurs when the sample selected from a population does not accurately represent the population due to chance factors, such as random variation in the sampling process.

For example, the study might have only included Muslim Sangomas based in a particular region of South Africa or already known to the researchers. As a result, the sample limits the generalisability of the study's findings. Furthermore, a small sample size can lead to biased results. This is because a biased sample is different from the population it is meant to represent. For example, suppose the researchers only selected Muslim Sangomas who were willing to participate in the study. In that case, the sample might be biased towards those with a particular view or experience of Ubungoma. This could lead to accurate or complete findings.

The second limitation of the study is the reliance on self-reported data, which could be influenced by social desirability bias. Social desirability bias occurs when respondents provide answers they believe are socially acceptable rather than the truth. In this study, participants may have needed more time to provide honest answers due to the sensitive nature of the questions. This limitation could be addressed using other data collection methods, such as observations or interviews, to triangulate the results. Another limitation of the study is that it did not include participants who had stopped practising Ubungoma or Islam. These participants may have provided additional insights into the experiences of Muslim Sangomas in South Africa. Understanding why some Muslim Sangomas stopped practising Ubungoma could provide valuable insights into the challenges and barriers to practising it in South Africa. In conclusion, the survey of Muslim Sangomas practising Ubungoma in South Africa had several limitations that could have affected the research findings. The small sample size could limit the generalisability of the findings, while reliance on self-reported data could introduce social desirability bias. Ubungoma could also limit the study's scope by not including participants who had stopped practising. Future studies could address these limitations to ensure the results are

more representative and accurate. By acknowledging these limitations, researchers can improve the quality of their studies and enhance the validity of their findings.

1.13 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The scope of the topic “Ubungoma and Islam: Case Studies of Muslim *Sangomas* in South Africa” is to examine how Muslim *Sangomas* in South Africa navigate the intersection of their traditional healing practices with their Islamic beliefs. The study will use a case study approach to explore the experiences of Muslim *Sangomas* and their clients, as well as the broader socio-cultural and religious contexts in which they operate. This approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and viewpoints. The chapters were structured as follows: initially, a background on Islam's view of culture or cultural practices is provided, followed by an in-depth examination of Ubungoma, exploring various aspects of the practices. Subsequently, the text delves into healing approaches in Islamic texts, among South African Muslims, and in West and East Africa and considers the implications for Ubungoma. Further, the chapters examine similar practices in other parts of the world, especially in Asia, and other practices akin to Ubungoma; the paper concludes with studies of black Muslims who have undergone or are undergoing Ubungoma. This structured approach ensures the study is thorough, coherent, and accessible, guiding the reader through a well-organised, systematic exploration of the topic.

The outline of the chapters is the following:

1.13.1 CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The chapter introduces the study, which contains the following: a description of the study problem, the purpose of the study, research objectives and questions/ hypotheses, the significance of the study, the study approach and design setting, the study population, the sampling and sample size data collection method(S), and the procedure and ethical considerations.

1.13.2 CHAPTER 2 ISLAM AND CULTURE (*‘urf*)

The chapter explores the concept of *‘urf* in Islam and the complex and intricate relationship between Islam and culture. The chapter seeks to uncover and understand how Islam interacts with and influences cultural expressions by delving into this subject. The objective is to shed light on the complexities and dynamics that arise from this interplay. Islamic beliefs and principles intersect with cultural practices in profound ways. It examines and analyses these intersections, drawing on the teachings of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah (the example and teachings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him), as well as the works of scholars and researchers in the field. Doing so aims to show comprehensively how cultural expressions shape Islam or vice versa. This foundational understanding of *‘urf* is crucial for comprehending how Black Muslims might perceive or integrate aspects of Ubongoma.

1.13.3 CHAPTER 3 UBUNGOMA

This chapter explored the concept of Ubungoma within its cultural and religious contexts. This examination aims to comprehensively understand Ubungoma and shed light on its relevance in African society. It will explore the core tenets of Ubungoma, including the role of ancestors (*amadlozi*), the process of ancestral calling (*ukuthwasa*), the rituals and practices involved in divination and healing, and the social function of sangomas (traditional healers). It will also address the contemporary challenges and transformations facing Ubungoma in modern South Africa, including its relationship with Western medicine, feminism, and Ubungoma as a religion or culture. This detailed analysis will serve as a crucial counterpoint to the discussion of Islam in subsequent chapters.

1.13.4 CHAPTER 4 - Approaches to Healing in Islamic Texts and Among South African Muslim Scholars.

This chapter explores the perspectives on healing with Islamic tradition and the views of South African Muslim scholars on traditional healing practices. It will first explore references to healing

in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, including divine healing, prophetic medicine, and the role of supplication (*du'ā*) and spiritual remedies. It will highlight areas of consensus and divergence, discussing the theological arguments for and against engagement with Ubungoma, often framed through the lens of *Tawhid* (oneness of God) and the avoidance of *shirk* (polytheism). This chapter provides the local academic and theological context for the lived experiences presented in the case studies.

1.13.5 CHAPTER 5 - Islamic Traditional Healing in West and East Africa: Implications for Ubungoma

This chapter broadens the scope of the research by examining the historical and contemporary interactions between Islam and indigenous healing practices in other parts of Africa, specifically West and East Africa. It will present case studies of how Islamic scholars and communities in these regions have engaged with local traditional healing systems, including adopting or rejecting certain practices. The chapter will explore syncretic expressions that have emerged in these contexts, such as the use of Qur'ānic verses for healing alongside traditional remedies, and the role of Muslim marabouts and sheikhs in spiritual healing. By drawing parallels and distinctions with these African examples, the chapter will offer insights and potential frameworks for understanding the dynamic between Islam and Ubungoma in the South African context.

1.13.6 CHAPTER 6 - Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia and its Connections to Ubungoma

This chapter further explores Islamic shamanism in Central Asia, focusing on its historical roots and contemporary manifestations. It will examine how pre-Islamic shamanistic practices, such as spirit possession, divination, and communication with the unseen world, have been integrated into or influenced by Šūfī in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. By drawing comparisons between the functional and experiential aspects of Central Asian Islamic shamanism and Ubungoma, this chapter will explore potential shared anthropological and

spiritual archetypes, offering a broader comparative lens to understand the South African case studies.

1.13.7 CHAPTER 7 – Case Studies of Black Muslim Sangomas

This chapter illustrates the experiences of black Muslims who have trained with Ubungoma. These real-life examples provide tangible insights and enhance the narrative by connecting theoretical discussion and lived experiences.

This pivotal chapter presents the core empirical data of the research: detailed case studies of Black Muslims in South Africa who identify as *sangomas*. Through in-depth interviews, this chapter will recount their journey, shedding light on how they reconcile their Islamic faith with the calling and practice of Ubongoma. Each case study will showcase unique strategies to navigate potential theological and social tensions, including the selective adoption of practices, reinterpretation of rituals, and the creation of hybrid identities. The chapter will explore their understanding of ancestors, the role of God (Allah) in their healing practices, and the reactions of their families, communities, and broader Muslim society to their dual identities. These narratives provide the lived experiences that inform the analytical chapter.

1.13.8 CHAPTER 8: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter synthesises the findings from the preceding chapters to offer a comprehensive analysis of the interaction between Islam and Ubongoma among Black Muslims in South Africa. It will revisit the initial research questions. It will draw upon the theoretical framework of *'urf*, comparative case studies from other African and Central Asian contexts, and rich empirical data from Muslim sangoma case studies. The chapter will discuss the various forms of reconciliation, negotiation, and hybridity observed in the lives of these individuals, exploring the theological, social, and cultural implications of their choices. It will identify key themes, such as the reinterpretation of ancestral veneration within an Islamic framework, the role of spiritual healing in both traditions and the challenges of identity formation. Finally, the chapter will offer concluding remarks on the implications of this research for

understanding religious pluralism, lived Islam, and Indigenous knowledge systems in contemporary South Africa. At the same time, we will propose directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

ISLAM AND CULTURE

"Much of what became the Prophet's sunna (Prophetic model) was made up of acceptable pre-Islamic Arab cultural norms, and the principle of tolerating and accommodating such practices among Arabs and non-Arabs alike in all their diversity may be termed a supreme, overriding Prophetic sunnah." Dr Umar Faruq Abdallah

The previous chapter provided the purpose of this study and its methodology. It indicated that it would use a theoretical framework utilising the concept of *'urf*, or customary law in Islam. This chapter explores the idea of *'urf* in Islam in greater detail. This concept seeks to uncover and understand how Islam interacts with and influences cultural expressions. The objective is to

shed light on the complexities and dynamics that arise from the interplay between Islam and culture. Islamic beliefs and principles intersect with cultural practices in profound ways. It examines and analyses these intersections, drawing on the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah (the example and teachings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him), as well as the works of scholars and researchers in the field. Doing so aims to show comprehensively how cultural expressions shape Islam or vice versa. Through an exploration of relevant literature and scholarly research, the chapter will delve into several aspects of *'urf*, including its definition, historical development, evidentiary basis, classification, prerequisites, and practical implications. In addition, an analysis of several instances of *'urf* from diverse areas and epochs in Islamic history will be conducted. In this discourse, we shall further delve into Islam's adaptability to diverse cultural contexts, the ethical considerations involved in integrating cultural practices, and the challenges and opportunities that arise from the interplay between Islam. It will also discuss the role of Islamic teachings in guiding and influencing cultural expressions, as well as the dynamics of cultural syncretism and pluralism within this context. By shedding light on the intricate relationship between Islam and culture, this chapter seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of the complexities inherent in the interplay between religion and culture. It aims to provide insights into how Islam navigates cultural expressions and how Islamic beliefs and principles influence cultural practices. The chapter on culture seeks to foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of Islam and its interwoven nature within the unique healing context. The complex interactions between Islam and indigenous African spiritual practice, notably Ubungoma, may be fruitfully examined through the framework of *'urf*. *'Urf* thus offers itself as a theoretical lens emerging from within the Islamic tradition that helps us understand and further develop this interplay.

2.1 The Concept of *'urf* in Islamic Law

The concept of *'urf* in Islamic Law plays a critical role in adapting to local cultures while maintaining *Sharī'ah's* fundamental principles and values. *'Urf* in Islamic Law allows for adapting laws to suit the specific customs and practices of different communities while remaining within the framework of Islamic teachings. This adaptability is essential in issues related to human relationships, where the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* may not provide specific guidance. The nature of *'urf* may change as it spreads across Muslim communities worldwide, incorporating local cultures and particular times and places. However, the fundamental values

and guiding principles based on *Sharī'ah* remain constant. This helps create a sense of unity in Islamic-built design despite the diversity of local cultures. Sitoto frames the inquiry of *ʿurf* as merely a marginal discourse in the overall formulation of Islamic law, not just as a matter of legal sources, but as a discourse concerning power, identity, and the "epistemic closure" often faced by Black African Muslims, who are structurally positioned as the "Muslim cultural 'Other'" within global Islamic narratives (Sitoto, 2000).

2.1.1 Brief Overview of Islamic Law (*Sharī'ah*)

Linguistically, *sharī'ah* means a way or a path. Technically, it means the legal system of Islam. For this study, however, we will translate the word *sharī'ah* as the laws of Islam or the Islamic laws. (Doi, 1998). The scope of Islamic law includes worship, morality, family, criminality, politics, and business. The two primary sources of Islamic law are the *Qur'ān* and the Sunnah. *The holy book of Islam*, the *Qur'ān*, is believed to be the word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Sunnah refers to the example and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, as recorded in hadiths. These sources form the basis of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the human interpretation of Islamic law. (Doi, 1998).

Over time, Islamic jurisprudence evolved through the efforts of scholars and jurists from various schools of thought (Madhāhib). This work will be based on the four primary Sunni sects: *Ḥanafī*, *Mālikī*, *Shāfi'ī*, and *Ḥanbalī*.

There is the role of *ʿurf* (custom) as a secondary source of Islamic law. However, our traditionally trained scholars widely acknowledge that *ʿurf* is one of the sources of Islamic law. According to Kamali, the ulema widely recognise the legitimacy of utilising *ʿurf* as a criterion for interpreting the *Qur'ān* (Kamali, 1989, p.249).

Islam is a comprehensive religion encompassing faith, worship, and various social and cultural aspects of life. A critical concept in Islamic jurisprudence that addresses the intersection of religion and culture is "*ʿurf*." It refers to the customs, practices, and traditions of a particular society or community.

2.2 Definition of *ʿUrf*:

The definition of *ʿurf* (custom) is paramount as it is the primary subject of inquiry. On the other hand, "tradition" offers a methodological and theoretical structure that directs the emphasis of the discourse; both these terms (traditions and customs) will fall within the category of *ʿurf*. Formulating precise, operational definitions for these terms removes potential uncertainties and misunderstandings from the outset, before they are utilised as fundamental theoretical concepts. The meaning of *ʿurf* (customs) can be defined from two perspectives: linguistic and technical. The term *ʿurf* is derived from the root verb *ʿarafa*, which means to know; technically, it is described as recurring practices appropriate to persons of sound nature.' This definition clarifies that custom must be sound and fair to be a viable basis for legal decisions. As a result, habits that provide no benefit or that involve prejudice and corruption are excluded from the *ʿurf* as customary practices and traditions formed over time within a specific group or community. It includes various cultural, social, and ethical norms regulating people's relationships and behaviour (Kamalli, 1991).

Badawi supports this point by arguing that the linguistic connotation of *ʿurf* can be examined from several perspectives.

- a. The custom in the language relates to what humans see as excellent and is practised and widely accepted.
- b. The linguistic meaning is concerned with what is seen and manifest.
- c. It also denotes generosity and the greatest of acts. *ʿurf* is the name given to what individuals are familiar with in their daily lives and activities.

In its technical definition, *ʿurf* refers to whatever society agrees upon and is continuously and tenaciously followed in daily life, from speech to action (Badawi, 2021).

Thus, *ʿurf* can be defined for this research as the commonly accepted customs, culture, and traditions that have developed over time within a specific group or community. It includes various cultural, social, and ethical norms regulating people's relationships and behaviour.

Another term commonly used interchangeably with "customs" is *ʿĀda*, which also carries the same meaning as (*ʿurf*) customs. To explain the relation between *ʿurf* and *ʿĀda*, Bello observes that the term *ʿĀdah* originates from the Arabic root (*al-ʿĀda*-), denoting the concepts of "return" or "repeat" (Bello, 2013). The term "*ʿādah*" denotes a recurring behaviour or ongoing activity. The terms *ʿurf* and *ʿĀdah* are often considered interchangeable, and this viewpoint is shared by most scholars (*ʿulama*). Some scholars have distinguished these

terms, asserting that the term '*Ādah*' denotes repeating or emphasising something. Recurrent practice is a versatile concept that may be applied to individuals and organisations. One example that can be cited is the behaviours of individuals who might be seen as their personal '*ādah*' (Kamali, 1991). Nevertheless, the term '*urf*' is not employed in this context; it is not used to refer to individuals' personal habits, which can be understood as their '*urf*'. The phenomenon under consideration pertains to the communal engagement of a substantial population, which is typically observed. The term '*urf*' signifies that the customs or practices of a limited number or even a significant minority within a collective do not embody the concept of '*urf*'. In the present study, the phenomenon referred to is the customary behaviour exhibited by a substantial population. Sometimes scholars refer to it as '*urf*' (Bello, 2013). The study will employ the phrase '*urf*' and '*Ādah*' interchangeably.

The discursive analysis of this text reveals a sophisticated linguistic genealogy that anchors the concept of '*urf*' (custom) in the Arabic root '*arafa*', which denotes the act of knowing or recognising. This etymological foundation moves the definition beyond merely observing repeated action. It shifts it towards the state of knowledge in which a practice is confirmed as valid and aligned with a sound, accepted order. The text establishes a rule for determining which customs are "good enough to be used in legal decisions. It acts like a filter, accepting only fair traditions and making sense of them. Because of this, any habits that are harmful, unfair, or based on bad behaviour are not counted as true '*urf*'. Essentially, a practice must be helpful and sound to be officially recognised.

The text further distinguishes between '*urf*' and '*ādah*' (habit) by exploring their respective scopes of agency and repetition. While '*ādah*' originates from the root *al-ādah*, signifying returns or repetition, it is a versatile concept that can apply to the idiosyncratic behaviours of a single individual. In contrast, '*urf*' is strictly defined by the communal engagement of a substantial population, meaning that the practices of a limited minority do not reach the threshold of this collective designation. Despite these technical nuances, the discourse observes that most scholars treat the terms as interchangeable in practice. By synthesising these ideas, the framework creates a clear and practical definition. This allows researchers to use a community's culture, social habits, and moral rules as reliable tools for studying how people relate to one another and how they behave.

2.3 Proof of *‘urf*.

The concept of *‘urf* is based on the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth, as well as the principles of Islamic legal maxims. The prevailing consensus among scholars holds that *‘urf* is a supplementary source of the Shari‘ah, and they have provided several pieces of evidence to substantiate this view. Nevertheless, it is imperative not to overlook the significance of scholarly discourse within Islamic Jurisprudence regarding the textual substantiation of *‘urf* (customary practices) in the Qur’ān or other sources as independent evidence to support legal rulings. Some acknowledge that this concept is firmly grounded as a source, while others maintain that this theory lacks substantiation in the Qur’ānic text or as independent evidence. In his journal entitled "The Influence of Fundamentalist Customs on Jurisprudential Branches," Suleiman Badawi discusses two schools of thought concerning the evidence of *‘urf*. One school of thought argues that textual proof exists, which scholars such as *Imām Ḥanafī*, *Mālikī*, Ibn Qayyim and some within the *Ḥanbalī* support. Another school of thinking believes that insufficient evidence supports the concept of *‘urf*. This perspective is primarily associated with the *Shāfi‘ī* and some within the *Ḥanbalī* school of thought (Badawi, 2021). The study will embrace the preceding positions because of their robust evidence and broader consensus compared to the subsequent ones.

2.3.1 Proof from the Qur’ān:

"Keep to forgiveness, enjoin ‘urf and turn away from the ignorant".

Interpreters of the Qur’ān suggested that the meaning of *‘urf* in this verse is synonymous with *ma‘ruf*, which means anything good. In discussing the word *‘urf* as the proof in the Qur’ān, Shaban maintained that the word *‘urf* in the verse above can be taken as enough proof through its literal meaning, which is "the good deed which is acceptable", albeit the meaning of the word *‘urf* here is different from its meaning as a technical term in *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) (Shabana, 2010). Umar et al. further argued that it could be proof of *‘urf* (as a technical term) in the sense that the customary practice of people, whether in their doings or their transactions, is usually the practice that is good to them and acceptable by reason (Umar et al., 2000). By examining the apparent meaning of this passage, several scholars, such as Qarafi and Ala'udeen Tarablis, have concluded that the word "*‘urf*" in the verse above from the Holy Qur’ān refers to people's habits and interactions with one another.

Islamic scholars of Jurisprudence have further substantiated the concept of *ʿurf* by citing verse 233 of Chapter 2 (Suratul Baqara) of the Qurʾān. The available textual evidence presents:

"The mothers should suckle their children for two whole years, (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the term of suckling, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis." (Chapter 2 verse 233)

Within this context, the Arabic term "*maʿrūf*," denoting the concept of a "reasonable basis" when translated into English, pertains to social customs. The verse references a cultural practice or tradition that outlines the expected responsibilities of a husband after the birth of a child, including providing sustenance and clothing for both the wife and the mother. According to Tabari, the presence of multiple levels within the verses of the *Qurʾān* signifies God's profound understanding of humanity's diverse circumstances, encompassing both affluence and destitution. (Kamali, 1991). This statement suggests the presence of persons who own significant wealth, possess limited resources and occupy a middle ground between the two. The individual in question issued a directive, as documented in *Jamiʾ Al-Bayan fi Taʿwīl*, which instructed individuals to allocate financial resources to support their spouses and children. This allocation was to be made according to the respective financial capacities of the individuals involved (Jamiʾ Al-Bayan fi Taʿwīl Al-Qurʾān Vol. 1, 1994). According to Tabari, the term "*maʿrūf*" in the Qurʾānic verse is compelling evidence supporting the significance of *ʿurf* as the fundamental basis of *Shariʿah*. This concept is based on an individual's aptitude or prevailing customs within a specific sociocultural context.

2.3.2 Proof from the Ḥadīth

Among the familiar proofs quoted by the scholars as indirect evidence in support of *ʿurf* is the following saying of the Prophet (SAW), narrated by the prominent Companion, 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, that:

"What the Muslims deem good is good in the sight of Allah, and what the Muslims deem to be abominable is abominable in the sight of Allah".

(Musnad Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal)

The saying of the prophets (SAW) above proves there is space for recognising customs and behavioural patterns that a specific community has agreed upon and accepted. Even though the statement only refers to the Muslims, it has been used by many Jurists as proof of *‘urf*. *Imām Al-suyuti* asserts that the Islamic legal maxim on *‘urf* (Customs are by nature legislative) is derived from the sayings mentioned above of the Prophet (SAW) (al-Suyuti, 1997). While this narration is used as proof, the examination of this *Ḥadīth* within the context of this study presents three perspectives to consider: its potential as evidence of *‘urf* due to its authenticity, its application as evidence for other secondary sources of *sharī‘ah*, and its limitations.

a) Authenticity -The concept of authenticity of narration holds significant importance in *Ḥadīth* studies, particularly about the Prophet's statements (SAW). Each of his statements has undergone rigorous evaluation to determine its validity as evidence in matters about Islam. The *Ḥadīth* in question has also been subjected to such meticulous analysis. The statement is attributed to the companion (*ṣahāba*) Ibn Mas'ud rather than a direct statement from the Messenger of Allah (SAW). Consequently, scholars like Sakhawi, Zayla'ee, and Ala'ee classify it as *marfū‘u*, indicating that it is a narration attributed to the Sahabi regarding the words, actions, or tacit approval of the Messenger of Allah (SAW). This classification raises doubts about its reliability as a vital piece of evidence.

b) Multiple usage as proof for other secondary sources of *sharī‘ah* – The utilisation of this *Ḥadīth* as evidence for *Ijmā‘* (consensus) is prevalent in several instances. In line with Ahmad, one potential limitation in utilising this *Ḥadīth* as evidence is that the word “the Muslims” pertains explicitly to the scholars rather than the broader people. The phrase concerns the concept of *Ijmā‘* (consensus), which inherently possesses a scholarly aspect (Sunnah, 1947). By its inherent nature, *Ijmā‘* constitutes an intellectual endeavour that engages a particular population segment, contrasting with specific patterns of behaviour prevalent within a given community or society. This prompts the question of whether this *Ḥadīth* may be considered compelling textual proof for the concept of *‘urf*.

c) Limitation- In the context of this research, the *Ḥadīth* (mentioned above on the proof of *‘urf*) is restricted, regardless of the perspective adopted by scholars, whether they are Muslim scholars or the broader Muslim community. The concept of *‘urf* is not limited to any specific religious doctrine, as stated in its definition. However, it encompasses norms deemed rational,

beneficial, and integral to any community or society. Therefore, utilising the *Ḥadīth* as evidence would restrict this practice exclusively to Muslims, thus rendering it irrelevant to the purpose of this study.

The second *Ḥadīth* (saying of the Messenger (SAW)) is the one that provides solid textual evidence about the concept of '*urf*' as far as the Sunnah is concerned. It is a *Ḥadīth* narrated by Aisha (RA) as follows:

Bint, the daughter of Utbah, said, "Oh, Messenger of Allah, my husband Abu Sufyan is stingy; he does not provide enough for my children, my children and me, besides what I steal without his knowledge." The messenger's response to her was, "Take what is equitable for you and your children¹. "

The term " or 'equitable'. The determination of enough nourishment for a wife and children can be assessed by examining the customary practices of specific individuals within a particular socio-cultural framework. Hence, the above statement provides clear evidence that the Shariah acknowledges and considers the customs, or '*urf*', of the populace. Imām Nawawiy supplements this view by asserting that *Shari'ah* has relied on '*urf*' in unspecified or unmandated matters (Nawawiy, 2023).

Supplementary Proof of '*Urf*' from the Hadith

The hadith and the statement narrated by Ibni Masud above are proof of '*urf*' from the hadith literature, as used by various jurisprudence texts and scholars. Both narrations can be interpreted in any direction, since they do not directly address the concept, whether in their expressions or in their descriptions of actions; however, the study has located a hadith that directly describes the cultural practices of other nations during the prophetic era. The narration is popularly known in Hadith studies as the incident of Banu Arfida, which is narrated in the two major Hadith works, Bukhari and Muslim, under the section on Eid (festivals). This Hadith is

¹ (Sunan bni Maja, Book 12, Hadith 157)

mentioned in different versions in both hadith books, but for this study, we shall combine all the other versions into a single narration :

On the day of Eid, a group of Ethiopian men arrived at the Prophet's Mosque in Medina and at Aisha's house was in her home which adjoined the mosque, and the Prophet (ﷺ) was also present. The Ethiopians began performing military-style with spears and shields, a form of entertainment and training for warfare. The Prophet (ﷺ) and Aisha watched the display from her doorway. Aisha's curiosity: Aisha asked the Prophet (ﷺ) if she could watch. In one version, he asks her if she wants to see the performance. She replied in the affirmative. Aisha's view: The Prophet (ﷺ) stood in front of her, screening her with his body and cloak. Aisha placed her chin on his shoulder to watch the Ethiopians play. He encouraged them, saying, "Go on, O Banu Arfida!" During the performance, Umar ibn al-Khattab entered the mosque and scolded the Ethiopians, attempting to stop them. The Prophet (ﷺ) intervened and told Umar to let them continue, again saying, "Go on, O Banu Arfida!" The Prophet (ﷺ) continued to stand there for a long time, allowing Aisha to watch. He only left when Aisha had seen enough and became tired of watching. (Bukhari, Book 15: The Two Festivals, Hadith 949/950) and (Book 7: The Book of Prayer, Hadith 892)

The performance by Banu Arfida, involving spearplay and acrobatics in the courtyard of the Prophet's Mosque (Masjid al-Nabawi), as mentioned in the Hadith above, constitutes a pivotal incident in Islamic jurisprudence. A superficial reading within the context of hadith might suggest its implications are limited to merely permitting cultural entertainment during Eid (festivals). However, a deeper analysis through the lens of Islamic legal maxim principles, integral to Islamic jurisprudence and the science of the Qur'an, reveals a more profound significance. In his work *Al Muharar fil Ulumul Quran*, Musa 'id Al-tayyari, quotes an Islamic legal maxim that provides the necessary framework for a nuanced understanding of the above-mentioned textual evidence.

The meaning is derived from the generality of the expression, not from the specificity of the reason. (al-Tayyar's, 2008).

Based on this, the generality of the statement in the Banu Arfida story is found in the prophetic (P.B.U.H) expression in the hadith above, "Exert yourself, Banu Arfida," and the specificity of

the reason is in the incident that took place on Eid Day and in the courtyard of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) Mosque. We can deduce that these incidents have far-reaching implications by exploring them through the lens of this legal maxim; several aspects of this hadith point directly to the concept of *'urf*.

Acceptance of Pre-Islamic Custom: The performance was a cultural display that likely predates Islam. The Prophet's (P.B.U.H) approval indicates that the local practice was not automatically deemed invalid. This is crucial for understanding *'urf's* application.

The Nature of the Act: The act served as entertainment and cultural expression, rather than a religious ritual. This places it within the area of *mu'amalat* (social dealings) and customs. *'Urf* mainly applies in these non-ritualistic areas.

Encouragement of Watching: The Prophet's (P.B.U.H) explicit instruction to 'Aisha to watch supports the practice. It shows active approval, rather than just silent acceptance. This raises the customs' significance.

Setting of the Mosque: The performance occurred within the Mosque of the Prophet (P.B.U.H). Allowing a cultural custom in such a sacred space is significant. It demonstrates the Prophet's recognition of its harmless and accepted nature.

This Hadith of Banu Arfida is one of the strongest proofs for this study. It offers a clear, documented example of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) valuing a community's established practice. This firmly establishes *'urf* as a valid source in Islamic law within the hadith literature.

2.3.3 Legal Maxims

The legal maxims of Islamic Law, known as *al-qawā'id al-fiqhīyah*, encompass the overarching principles of fiqh (jurisprudence) and illustrate the aims and purposes of the Sharia. These principles are utilised in many scenarios and are significant in deriving numerous fiqh rules, as they offer a framework for determining specific legal judgements.

In his doctoral dissertation, Ayman Shabana expounds on the three developmental stages of Islamic maxims: rudimentary beginning, incremental growth, maturity, and full-blown development. The first stage began during the Prophet's time and continued until the end of the third/ninth century. The *Qur'ān* and Prophetic reports are the founding texts of Islam, with

concise statements often used in Islamic law. These texts inspired many legal maxims, but some were taken verbatim.

The second stage - The genre of legal maxims began to grow in the fourth/10th century, with theoretical and applied approaches as key. The applied approach, known as *Tahrir* (extrapolation), abstracted underlying general principles used by early jurists to construct substantive rulings. This method, characterised by the methods developed by its founder, gained popularity as significant law schools developed their own legal identity. Legal maxims were treated under various titles, including *Ashbāh wa al-Naẓā'ir*, *uṣūl*, and *qawā'id*. The earliest texts from this period were the treatises of Abu al-Hasan al-Karkhi and 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Uraar al-Dabbusi. As legal maxims developed into a well-established genre, inter- and intra-school differences were reflected in their construction. Al-'Izz Ibn Abd al-Salam is often credited with founding the genre.

The last stage is usually associated with the *Majallat al-Ahkam al-'Adliyyah*, a 1286/1870 composition by Ḥanafī law jurists that served as a formal civil code in the Ottoman Empire. It updated *sharī'ah* law in accordance with the *Ḥanafī* school and modern European codes. The *Majallah* aimed to facilitate reference during court adjudications and to ensure the consistent application of the law. It contains 99 legal maxims on custom in Islamic law. The *Majallah* remained in Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Libya after the Empire's fall in 1924 (Shabana, 2019).

These are some critical essential legal maxims and principles that substantiate the utilisation of the *urf* as a valid source of *Sharī'ah* law:

- i. Custom is legislative - This statement underscores the fundamental tenet of Islamic law, which acknowledges the multifariousness of humans. It goes on recognising that cultural practices and traditions also have legislative implications.
- ii. What is deemed a custom is also considered a condition in legal matters.

The legal maxim mentioned above supports the Shariah stance regarding the legitimacy of cultural norms and customs within the Islamic legal system. It states that what is commonly called "customs" among the populace is analogous to legally mandated conditions. Therefore, traditions that adhere to Islamic law are authoritative.

- iii. People's customary practice is legal proof and must be considered.

This maxim means that a specific community's established recurring habits and practices in their dealings and social life can serve as a valid source of law.

Islamic legal maxims serve as overarching concepts that endorse the incorporation of customs (*‘Urf* or *‘Ādah*) as a valid source of Islamic law. They manifest the actuality and multiplicity within human societies and possess the potential to contribute to attaining the aims and objectives of Islamic law, namely the advancement of well-being and prevention of harm to individuals. Hence, Muslim jurists acknowledge and consider customs while interpreting and implementing Islamic law.

In summary, including *‘āda*, or customary law and practices, in interpreting and applying Islamic law is pivotal in understanding the dynamic nature of *Sharī‘ah*. Religious teachings, such as the Qur’ān and Hadith, serve as the primary sources of *sharī‘ah* (Islamic law) and play a significant role in adapting these principles to the social and cultural contexts of Muslim communities. By recognising *‘urf* as a valid source of *Sharī‘ah*, Muslim jurists acknowledge the importance of considering the customs and traditions of a particular society. This recognition of Islamic law as evolving and accommodating the diverse needs and circumstances of Muslim communities. It demonstrates that Islamic law is not rigid or stagnant but responsive to the changing realities of the world.

2.3.4 Analysis

This analysis examines the textual and rational foundations of *‘Urf* (customary practice) as a supplementary source of Islamic law. By evaluating the provided text, we can distinguish with precision a sophisticated tension between literalist interpretations and teleological applications of the *Sharī‘ah*.

The primary Qur’ānic evidence rests on the command to “enjoin *‘urf*” (Qur’ān 7:199). The discursive challenge here lies in the evolution of terminology. While classical *mufasssīrūn* (interpreters) often equate *‘urf* with *ma’rūf* (the good/recognised), legal theorists bridge the gap between “goodness” and “social habit.”

Scholars like Shabana (2019) contend that the literal meaning of actions “acceptable” to reason naturally encompasses a people's established customs. Verse 2:233, concerning suckling and

maintenance “on a reasonable basis” (*bi-l-ma'rūf*), provides a more concrete legal application grounded in socio-economic factors. Tabari's analysis is crucial here; he suggests that “reasonableness” is not a static value, but a variable determined by an individual's financial status and social context. This transforms *'urf* from a vague moral concept into a practical measure for determining legal obligations, including maintenance (*nafaqah*).

In the Hadith, the text identifies two types of Prophetic evidence: indirect aphorisms and direct observations. With regards to the statement by Ibn Mas'ūd narration, “What the Muslim deems good is good in the sight of Allah”, it serves as a foundational pillar for *'Urf*, yet it faces significant critical scrutiny:

Isnād (Chain) Concerns: The text notes that scholars like Sakhawi and Zayla'ee classify this as *marfū'u* (attributed to a companion) rather than a direct Prophetic quote. This status weakens its position as primary textual evidence.

Definitional Scope: A major discursive conflict arises regarding who “the Muslims” are. If the term refers only to scholars, the Hadīth supports *Ijīmā* (consensus), not *'urf*. If it refers to the lay community, it validates social custom. The text rightly identifies that a strictly “Muslim-only” custom would limit the universal application of *'urf* in multicultural societies.

Whereas in the case of Hind bint Utbah, the instruction to “take what is equitable” (*ma'rūf*) provides a robust precedent for judicial discretion based on local living standards. It shifts the burden of proof from text to context.

The analysis of the Banu Arfida Incident, where the Ethiopians' spearplay in the Prophet's Mosque, offers a unique “action-based” proof. This incident is significant because the performance took place within a sacred space (the Mosque), suggesting that cultural practices are not inherently “profane and the Prophet's active encouragement (“Go on, O Banu Arfida!”) elevates a pre-Islamic cultural tradition to a legally recognised practice.

The transition from textual evidence to legal maxims (*al-qawā'id al-fiqhīyah*) represents the “maturity” stage of Islamic jurisprudence. The text outlines a trajectory where *'urf* moves from a secondary consideration to a codified principle. Moreover, the *Majallat-al-Adliyyah* (1870) represents the pinnacle of this development, where 99 maxims turned *'urf* into a formal civil code. This demonstrates that the proof of *'urf* is not merely found in ancient verses but in its utility for maintaining social order and public interest (*Maslaha*).

The discourse reveals that while the Shāfi'ī and Hanbalī scholars remain sceptical of *ʿurf* as “independent” evidence, the prevailing consensus utilises it to ensure the Sharīʿah remains adaptive. The transition from the “specific reason” of a Hadīth to the “generality of the expression” allows jurists to apply 7th- century precedents to modern socio-cultural complexities.

2.4 Classifications of *ʿurf*.

ʿUrf because it acknowledges the role of customary practices and traditions in shaping legal principles within a given society. Islamic jurists have classified various categories of *ʿurf* (customs). The classifications are as follows:

2.4.1 *ʿUrf Qawlī* (verbal customs)

The concept of verbal *ʿurf* encompasses the collective consensus among individuals regarding utilising and interpreting words for purposes beyond their literal definitions. As a result of this agreement, the usual interpretation tends to have a more significant influence, while the original or literal interpretation is relegated to a less common occurrence. Al-Qarafi explains verbal *ʿurf* as the custom of the people to express themselves in a particular manner (al-Qarafi, 1991). Badawi adds to the definition of *ʿurf* by asserting that people's harmonious use of language leads to a common understanding devoid of misunderstanding. The use of *walad* (children) in Arabic, which refers to both boys and girls despite being written and pronounced in the masculine form, serves as an illustration (Badawi, 2021). The concept of verbal custom refers to the use of specific linguistic expressions by individuals within a particular geographic area, neighbourhood, region, or even a nation. These are effective terminologies. Sarakhsi, in his work, quotes *Imām Ḥanafī*, who contends that in such a situation, *ʿurf* determines and interprets the actual meanings of commonly used terms in a culture, region, or country.

In his scholarly publication titled "*Mafhūm al-ʿUrf fī Sharīʿat al-Islam*," Muhammad Hassanain has further classified verbal *ʿurf* into two categories: legal verbal *ʿurf* and practical *ʿurf*. The former pertains to the specific meanings of terms in Islamic legal discourse, for instance, the sense. The Arabic word "*Zakāt*" conveys a general sense of progress or growth. However,

inside the framework of Islamic law, it denotes a form of obligatory charity that Muslims must provide annually, whereas the latter pertains to the daily utilisation of words. This classification can be applied to Ubungoma to analyse how traditional healing terminology is understood within Islamic and cultural contexts. The term is based on the community's everyday use of it to refer to a healer. Meanwhile, within Ubungoma, the term refers to a particular role. It signifies an individual who has undergone a highly spiritual calling, extensive training and initiation and has been recognised as a practitioner who communes with the ancestors to provide guidance, healing and divination. This classification can be applied to Ubungoma to analyse how traditional healing terminology is understood within Islamic and cultural contexts. The term is based on the community's everyday use of it to refer to a healer. Meanwhile, within Ubungoma, the term refers to a particular role. It signifies an individual who has undergone a highly spiritual calling, extensive training and initiation and has been recognised as a practitioner who communes with the ancestors to provide guidance, healing and divination.

2.4.2 'Urf 'Amalī (Practical 'urf)

Practical 'urf refers to the customs and traditions observed in practice specific to a particular group of individuals, geographical areas, or communities. It encompasses often recurring individual behaviours shown in everyday routines and interactions within civil society. Kamali asserts that Actual 'urf consists of commonly recurrent practices that people accept. An example of actual 'urf is the give-and-take sale, or *bay' al-ṭa'āṭi*, which is usually concluded without utterances of offer and acceptance. Similarly, customary rules regarding the payment of dower in marriage may require a certain amount to be paid at the time of the contract, with the remainder to be paid later (Kamali, 1991).

Moreover, it is worth noting that the two types of 'urf have been classified into two distinct categories: 'urf al 'āmm (generic customs) and 'urf al khāṣ (customs). A general custom refers to an adopted and acknowledged practice among persons, regardless of duration. In contrast, Oba posits that a specialised custom refers to a prevailing custom within a given geographical area or professional domain. The inhabitants of a particular locality embrace this unique ritual, while its acceptance may not be universal. An illustration of this specific custom can be seen in the practices prevalent among wholesale dealers, in which payment

for goods may be postponed for a specified period, a practice not commonly observed in retail transactions.

Islamic jurists have classified many customary forms into two distinct groups, significantly influencing their suitability for an application. *al-ʿUrf al-Ṣaḥīḥ* and *al-ʿUrf al-Fāsid* refer to lawful and invalid customs, respectively. Legitimate customary practice pertains to the *ʿurf*, commonly observed by the broader populace, in accordance with Islamic law norms, to safeguard persons' well-being and mitigate the risk of corruption. The term "invalid custom" refers to a tradition that is not considered valid or acceptable yet is practised by certain persons. However, evidence suggests that this custom goes against the principles of *Sharīʿah*.

One noteworthy aspect of this category is the inclusion of the notion of *ʿurf* within Islamic Jurisprudence. It is essential to acknowledge that *ʿurf* is a supplementary source of Islamic law, following the Qurʾān's and Sunnah's precedence. Custom (*ʿurf*) is an auxiliary element to the rules derived from the primary sources of Shariah. Consequently, it raises the question of how a source of *ʿurf* can be considered another distinct category of customs. The concept of *ʿUrf ʿAmalī* in Islamic jurisprudence offers a framework for understanding how spiritual practices, such as Ubungoma, can be reconciled with Islamic teachings. Its relevance hinges on contextual *Ijtihād* (interpretative effort) to ensure that the practised customs align with *Sharīʿah*. This interplay fuels broader debates within Islam, where local traditions and global Islamic orthodoxy negotiate coexistence.

2.5 Conditions of *ʿurf*:

Islamic scholars have delineated specific criteria for classifying a practice as *ʿurf*. The circumstances above encompass:

- a) Prevalence: The custom or practice should be widely accepted and recognised within a particular community or society. Al-Suyuti observed that customs are recognised when a community extensively practises them, but they are inconsistent. If there is ambiguity regarding a custom's recognition, scholarly opinions vary (al-Suyuti, 1997).
- b) Consistency with Islamic Principles: *ʿurf* must not contradict any clear Islamic teachings established in the texts (Qurʾān and prophetic traditions).

- c) Prior existence: An *‘urf* or custom must exist before a specific case, incident, contract, or commercial transaction, but it must be in practice at the time of the event to which it pertains.
- d) Absence of Harm: The custom or practice should not harm anyone or violate Islamic ethics.
- e) Change of Customs: Salisu mentions that when the prevailing *‘Ādah/ ‘urf* custom changes, the rules must also change. However, if otherwise, it remains decisive. The Fiqh Academy of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (Majma'al-*‘urf* (Custom), in recognition of this principle, once gave a fatwa that among those things a sound Mufti /Faqih must note is the changing customs of the society (SALISU, 2013).

In conclusion, the preceding analysis demonstrates that the concept of *‘urf* serves as a dynamic bridge between the fixed tenets of Islamic revelation and the evolution of human society. Rather than being a vague or random idea, the “condition” of *‘urf* is a carefully managed legal tool. It follows specific rules and is viewed differently depending on which of the four main Sunni schools of thought (madhahib) is applying it. When we bring these conditions together with Ubongoma, the traditional healing and spiritual practices of South Africa, we see a clear overlap between Islamic legal theory and local culture. In this setting, the rules of *‘urf* function as a filter. They help determine which parts of this indigenous system can be kept as they are, which parts need to be changed, and which parts must be set aside entirely to fit within an Islamic Framework.

A key part of making this work is looking at two main requirements: that the custom is widely practised and that it existed long before the current situation. Following the standards set by al-Suyuti (1997), *‘urf* must be well-known and established before it can be used in a legal case.

Ubongoma fits these rules perfectly. It is an ancient system, deeply rooted in the region’s social and spiritual fabric, long before modern laws arrived. Since millions of people still rely on it for healing and guidance, it clearly meets the “Prevalence” requirement.

Because of this, the Hanafi school’s approach, which says that an established custom carries the same weight as a formal text (Rusdhie, 2013), is very relevant here. It means the social structures within Ubongoma, such as the authority of elders and specific community protocols, could, in theory, serve as a foundation for making agreements or handling social matters within an Islamic legal context.

However, the most rigorous condition for *‘urf* remains its consistency with Islamic principles, specifically that it must not contradict the *nass* (Qur’ān and Sunnah). Discursive analysis

suggests that while the Mālikī school emphasises “public interest” (*Maslahah*), any element of Ubongoma involving shirk (the association of partners with God) or practices explicitly forbidden in Islamic texts would be classified as ‘*urf fasid* (corrupt custom).

This means we need to look at things in a new way, much like how Kamali (1991) described *Imām* al-Shāfi ‘ī changing his views after moving to Egypt to fit his new surroundings. In Southern Africa, this kind of thinking allows the social and medical aspects of Ubongoma, such as herbal healing and the way the community resolves its problems, to be accepted as valid ‘*urf*. At the same time, the spirituals are adjusted to align with Islamic belief in one God.

On top of that, the rule that ‘*urf* must not “harm anyone or go against Islamic ethics” acts as the final safety check. When looking at Ubongoma, this means that any practice that strengthens community bonds, supports mental health, or promotes physical recovery is viewed positively in Islamic law. On the other hand, any custom that leads to people being cheated out of money or getting physically hurt would be completely rejected. This “Absence of Harm” rule ensures that bringing a custom into the fold never puts the well-being of the individual or the community at risk.

Finally, the legitimacy of this integration is tied to the principle of change of customs, as articulated by Salisu (2013): rules must change when the ‘*ādah* (custom) changes. This is highly relevant as communities move between rural traditions and urban Islamic environments, causing the “condition” of Ubongoma to evolve. This implies that legal rulings regarding Ubongoma are not static; they must account for the practice’s current understanding within the community. If the practice evolves into purely therapeutic rather than theological practice, its status as a valid and acceptable ‘*urf* within an Islamic framework becomes significantly stronger, ensuring that the law remains both rooted in tradition and responsive to the human condition.

2.6 Views of the four Schools of thought on ‘*urf*:

Islam has produced several jurists, but four individuals have achieved significant prominence in their respective eras. As a result, they are now widely acknowledged by most Sunni Muslims as the primary authorities on matters of Islamic Law. These four eminent jurists and theologians endeavoured to establish a systematic framework for Islamic law, creating a comprehensive and rational system that encompassed various legal scenarios. The names of their respective founders denote the four important schools of Islamic jurisprudence. They

are called the *Ḥanafī*, *Mālikī*, *Shāfiʿī*, and *Ḥanbalī* schools of Islamic legal thought. These schools of thought exhibit strong consensus on the fundamental aspects of Islam. All individuals within the Islamic faith recognise the supremacy of the Holy *Qurʾān* and the Traditions as the primary foundations of Islamic jurisprudence. The four schools use their reasoning and may diverge only when these two sources need to provide guidance. The following are their perspectives regarding the Islamic legal concept of *ʿurf*.

Imām Abu Ḥanifā viewed *ʿurf* as a significant source of law and allowed its consideration alongside other legal sources. He emphasised the importance of custom in determining legal rulings, particularly in cases without a clear Islamic text. Scholars like Ibn Abideen and Abu Yusuf, both adherents of the *Ḥanafī madhab* (*Ḥanafī school of thought*), have written voluminous works on *ʿurf*. In his literary oeuvre titled "*Al ʿurf ʿindal Uṣūliyyūn (pl.) wa atharuh fi Sharʿah* ", Rusdhie references a commonly cited legal principle that holds significance within the *Ḥanafī* school of jurisprudence. "What has been identified as *ʿurf* is that it is as if it is text. What has been established as *ʿurf* is established as text (Rusdhie, 2013)

Mālikī: According to Ibn Mas'ud, the *Mālikī* school of Islamic jurisprudence relies on customary practices and considers them a legal basis when no explicit textual evidence is available. The *Mālikī* school of fiqh demonstrates a greater reverence for tradition than the *Ḥanafī* school. As previously discussed, the principles of public interest and general welfare serve as the basis for decision-making in *Mālikī* fiqh. This framework considers recognising the value of customs that do not cause damage as a form of benefit. Any jurist must not disregard it; instead, it is incumbent upon them to embrace it. It has been observed that adherents of the *Mālikī* school of thought tend to ignore analogy when it contradicts established customs. According to Mas'ud (2013), the *Mālikī* school employ custom methods to render the broad more specific and to provide qualifications for previously unqualified aspects. The author expands his thesis by offering another example: the stress on customary usage in *Mālikī* fiqh. This aspect of *Mālikī* fiqh elucidates the interpretation of statements based on linguistic usage rather than on acts. According to Ash-Shatibi, businesses encompass a range of phrases that exhibit diverse meanings, including differences in vocabulary or in the prevailing usage of concepts. The assessment is derived from customary practices observed in typical contexts, such as oaths, contracts, and the use of indirect language in divorce proceedings.

Imām Shāfi'ī recognised the role of *ʿurf* but considered it subordinate to the Qurʾān and Hadith. He advocated with Islamic teachings and urged the preservation of the Prophet's traditions. Kamali argues that, for example, it is well known that Imām al-Shafi'i laid the foundations of his school in Iraq, but that when he went to Egypt, he changed some of his earlier views owing to the different customs he encountered there (Kamali, 1991). This observation strongly suggests that the individual altered their legal perspectives (madhab) due to the prevailing customs in their new environment. Kamali posits that *Imām Shāfi'ī*'s acceptance of "*urf*" as a secondary source of law can be attributed to the evolution of his opinion following his exposure to various Egyptian customs. An essential question arises from Kamali's remark about *Shāfi'ī*'s shift in perspective: *Did he apply ʿurf as a guiding principle in developing novel legislation after his transformation?* Alternatively, he may have derived new regulations from other principles of Islamic jurisprudence. Therefore, Kamali's statement neither suggests nor establishes that *Shāfi'ī* derived some of his views on *Fiqh* matters from *ʿurf*; instead, it provides a rationale for a shift in perspectives. Furthermore, one argument circulating in the *Fiqh* debate posits that *Shāfi'ī* does not regard *ʿurf* as a legitimate source of Islamic jurisprudence. Su'eb asserts that *Shāfi'ī* and *Ḥanbalī* groups do not consider *ʿurf* a *ḥujjah* (proof) or the proposition of Sharia law. The Imām *Shāfi'ī* group does not recognise the existence of *istiḥsān*; they refuse to use it in *Istinbāṭ* (extrapolation) of law and do not use it as an argument. So, with that, automatically, the *Shafi'ites* also refuse to use *ʿurf* as a source of Islamic law. Badawi further supplements this point by stating that two schools of thought, *Shāfi'ī* and *Ḥanbalī*, do not consider *ʿurf* a proof nor an independent source of law (Badawi, 2021).

The perspectives above indicate that the *Shāfi'ī* school of thought does not regard *ʿurf* as an Islamic legal principle. This will include the *Ḥanbalī* school of thought. The *Mālikī*s and *Ḥanafī*s have accepted *ʿurf* as an independent source of *sharīʿah*. In contrast, the *Shāfi'ī* and *Ḥanbalī* scholars have adopted a conservative and circumspect approach to adopting *ʿurf* as an independent source of *Sharīʿah*.

The postulation of four primary schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the *Ḥanafī*, *Mālikī*, *Shāfi'ī*, and *Ḥanbalī*, reveals an internal diversity in how the faith engages with human culture. While all four traditions maintain the supremacy of the Qurʾān and the Sunnah, their divergent views on *ʿurf* (customary practice) create the boundary between strict textualism and cultural adaptation. The *Ḥanafī* and *Mālikī* schools, by elevating custom to a functional source of law, offer a "hospitable" framework that allows the faith to breathe within different social contexts. In contrast, the *Shāfi'ī*

and Ḥanbalī schools prioritise a cautious, subordinate role for *ʿurf*, seeking to protect the theological core from being diluted by local traditions.

This legal tension is not only an abstract debate but a vital lens for understanding Black Muslim praxis and the integration of Ubungoma. For the African practitioner, the Ḥanafī and Mālikī perspectives provide a theoretical bridge to cultural practices with the Oneness of Allah, allowing for an authentic expression of faith that does not require the erasure of "Blackness." Under these schools, cultural rites that do not explicitly contradict scripture are validated as a form of benefit or "custom as text." However, the more conservative Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī stances often create friction, leading to scrutiny of Ubungoma and other cultural practices through a religiously sceptical lens. This can lead to a "dual consciousness," in which believers must navigate the space between mosque-centred correct practice and deeply rooted indigenous spiritual and socio-economic cultural expressions.

As the final point, the culmination of these four schools demonstrates that Islamic law is an adaptive toolkit rather than a rigid monolith. The debate over *ʿurf* illustrates the ongoing balance between unchanging divine revelation and the lived realities of African practices. Whether through the Mālikī emphasis on public interest or the Shāfiʿī insistence on textual purity, these frameworks determine how a believer navigates the world. For Black Muslims in South Africa, the choice of a legal path shapes whether their cultural identity is seen as a distraction from the faith or a sanctified part of their journey toward the Divine.

2.6.1 Contestation around *ʿUrf*

While the four primary Sunni schools of jurisprudence apply *ʿurf* (custom) with varying degrees of frequency, they all recognise its legal validity. In contrast, other scholars and specific Islamic schools of thought reject this concept entirely, viewing the integration of local customs as a departure from authentic religious practice. Kumo et al, in their article "Consideration of Custom (Urf) by the Izalah Organisation² In Gombe, Nigeria: A Critical Examination", identify a specific tension where the Izalah organisation, formally known as *Jama'atu Izalatil bid'a wa Iqamatis Sunnah*, reclassifies customary practices (*ʿurf*) as religious innovations (*bid'ah*)(Kumo et al., 2018). The authors argue that the Izalah organisation often uses the term *bid'ah*(*innovation*)

² A prominent Salafi movement dedicated to removing religious innovations (*bidi'a*) and reviving the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. It focuses on strict adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah, educating against Sufi

"indiscriminately to include customary practices in social transactions (*mu'amalat*). Because the movement's primary goal is the "elimination of all forms of religious ignorance, heretic Sufi innovations and new practices," it frequently applies the label of *bid'ah* to any act perceived as contradictory to the Prophet's teachings, including what many other scholars would regard as *'urf*. Other scholars reject *'urf*. García Sánchez et al. (2025) argued that the Zāhiri School (literalists)³ generally rejected *'urf* as a formal, binding source of law, prioritising the literal interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah, and rejecting secondary legal tools like custom or extensive analogy, as exemplified by one of Ibn Hazm's critiques of Maliki practices, particularly their reliance on *amal* (local customs). One may also add that another reason for the scholars' hesitancy in accepting *'urf* as proof is its instability. It can change over time and place at any given time. This means a ruling under Islamic law will not be constant but will change over time and place (Abid, 2013). This reflects the tension between textual fidelity and contextual adaptation in Islamic legal thought. Ibn Hazm's outright rejection of local practices highlighted a critical tension between theoretical consistency and practical adaptation, raising questions about the viability of a purely literalist approach in a pluralistic legal environment.

The divergence between the four primary Sunni schools and literalist movements such as the Zāhiri and the modern Izalah organisation underscores a fundamental tension in Islamic jurisprudence, the balance between preserving textual sanctity and accommodating socio-cultural realities. While traditional scholarship utilises *'urf* as a vital mechanism for legal flexibility, critics reject it to safeguard against what they perceive as the infiltration of 'innovation' (*bid'ah*) into the faith. This debate is not merely academic; as demonstrated by Izalah's reclassification of marriage customs and Ibn Hazm's critique of Maliki *amal*, the rejection of custom can profoundly disrupt long-standing community identities. For this study, these competing perspectives provide a critical lens through which to view the intersection of traditional practices such as *Ubungoma* and formal religious frameworks. Whether one views these practices as valid contextual adaptations or as deviations from *Tawhid* often depends on whether they prioritise the fluidity of lived experience or the perceived stability of a literalist text.

2.7 Application of the *'urf* Principle:

³ The Zāhiri school is a Sunni Islamic legal school (madhhab) emphasizing strict adherence to the literal, apparent (zahir) meaning of the Quran and Hadith.

The utilisation of *‘urf* within the domain of Islamic jurisprudence demonstrates a degree of variety that depends on specific contextual conditions and the differing interpretations of scholars. The application of Islamic principles is evident in various spheres, including but not limited to family law, commercial transactions, and social norms, ensuring adherence while considering the cultural diversity within the Muslim community. It can also provide guidance and adaptability in addressing contemporary issues and challenges, such as technology, human rights, democracy, globalisation, and traditional practices.

2.7.1 Application of *‘urf* in devotional acts (*Fiqh al-‘Ibādāt*)

Scholars have established a consensus regarding the imperative nature of maintaining modesty by concealing one's private parts.⁴ when praying. Nevertheless, the question is whether this action is essential to the prayer being deemed acceptable. In his scholarly work "*Bidāyatul Mujtahid*," Ibn Rushdi discusses the varying perspectives of the four primary schools of thought. The *Shafi'i* and *Hanafi* schools of thought assert that concealing one's private parts is a prerequisite for the prayer to be deemed valid. Conversely, the *Hanbali* school of thought maintains that covering the private parts is obligatory (*wājib*) and a fundamental requirement for the prayer to possess validity. However, certain *Mālikī* jurists have argued that covering the private parts is not a prerequisite for the prayer to be valid (Rushd, 1990).

The reason for the differences in this matter is the following verse of the Qur'ān, which states:

"O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer. "The Qur'an, 1934/2004, 7:31

The legal inquiry that emerges pertains to whether the verse of the Qur'ān mandates the act of covering or if it is merely a suggestion. Those who adhere to the perspective that it is obligatory argue that the verse pertains to the requirement of covering the body, in contrast to those who retain the stance that the verse only offers a suggestion; they contend that it relates to the adornment of attractive clothing. Upon careful examination, it becomes evident

⁴ Islamic law defines *‘awrah* (intimate parts) as the areas of the body that must be covered. For males, this is the area between the navel and the knee. For females, in the presence of unrelated men or during prayer, it encompasses the entire body except for the face and hands (and feet, according to some schools). These boundaries are derived from Surah al-Nur (24:31) and various Prophetic traditions to uphold the principles of *haya* (modesty) and sanctity.

that the subject matter in question can be categorised as '*urf*', as Shariah does not explicitly prescribe any provisions regarding wearing any apparel.

2.7.2 Application of '*urf* in Transactional Acts

Bello elucidates the utilisation of '*urf*' in transactional activities in a subsequent manner: Conventional financial institutions play a crucial role in an economy by serving as intermediaries between those with excess funds to deposit and those seeking financial resources to borrow. Banks can generate profits and facilitate economic activity by receiving deposits and extending loans. The three primary categories of deposit accounts encompass current accounts, savings accounts, and Fixed/Investment Deposits. Current accounts allow users to issue cheques against their deposited funds without accruing interest or incurring minimal interest charges. Savings accounts offer the benefit of earning interest on deposited funds while imposing restrictions on withdrawals, enabling individuals to allocate a portion of their readily available financial resources to generate a financial gain. Fixed or investment deposits are financial instruments that accrue interest but are subject to a predetermined term or time during which they cannot be withdrawn.

Islamic deposit accounts, grounded in legal maxims under the concept of '*urf*', are recognised as customary among merchants and are agreed upon between them (*al-Ma'rūf bayna al-Tujjār al-mashrūf baynahum*). Like conventional banks, Islamic banks depend on depositors' funds and capital as a primary funding source. Hence, the primary sources of money for deposits are current deposits (demand accounts), savings, and time deposits, which depend on depositors' cash and capital (Bello, 2003). The discussion on the application of '*urf*' is the most pertinent to Ubungoma. In contemporary legal systems, there is a growing recognition of indigenous knowledge systems and customary law. The principles that make '*urf*' a dynamic source of law in Islamic jurisprudence highlight the current need to respect and integrate specific indigenous cultural practices, especially in health and well-being. For instance, recognising Ubungoma as a legitimate system of traditional healing in a particular society aligns with the spirit of '*urf*', acknowledging a beneficial, deeply embedded custom that serves a vital societal function, provided it does not contradict fundamental Islamic principles. Just as '*urf*' offers a mechanism for Islamic law to remain relevant across diverse contexts, the principles that underpin the acceptance of customs in Islam can support the contemporary recognition

and integration of Ubungoma, ensuring cultural continuity and respect for different approaches to healing.

2.8 Cultural Diversity and Unity in Islam:

Islam, as a comprehensive faith, acknowledges and celebrates cultural diversity while emphasising the unity of humanity. The Qur'ānic verse 49:13 affirms this perspective: "O humanity, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you" (Qur'ān 49:13). This verse, as explained by Dr Ingrid Mattson, a renowned Muslim scholar, emphasises the value of cultural diversity as a means of fostering mutual understanding and appreciation among people (Mattson, 2012).

In her book "The Story of the *Qur'ān*," Dr Mattson explores the teachings of the Qur'ān and elucidates the significance of cultural diversity in Islam. She highlights how this diversity, rooted in the Qur'ānic verse mentioned above, serves as a means for individuals to gain knowledge and understanding of one another's unique cultural backgrounds (Mattson, 2013). This understanding is not limited to tolerance but goes beyond promoting empathy, respect, and cooperation among diverse cultures. Moreover, Dr Jonathan Brown, an Islamic studies professor, emphasises that Islam recognises the importance of cultural diversity as a source of enrichment and knowledge for individuals and societies (Brown, 2019). He explains that Islam does not seek to erase cultural differences but encourages Muslims to appreciate and respect cultural expressions that align with Islamic values.

The Islamic concept of "Ummah," referring to the global community of Muslims, embodies the unity of believers irrespective of their cultural backgrounds. Dr Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a leading Islamic scholar, asserts that the concept of Ummah emphasises Muslims' spiritual and ethical unity, transcending cultural boundaries while preserving cultural diversity (Nasr, 2011). This concept fosters a sense of solidarity and mutual support among Muslims while encouraging dialogue and cooperation with individuals of other faiths and cultures. Islam recognises the significance of cultural diversity in fostering mutual understanding and

appreciation among people. The Qur'ānic verse 49:13 highlights this importance, emphasising diversity and the value of humanity's unity and cultural diversity. Scholars such as Dr Ingrid Mattson, Dr Jonathan Brown, and Dr Seyyed Hossein Nasr provide valuable insights into how Islam encourages the integration of cultural diversity within the broader framework of the Islamic faith. Further evidence of this is the fact that the design of the minaret or dome of the mosque varies from country to country and region to region; for instance, the minarets in Baghdad are circular, whereas the ones in Morocco are square, reflecting the fact that the dress codes of Muslims around the world are all influenced by their respective cultures.

2.9 Cultural Preservation and Islamic Ethics:

Islam places great importance on preserving cultural heritage if it aligns with Islamic ethics. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasise the significance of maintaining one's cultural identity while adhering to the principles of Islam. A *Hadith* states, "Whoever imitates a people is one of them" (Abu Dawood, year 4031). This hadith, attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), highlights the importance of Muslims retaining their unique cultural identity while avoiding practices that contradict Islamic teachings. Dr Tariq Ramadan further explains that Islam encourages Muslims to embrace and celebrate the positive aspects of their culture, provided they do not conflict with Islamic principles (Ramadan, 2004). This approach allows Muslims to preserve their cultural heritage while remaining steadfast in their commitment to Islam.

It is essential to note that cultural preservation in Islam depends on adherence to Islamic ethics. Scholars like Dr Seyyed Hossein Nasr argue that cultural practices with Islamic principles, such as justice, equality, and ethical conduct (Nasr, 2003). This perspective ensures that cultural expressions align with Islam's teachings, avoiding practices that may cause moral or spiritual harm. In his book "Islamic Art and Spirituality," Dr Seyyed Hossein Nasr highlights how Islamic art is an example of preserving cultural heritage within an Islamic framework (Nasr, 1987). Islamic art incorporates diverse cultural elements while adhering to the principles of beauty, harmony, and spirituality derived from Islamic teachings. In his article "Islam and the Cultural Imperative," Dr Umar Faruq explains how Chinese Muslims have integrated Chinese calligraphy into Islam.

"Chinese civilisation cultivated calligraphy, and Chinese Muslims preserved that legacy while developing their integrated Chinese reed-written Arabic calligraphic styles, often using Chinese

on the same inscription to translate Arabic. For example, upon entering a Chinese mosque, one may encounter a prominent inscription with the ideogram's *kai tian gù jiào* (the primordial religion from the world's beginning)."

Dr Reza Shah-Kazemi, an Islamic philosopher, emphasises distinguishing between cultural practices compatible with Islamic principles and those not (Shah-Kazemi, 2006). This discernment enables Muslims to engage in cultural activities that promote Islamic values while avoiding practices that may lead to ethical or religious conflicts. In conclusion, Islam encourages the preservation of cultural heritage if it aligns with Islamic ethics. The Ḥadīth emphasising the avoidance of imitating others underscores the importance of maintaining one's cultural identity while adhering to Islamic principles. Muslims are encouraged to embrace the positive aspects of their culture while avoiding practices that contradict Islamic teachings. By evaluating cultural expressions through the lens of Islamic ethics, Muslims can balance preserving their cultural heritage and upholding the values and principles of Islam. Cultural preservation and Islamic ethics carry significant implications for the practice of Ubungoma. Muslims who are sangomas must critically evaluate their practices to ensure alignment with Islamic ethics and creed. Thus, the pursuit of cultural preservation cannot compromise foundational Islamic tenets.

2.10 Cultural Practices and Islamic Compatibility

Islamic teachings offer guidance on evaluating the compatibility of cultural practices with Islamic values. Prominent scholars, such as Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, emphasise the importance of assessing cultural practices based on their alignment with Islamic principles, including justice, equality, and ethical conduct (al-Qaradawi, 2009). This approach enables Muslims to navigate cultural expressions while upholding their religious obligations. In his book "The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam," Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi explains that cultural practices should be evaluated according to their adherence to Islamic values and principles. He argues that Muslims should embrace cultural practices in harmony with Islamic teachings, as they contribute positively to the development of individuals and societies (al-Qaradawi, 1997). By employing such an evaluation framework, Muslims can ensure their cultural expressions align with Islamic ethics and teachings.

Islamic jurisprudence also plays a crucial role in assessing the compatibility of cultural practices with Islamic values. Scholars analyse cultural practices within the framework of Islamic law to determine whether they are permissible or prohibited. For example, in the field of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), scholars examine cultural practices to assess their conformity with the principles of Shariah (Islamic law) and the objectives (Maqāṣid of Islam). This evaluation allows Muslims to distinguish between cultural practices that align with Islamic values and those that may lead to ethical or religious conflicts. Dr Abdullah bin Bayyah, a renowned Islamic scholar, highlights the concept of "*ibadah*", which encompasses acts of worship, obedience, and service to God. He explains that cultural practices must not compromise the principles of monotheism and the exclusivity of worship directed to Allah (Bayyah, 2015). This perspective underscores the importance of preserving the fundamental tenets of the Islamic faith while engaging in cultural practices.

Islamic teachings promote cultural diversity and encourage Muslims to appreciate different cultural expressions within the boundaries of Islamic values. The Qur'ān acknowledges the existence of diverse nations and tribes, emphasising that such diversity is a means for people to know and understand one another (Qur'ān 49:13). Islamic scholar Dr M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, in his translation and commentary of the Qur'ān, elucidates how this verse promotes the value of cultural diversity as a means of fostering mutual understanding and appreciation among people (Haleem, 2005). In conclusion, Islamic teachings guide the compatibility of cultural practices with Islamic values. Scholars like Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasise the importance of assessing cultural practices to navigate cultural expressions while upholding their religious obligations. By employing frameworks such as Islamic jurisprudence and considering the objectives of Shariah, Muslims can discern between cultural practices that are in harmony with Islamic ethics and those that may conflict with them. Promoting cultural diversity within Islamic teachings encourages Muslims to appreciate and understand different cultural expressions within the boundaries of Islamic values. The text above provides a crucial methodological framework for Muslims to consider when engaging with Ubungoma. It evaluates whether cultural practices align with foundational Islamic beliefs in honesty, worship, safety, and the preservation of intellect and life. The guidance from the scholars mentioned above provides that Ubungoma practices and their cultural significance cannot override adherence to the Islamic creed.

2.11 Cultural Adaptation and Flexibility in Islam:

Islam promotes adaptability and flexibility in cultural matters. The "*urf*" (customs) concept in Islamic jurisprudence allows for integrating local customs and practices so long as they do not contradict Islamic principles. Scholars like Fazlur Rahman emphasise the need for contextual understanding and flexibility in interpreting cultural practices within an Islamic framework. Islamic teachings offer guidance on evaluating the compatibility of artistic practices with Islamic values. In terms of dress code, for instance, Muslims in Indonesia, a tropical nation where Islam is the predominant religion and has been transmitted for generations, observe the faith differently from Muslims in other parts of the world. Baju koko, also known as baju takwa, is a customary Muslim garment for men in Indonesia, tailored for religious observances, including Friday prayers and the *Lebaran* (Eid al-Fitr) festival. It is accompanied by a sarong and peci, flexible garments composed of long fabric that men wear and draped loosely around the body. Prominent scholars, such as Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, emphasise the importance of assessing cultural practices based on their alignment with Islamic principles, including justice, equality, and ethical conduct (al-Qaradawi, 2009). This approach enables Muslims to navigate cultural expressions while upholding their religious obligations.

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2.12 Islamic Ethics and Cultural Expressions:

Islamic ethics shape cultural expressions by providing moral guidelines. For example, Islamic art, music, and literature often reflect ethical values, such as beauty, compassion, and gratitude. The Islamic concept of "*adab*" (etiquette) guides cultural expressions, promoting refinement, humility, and respect for others. Islamic ethics significantly shape cultural expressions by providing moral guidelines that influence various art forms, music, literature, and overall behaviour. Islamic art, for instance, reflects ethical values through its aesthetic appeal and symbolic representations. The emphasis on beauty, harmony, and spirituality in Islamic art stems from the moral principles of Islamic teachings (Ernst, 2017).

Islamic scholar Dr Carl W. Ernst explains that Islamic art is characterised by its adherence to ethical values, such as compassion, justice, and gratitude. This adherence creates visually stunning masterpieces embodying spiritual and moral dimensions (Ernst, 2010). Islamic calligraphy, geometric patterns, and intricate designs found in mosques and manuscripts are prime examples of how Islamic ethics shape cultural expressions in art. Music also reflects ethics. Traditional Islamic music often emphasises spiritual and moral values. It can evoke a

sense of tranquillity, contemplation, and devotion. Scholars such as Dr Kristina Nelson argue that Islamic music is infused with ethical qualities, such as humility, piety, and praise of God (Nelson, 2005). Šūfī music is renowned for its spiritually uplifting melodies that aim to instil feelings of love, unity, and connection with the Divine, such as Qawwali, a form of devotional music that expresses the mystical Šūfī practice of Islam in South Asia, mainly in areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India and Gnawa in West Africa.

Literature in the Islamic tradition is another avenue through which ethical values are conveyed. Islamic literature encompasses a range of genres, including poetry, storytelling, and philosophical works. These writings often highlight moral virtues such as justice, wisdom, and honesty. The works of renowned Islamic poets like Rumi and Hafez exemplify how Islamic ethics permeate literary expressions, offering profound insights into human spirituality and ethical conduct (Haque, 2008).

The concept of "*adab*" plays a significant role in guiding cultural expressions within the Islamic framework. Adab refers to the code of conduct and etiquette that governs interactions and behaviour in various aspects of life. Islamic scholar Dr Hisham A. Hellyer explains that adab encompasses refinement, humility, and respect for others (Hellyer, 2018). This concept guides individuals' cultural expressions, encouraging them to embody ethical values in their interactions, speech, and artistic creations. In conclusion, Islamic ethics significantly influence cultural expressions in various forms. Islamic art reflects aesthetic beauty and symbolic representations while embodying ethical values such as compassion, justice, and gratitude. Islamic music evokes spiritual and moral sentiments, promoting humility, piety, and praise for the Divine. Islamic literature conveys moral virtues and profound insights into human spirituality. The concept of *adab* guides cultural expressions by promoting refinement, humility, and respect for others. By adhering to Islamic ethics, cultural expressions within the Islamic framework embrace moral guidelines, enriching the artistic and cultural landscape.

2.13 Islamic Influence on Cultural Norms:

Islamic teachings have influenced cultural norms in various societies. For instance, in Muslim-majority countries, cultural practices such as modesty in dress and dietary restrictions align with Islamic principles. Islamic teachings on gender equality have also influenced cultural attitudes and practices regarding women's rights. Islamic teachings have profoundly shaped

cultural norms in societies where Islam is predominant. Cultural practices in Muslim-majority countries often reflect Islamic principles, such as modesty in dress and dietary restrictions (Al-Saadi, 2018). These practices align with Islamic teachings and have become an integral part of the cultural fabric. Modesty in dress is a cultural norm influenced by Islamic teachings. The Qur'ān emphasises the importance of modesty in attire, encouraging both men and women to dress modestly and avoid revealing clothing (Qur'ān 24:31). Islamic scholar Dr Reza Shah-Kazemi explains that modesty in dress reflects an individual's commitment to humility and purity, as prescribed by Islamic ethics (Shah-Kazemi, 2006). This cultural practice is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and serves as a visible expression of religious identity.

Islamic dietary restrictions, such as the prohibition of consuming pork and the requirement of ḥalāl (permissible) food, have also influenced cultural practices in Muslim-majority countries. These practices stem from Islamic teachings on dietary purity and the concept of ḥalāl, which encompasses not only the type of food but also the method of its preparation (Gilliat-Ray, 2011). Muslim communities adhere to these dietary restrictions to demonstrate obedience to Islamic principles and maintain spiritual purity. Cultural and social dynamics have also impacted nutritional preferences. Mas Huni is a popular morning dish among Muslims in the Maldives. It is made from within roti bread and incorporates tuna, coconut, and lime, a perfect representation of the best flavours of this vibrant nation. Islamic teachings on gender equality have significantly impacted cultural attitudes and practices regarding women's rights. Islam recognises the equal worth and dignity of both men and women, as stated in the Qur'ān: "Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise" (Qur'ān 4:124). This emphasis on gender equality in Islamic teachings has influenced cultural attitudes towards women's rights in Muslim-majority societies.

Scholars like Dr Khaled Abou El Fadl argue that Islam's teachings on gender equality have challenged patriarchal cultural norms and practices (Abou et al., 2006). Efforts to promote women's education, economic empowerment, and participation in public life are rooted in Islamic principles of justice and equality. Cultural practices that promote women's rights, such as access to education, align with Islamic teachings on gender equality. In conclusion, Islamic teachings have influenced cultural norms in various societies, particularly in Muslim-majority countries. Cultural practices related to modesty in dress and dietary restrictions align with Islamic principles and serve as visible expressions of religious identity. Furthermore, Islamic teachings on gender equality have influenced cultural attitudes and practices related to women's rights, challenging patriarchal norms. These cultural expressions are deeply rooted

in Islamic ethics and demonstrate the impact of Islamic teachings on shaping cultural values and practices.

2.14 Challenges of Cultural Syncretism:

The interaction between Islam and culture can give rise to challenges related to cultural syncretism. Syncretism occurs when elements from multiple cultures merge, often blending Islamic and local practices. Scholars like Tariq Ramadan caution against syncretism that compromises core Islamic beliefs and values, highlighting the need for a balanced approach. The interaction between Islam and culture can give rise to challenges related to cultural syncretism. Syncretism occurs when elements from multiple cultures merge, often blending Islamic and local practices. While cultural syncretism can enrich the diversity and adaptability of a religious tradition, scholars like Tariq Ramadan caution against syncretism that compromises core Islamic beliefs and values (Ramadan, 2005).

A prominent Muslim scholar, Tariq Ramadan, argues for a balanced approach to navigating the interaction between Islam and culture. He highlights the importance of preserving the integrity of Islamic teachings while embracing cultural diversity (Ramadan, 2005). This perspective emphasises the need to critically evaluate cultural practices to ensure they are compatible with Islamic principles. One area where cultural syncretism often occurs is in rituals and ceremonies. Local customs and traditions may intertwine with Islamic rituals, creating a unique blend of practices. For example, in some Muslim-majority regions, wedding ceremonies may incorporate elements of local cultural traditions alongside Islamic rites. While these practices can provide a sense of cultural identity and belonging, scholars like Dr Jonathan Brown stress distinguishing between essential Islamic rituals and cultural embellishments (Brown, 2014).

The challenge of syncretism becomes more pronounced when cultural practices contradict or compromise core Islamic beliefs. Islamic teachings emphasise the oneness of God and the prohibition of associating partners with Him (Qur'ān 112:1-4). Practices and beliefs in supernatural beings can conflict with Islamic monotheism. Scholars such as Dr Seyyed Hossein Nasr warn against syncretism that dilutes Islam's fundamental monotheistic principles (Nasr, 2003). Furthermore, the interaction between Islam and culture can influence gender roles and norms. Local cultural practices may perpetuate patriarchal attitudes inconsistent

with Islamic teachings on gender equality. Muslim scholars like Dr Amina Wadud emphasise the need to challenge cultural practices that infringe upon women's rights and dignity, urging Muslims to uphold Islamic principles of justice and equality (Wadud, 1999).

To navigate the challenges of cultural syncretism, scholars advocate for a nuanced understanding of Islam's core beliefs and values. It is essential to distinguish between cultural practices compatible with Islamic teachings and those that compromise crucial principles. Muslims are encouraged to examine cultural practices critically, seek guidance from knowledgeable scholars and adhere to the Qur'ān and the authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In conclusion, the interaction between Islam and culture can give rise to challenges related to cultural syncretism. Scholars caution against syncretism that compromises core Islamic beliefs and values. Maintaining a balanced approach that respects cultural diversity while upholding the integrity of Islamic teachings is essential. Critical evaluation of cultural practices is necessary to ensure their compatibility with Islamic principles. By navigating these challenges, Muslims can preserve the essence of their faith while embracing the richness of diverse cultures. Cultural syncretism in Islam provides a conceptual framework for examining Ubungoma, particularly highlighting the need to maintain the integrity of core Islamic beliefs. Further, it underscores the importance of separating foundational belief (*'aqidah*) from cultural adaptations.

2.15 Cultural Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue:

Islam promotes cultural pluralism and encourages interfaith dialogue. Scholars emphasise the importance of respecting and engaging with diverse cultures, mutual understanding, and cooperation. Interfaith dialogue promotes appreciation of cultural differences and contributes to social harmony. Islam promotes cultural pluralism and encourages interreligious dialogue to foster mutual understanding and cooperation among diverse cultures. Islamic teachings emphasise respecting and engaging with different cultures, recognising humanity's inherent diversity. Scholars and religious leaders highlight the significance of interfaith dialogue in promoting social harmony and building bridges between communities. Cultural pluralism, a concept supported by Islamic teachings, recognises and values the existence of multiple cultures within society. The Qur'ān states, "And if Allah had willed, He

could have made you [of] one religion, but He causes to stray whom He wills and guides whom He wills" (Qur'ān 16:93). This verse emphasises the diversity of religions and cultures as part of Allah's divine plan. It encourages Muslims to embrace cultural differences and interact respectfully with people of diverse backgrounds.

Interfaith dialogue promotes understanding and cooperation among different religious and cultural communities. Scholars like Dr Ingrid Mattson highlight the importance of interfaith engagement in overcoming stereotypes and building meaningful relationships (Mattson, 2007). Through dialogue, individuals from different faiths can explore shared values, common aspirations, and collective concerns. This process deepens mutual understanding and fosters unity among diverse cultures.

Interfaith dialogue also fosters appreciation of cultural differences. Abdal Hakim Murad, an American Muslim academic and scholar, participated in the interfaith dialogue 2008 at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Individuals gain insights into the richness and uniqueness of various cultures through conversations and learning from one another. This awareness cultivates respect and admiration for the contributions and traditions of different communities. Islamic teachings encourage Muslims to seek knowledge and understanding, promoting cultural appreciation and celebrating diversity. Furthermore, interfaith dialogue provides an opportunity to address misconceptions and promote peaceful coexistence. Through open and respectful discussions, individuals can dispel stereotypes, challenge prejudices, and foster a sense of common humanity. By acknowledging the shared values of compassion, justice, and ethical conduct, people of different cultures can work together to address societal challenges and promote social harmony.

Muslims are called upon to actively engage in interfaith dialogue as ambassadors of their faith and culture. Islamic scholar Dr Sayyid Syeed emphasises that dialogue should be conducted with wisdom, humility, and a genuine desire to understand others (Syeed, 2011). By embodying Islamic teachings in their interactions, Muslims can contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious society. In conclusion, Islam promotes cultural pluralism and encourages interfaith dialogue to foster mutual understanding and cooperation. Islamic teachings emphasise respecting and engaging with diverse cultures, recognising the inherent diversity within humanity. Interfaith dialogue enables the exploration of shared values and the appreciation of cultural differences, contributing to social harmony and to the building of

bridges between communities. Thus, in the case of Ubungoma, interfaith or intercultural dialogue can foster mutual respect among diverse cultural and religious groups. This is important because both Muslims and non-Muslims often misunderstand the practice of Ubungoma. Such dialogues can help dispel stereotypes and misconceptions commonly associated with African indigenous practices such as Ubungoma. The analysis of *‘urf* (custom) in Islamic jurisprudence provides a conceptual tool for Ubungoma, suggesting that its traditional healing practices can be legitimised and maintained if they are locally accepted and do not fundamentally contradict the core tenets of (e.g., *Tawhīd* or monotheism). However, the question of whether *‘urf* applies to practices from largely non-Islamic backgrounds, which is the case for Ubungoma, presents a significant challenge regarding its potential for legal and religious recognition within Muslim communities.

2.16 Theoretical Discussion

This chapter examines *‘urf* (customs) as a concept in Islamic jurisprudence, a crucial means of bridging the gap between religion and culture. It explored the definition of *‘urf*, which is a term referring to the Sharia-compliant customs or knowledge of a particular society. It further situated *‘urf* as a secondary source of Islamic law, capable of deriving rulings on matters not explicitly or directly mentioned in the *Qur’ān* and Sunnah. While there has been debate over its location within the two primary sources of *sharī‘ah*, acclaimed Islamic jurists such as Abu Yusuf and al-Sarakhsi acknowledged and applied *‘urf*, providing examples of how it was sanctioned or regulated by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions. It further touched on the viewpoints of the four *Imāms*, highlighting how they approached and applied the concept.

Recognising and accommodating cultural practices within the Islamic principles of *‘urf* facilitates the harmonious coexistence of religion and culture, contributing to the rich diversity of Muslim societies worldwide. Incorporating culture into Islamic law is a complex and multifaceted process, one that has been debated and criticised for centuries. While some argue that culture is an integral part of Islamic law and must be considered in its interpretation and application, others contend that culture should not influence the law, as it may lead to misinterpretations and contradictions. One of the main challenges in incorporating culture into Islamic law is defining the term 'culture'. Culture is a broad and ambiguous term encompassing many practices, beliefs, and customs that vary across societies and regions. This makes it difficult to determine which cultural practices should be incorporated into Islamic law and which

should be rejected as un-Islamic. The perspective that *ʿurf* is recognised as a source of *sharīʿah* only when practised by Muslim communities raises the question of whether practices observed by non-Muslims or individuals from largely non-Islamic backgrounds have any legitimate recourse to *ʿurf*. Another challenge is the potential for cultural bias to influence the interpretation and application of Islamic law. Cultural biases are deeply ingrained in society and can affect how individuals perceive and understand religious texts and traditions. This can lead to misinterpretation of Islamic law and to the imposition of cultural practices that are not aligned with Islamic principles. Criticisms of incorporating culture into Islamic law include concerns that it may dilute Islamic principles and erode the law's universality. Some argue that incorporating culture into Islamic law may result in subordinating Islamic law to local customs and traditions, which may be at odds with its universality.

Moreover, critics of cultural incorporation in Islamic law argue that culture is often used as a tool of oppression, particularly against women, minorities, and marginalised groups. Incorporating cultural practices that are discriminatory or oppressive towards certain groups can violate their human rights and undermine the fundamental principles of justice and equality at the heart of Islamic law. Incorporating culture into Islamic law is a complex and contentious issue requiring careful consideration and critical analysis. At the same time, culture can play a valuable role in interpreting and applying Islamic law, in accordance with Islamic principles of justice, equality, and universality. Any cultural practices that are discriminatory or oppressive towards certain groups must be rejected, and the importance of the Islamic tenets must be maintained.

Islam and culture are vast and nuanced topics that require thorough exploration. The interplay between Islam and culture influences various aspects of Muslim societies, including approaches to healing, social norms, and cultural expressions. Islam provides a moral and ethical framework that guides cultural expressions while respecting the diversity of cultural practices within the Muslim community. The relationship between Islam and culture is not one of opposition or dichotomy, but rather a dynamic interaction and adaptation. To fully understand the relationship between Islam and culture, it is essential to consider the rich heritage of Islamic scholarship and the diverse cultural contexts in which Muslims reside. The exploration of Islam and culture is not limited to theoretical discussions but extends to practical applications. Muslims worldwide engage in synthesising Islamic beliefs and cultural practices, finding ways to maintain their cultural heritage while adhering to Islamic teachings. Cultural practices that align with Islamic ethics, such as modesty in dress, dietary restrictions, and gender equality, are recognised and embraced by Muslim communities. Islam encourages

the preservation of cultural heritage if it aligns with Islamic values and principles. However, the relationship between Islam and culture is not without its challenges. Cultural syncretism, blending Islamic and local practices, can lead to dilemmas and compromises. Scholars caution against syncretism that compromises core Islamic beliefs and values, and advocate adherence to Islamic principles. Engaging in ongoing dialogue and scholarship is crucial to fully understanding the intricate relationship between Islam and culture. Islamic studies programs, academic research, and interfaith dialogues provide platforms for further exploration of this relationship. Through these endeavours, a deeper understanding of the interplay between Islam and culture can be achieved.

2.17 Conclusion

This chapter has navigated the complex terrain of *‘urf* (customary law), moving from its basic definitions to its deep-seated roots in the Quran and Prophetic traditions. We have seen that *Urf* is not merely a secondary legal tool but a living, breathing bridge between divine revelation and the lived realities of human societies. By examining its conditions and types, we have established that for a custom to be legally valid, it must be consistent, widespread, and most importantly, not in direct conflict with clear scriptural mandates. Further, the study has categorised custom into Verbal *‘Urf* (common linguistic usage) and Physical *‘Urf* (habitual actions). We gain the analytical tools to dissect *Ubungoma* through the lens of Black Muslim Praxis (BAMP).

***‘Urf* as a Source of Law**

In Islamic jurisprudence, *‘urf* is not a mere suggestion; it is a "solid" source that can specify general rulings or even restrict them. When a contract is silent, the "custom of the land" fills the gap. The section has revealed that while the Shāfiī and Hanbalī scholars remain sceptical of *‘urf* as "independent" evidence, and schools like the Zahiris and Izala outrightly reject the concept. There is, however, a prevailing consensus amongst scholars that utilises it to ensure the Sharīah remains adaptive. The transition from the "specific reason" of a Hadīth to the "generality of the expression" allows jurists to apply 7th-century precedents to modern socio-cultural complexities.

Verbal 'urf: This refers to how a community understands specific words. For example, if a Muslim community in South Africa uses the term *Idlozi* (ancestor) to mean "a righteous person from whom we inherit wisdom" rather than a deity, the legal ruling on that speech changes based on the community's shared definition. A practitioner uses the term "*Amadlozi*" (ancestors) to refer to the biological and spiritual lineage of their family. In this sense, they are referring to Birr al-Walidayn (honouring parents) and to keeping the memory of the deceased alive through *Sadaqah Jariyah* (ceaseless charity) in their name. This is a valid verbal custom because the "meaning" is rooted in historical respect.

Physical 'urf: These are the recurring actions or trades a society performs. In the context of healing, using specific indigenous herbs or wearing certain colours to signify a student status can be seen as physical customs that are permissible if they carry no theological weight. This involves the physical rituals, dress, and tools used in the healing process. The use of *Isiphandla* (a traditional wristband) or specific beads purely as a sign of identity, status, or a "uniform" for a healer. If these items are worn as cultural markers, like a scholar wearing a turban or a doctor wearing a white coat, they fall under permissible physical 'urf. They serve a social function of identification and communal belonging.

The Invalid Example: The use of bones for divination (*umbhalo*). As noted in the provided text, using bones to "see" the *Ghaib* (the unseen/future) is a physical act that directly contradicts the Islamic prohibition of *Kahanah* (soothsaying). Regardless of how widespread the custom is, it cannot be "Islamised" because its core function, claiming knowledge that belongs only to Allah, violates a primary pillar of faith.

The Limits of Custom: 'urf al-Fasid in Ubungoma

While BAMP emphasises healing and the restoration of African identity, 'urf is not an "anything goes" principle. It distinguishes between *al-'urf al-Sahih* (valid custom) and *al-'urf al-Fasid* (invalid custom). Healing the soul through BAMP requires a "rigorous filtering process" to ensure that cultural pride does not lead to theological harm.

Intercession and Shirk: As noted by scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah, any custom that involves seeking help or intercession from the deceased shifts from "veneration" to *Shirk* (the association of partners with God). In the discursive analysis of *Ubungoma*, calling upon

ancestors for power or protection violates the protection of *Deen* (Faith). This is an invalid custom because it attributes the "unseen" power (*Ghaib*) to created beings. However, there are alternative views within Islam that do not regard intercession as shirk (associating partners with Allah. See above in 1.4⁵ The views of Sayyid Alawi Al-Maliki on intercession. Al-Maliki's theological framework creates a clear bridge to the practices of *Ubungoma*. By affirming that believers may approach the divine through righteous intermediaries, his perspective suggests that these traditional customs align more closely with Islamic principles than previously thought. The essential condition, however, is that such intermediaries must be viewed strictly as a 'means' to an end, rather than the 'end' itself.

Divination vs Diagnosis: The use of bones for divination (*Kahannah*) serves as a practical example of a custom that fails the '*urf*' test. Even if a practitioner views it as a "diagnostic tool," Islamic law (as noted by Al-Qaradawi) voids any custom claiming to unveil the future or the hidden. For this to be "Islamised," the practice would need to be stripped of its supernatural claims and reduced to medicinal or psychological observation. Is the concept of divination in Islam prohibited as an act in itself or in the manner in which it was used during pre-Islamic Arabia, where it was to a deity who was perceived as a god?

The shift towards monotheism defines the theological limits placed on divination. Still, its legal status in Islamic law depends on how scholars balance the literal wording of scripture with its intended meaning. This necessitates examining how different schools of Islamic jurisprudence define "unseen knowledge" (*al-ghayb*) and whether they draw a clear line between prohibited sorcery and forms of spiritual insight that may be permitted.

A major point of uncertainty in discussions about divination is whether Islamic teachings prohibit the act itself or the religious setting from which it originally emerged. Pre-Islamic Jahiliyyah practices were deeply tied to the worship of multiple deities, whereas Islam redirected spiritual devotion exclusively to one God. This raises an important question for modern researchers: if the primary aim of the early prohibition was to end idolatry, could certain forms of divination be acceptable today, understood not as worship but as a means of seeking divine guidance through a human intermediary?

There is also an ethical debate, especially when such practices are used with the intention of helping others, for example, in spiritual healing or in protecting people from perceived harm,

⁵ See section 1.4 page 14 above .

which complies with the *Maqasid al-Ashari'ah* (higher objectives of Islamic Law) or *Maslaha* (public interest). The broader challenge for contemporary Islamic law is deciding whether the historic ban must be applied exactly as it was, or whether new interpretations can allow some of these practices to fit within a monotheistic and ethically responsible framework.

Synthesis: A Framework for Healing

This chapter looked at *'urf* as a potential theoretical framework for understanding Ubungoma. The preceding exploration of *'urf* (customs) in Islamic jurisprudence provides a strong basis for understanding and contextualising Ubungoma within a broader Islamic socio-cultural landscape. While Ubungoma may initially seem to function outside the ambit of Islamic law, a closer study of the principles of *'urf* provides valuable analytical tools to study Muslim sangomas and their practices from within the Islamic framework.

'Urf is a theoretical lens that allows us to see Ubungoma as potentially part of the broader Islamic tradition or not. On the other hand, practices such as ancestral communication in Ubungoma face significant scrutiny under the lens of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (Objectives of Law). Specifically, seeking intercession from the deceased risks violating the protection of *Deen*. Thus, communicating with ancestors as a form of worship is classified as *al-'urf al-Fāsid* because it attributes powers of the 'unseen' to created beings. To be considered an acceptable custom, the practice would need to be redefined as historical veneration, a transition that remains theologically contested.

Through the lens of BAMP, *'urf* allows the Black Muslim to heal the fracture between their Africanity and their Islam. It provides a way to honour the "good" in our cultures while using the Shari'ah as a protective filter to ensure our spiritual health remains intact. We turn to a detailed study of Ubungoma in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

UBUNGOMA, A DETAILED EXAMINATION

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter examined the concept of *‘urf* (customs) as a source of Islamic law and described the intricate and complex relationship between Islam and culture. Additionally, it positioned customary practices within the primary sources of Islamic law, the Qur’ān, and Prophetic traditions. This chapter examines the cultural and theological significance of one of the African customary practices, Ubungoma, a term derived from African culture. This analysis seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of Ubungoma and shed light on its significance in African society by examining its etymology, the role of ancestors, the practice of Ubungoma, and contemporary issues within it. The South African government recognises traditional healers, including sangomas, as essential healthcare providers and includes them in the National Health Act. These practices are profoundly rooted in African culture. They are believed to facilitate communication with ancestors, heal physical and spiritual ailments, and

preserve community and identity. However, Western medicine has frequently regarded traditional healing practices with scepticism, and calls have been made for a greater integration of traditional healers into mainstream healthcare. South African patients use traditional medicinal practices alongside modern healthcare practices, and cultural beliefs and practices can influence health-seeking behaviours and health outcomes.

3.2 Etymology and Definition of Ubungoma

The study employs the term Ubungoma as the primary framework for investigating indigenous healing practices across diverse South African cultural groups, including the IsiXhosa, Sesotho, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. Choosing this specific term is a deliberate, analytically grounded decision intended to provide a cohesive lens for examining the shared core beliefs and traditional principles that connect these practices.

While the research acknowledges that each cultural group maintains its own unique terminology, such as *Igqirha* (IsiXhosa), *Bongaka* (Sesotho), *Vhudovhela* (Tshivenda), and *Vhukhomba* (Xitsonga), the researcher has opted for Ubungoma due to its widespread recognition and broad cultural visibility across the country. The term has effectively transcended its specific linguistic roots to become a widely accepted descriptor for traditional healing.

By utilising this common nomenclature, I establish a shared ground for discussion and avoid the constant need to redefine terms for the reader. While incorporating every group-specific term might seem academically precise, doing so risks fragmenting the narrative and diluting the study's core arguments. Focusing on a resonant, unifying term allows for a clear, streamlined analysis of traditional healing across South Africa's cultural landscape without getting lost in terminological complexity.

In exploring the term's etymology, the scholarly literature presents many perspectives on Ubungoma, examined through numerous terminologies, including Ubungoma and Ukuthwasa, and how diverse tribal communities employ distinct terms to delineate this practice. Berglund argues that the term "ngoma" in Zulu culture carries a particular connotation, indicating that "ingoma" and "Isangoma" were terms used to describe diviners who, according to traditional Zulu society, practised divination using sticks called "*izibulo*" (Berglund, 1976). In Xhosa, it is explained that the nouns Ubongoma and Sangoma share a joint entry with the term "goma," which denotes the act of healing. However, the distinction lies in the use of different prefixes. Specifically, Ubongoma employs the compound prefix "*ubu*," while *Sangoma* employs the

complex noun prefix "isa" (Xala, 1996) to refer to a specific source. According to Podolecka, the precise etymology of the term 'Sangoma' remains to be determined.

Podolecka asserts that the term '*Sangoma*' denotes an individual associated with the drum, with the word 'ngoma' signifying the musical instrument itself. Drums are regarded as sacred musical instruments that facilitate the induction of a trance state in Sangomas, enabling them to communicate with spiritual entities. Drums are also considered repositories of energy, although the term 'energy' is a more recent concept and was not commonly employed a few decades ago (Podolecka, 2016). Berglund elaborates on the concept by stating that "One diviner asserted that *ingoma* and *Isangoma* were, in essence, synonymous terms used to refer to diviners who, by traditional Zulu society, practised divination using sticks referred to as *izibulo* (ibis)." Another phrase commonly linked to Ubungoma is *ukuthwasa*, a Xhosa word denoting the process of emergence or coming forth, sometimes accompanied by the manifestation of "*inkathazo*," which can be understood as difficulties or challenges. Mlisa (2009) introduces another language. The word "Ubungoma," also known as "Sangoma" or "Traditional Healer," is used in many African societies to designate individuals with inherent spiritual or divinatory aptitudes. The individual who engages in Ubungoma is called *Isangoma*. These individuals are often regarded as having a distinct and profound affiliation with the metaphysical domain, rendering them highly sought after for their capacities in healing, prophecy, and counselling within their respective communities.

Ubungoma means to be with song so that healers may chant, sing and dance during ceremonies and consultations. Accompanying these is the drum, which is essential for inducing a trance. During ceremonies, the drumming induces a hyper-stimulation of the body and mind, shifting everyday consciousness into a trance-like state. The *sangoma* (diviner) root word in Venda or Tsonga is *mungoma*, which refers to the drum (Nomabutho, 2021).

Despite the cautionary stance of researchers and Ubungoma specialists such as Dr Velaphi Mkhize, who have argued for limiting the meaning of sangoma to a healer, it becomes evident from examining the definitions and explanations of Ubungoma that the concept of "healing" is consistently emphasised across numerous literary sources. The prevalence of the association

between *sangoma* and healers indicates that many authors and practitioners widely accept and employ the interpretation of *sangoma* as healers. In this study, the operational definition of *sangoma* as a traditional healer, counsellor, and diviner will serve as the working definition.

3.3 Classifications of *iZangoma* or Healers.

According to Mkhize, "*Isangoma*" is commonly used to refer to traditional healers. However, this label is misleading as not all individuals who undergo initiation are designated as such. "*Isangoma*" refers to those who have experienced possession because of engaging in dance and singing, known as "*ukugida ngengoma*" in the Zulu culture. In IsiZulu, the term for all healers is "*Uhlanya*," with the plural "*Izinhlanya*." This terminology is attributed to their extraordinary abilities, which surpass those of ordinary individuals, enabling them to perceive phenomena beyond normal human perception. The various classifications of healing encompass. In the context of African Healing, the several varieties of *izinhlanya* that are recognised include the following:

Isangoma is believed to be possessed and undergoes training via dance and music, known as an *ingoma*. Lange explains *that a sangoma*, as commonly known, is typically female and operates within a traditional religious supernatural context, primarily as a conduit between the mortal world and ancestral spirits. Messages from the ancestors are interpreted to diagnose inexplicable illnesses. At the same time, the medication is prescribed for identifiable conditions, and a diagnosis is always made by "reading" thrown bones or while in a trance. There is no need for direct contact with the patient (Lange, 2018).

3.3.1 Abalozi are believed to be possessed and trained by whistles. Its infrequency and prolonged duration characterise the form of healing above compared to conventional training methods. Typically, ancestors undertake comprehensive self-training through dreams.

3.3.2 Umthandazi - The practitioner, known as an *umthandazi*, typically employs a prayer and water. Specific individuals utilise candles throughout their consultation sessions. Ramulongo analyses the role of *Umthandazi*/Prophet within religious contexts, explicitly focusing on their presence in churches such as amaZayoni. This work exhibits similarities to *iZangoma*, as Ramulongo noted, albeit it lacks a specific initiation process. This healer type is commonly associated with Christian churches, Ubungoma (Ramulongo, 2022).

3.3.3 Umhlahli refers to an individual who can disclose the identity of the individual responsible for bewitching another. Such individuals are scarce in contemporary times.

3.3.4 Isanusi refers to the highest hierarchy level within the African Healing system. *Isanusi* is a clairvoyant, capable of predicting future events and their timing, functioning as both a seer and a prophet. Mkhize (2011) discusses the development.

3.3.5 Izinyanga, the English meaning of *inyanga*, is the moon, but in this context, it refers to a herbalist. According to Lange, an *inyanga* is a specialist in the use of herbal medicinal potions to treat disease and ailments. Herbalists are typically male and choose their profession voluntarily. Herbalists do not claim to have divine powers and usually spend several years learning their trade. In addition, they have a comprehensive understanding of medicinal botanicals, natural remedies, and animal-based medicinal compounds. Their extensive curative knowledge encompasses preventive and prophylactic remedies, rituals, symbols, and, occasionally, elixirs for good fortune and faithfulness. Some of the *izinyanga* become recognised experts in their discipline, renowned for their expertise. Herbalists require patient contact and a background understanding of their disorders (Lange, 2018).

Traditional healers, like medical professionals, exhibit heterogeneity within their ranks. The phrase "traditional healer" is a broad notion encompassing several healers with diverse training and expertise. Researchers across different geographical regions have identified various types of traditional healers. Within the Bapedi tribe, individuals practising traditional healing are called '*dingaka*' or '*mangaka*'. Multiple categories of traditional healers can be identified, including diviners, widely referred to as '*Ngaka ya ditaola*'; Sanusi, also known as '*Sedupe*'; traditional surgeons; and traditional birth attendants, commonly referred to as '*Babelegis*' (Ramulogo, 2018).

Even though the practice is referred to as Ubungoma and the practitioners are commonly called Isangoma, the preceding list shows significant distinctions in how they are named and operate. The name might sometimes indicate a person's rank in the traditional healing hierarchy, as with *Isanusi*. One of the informants stated that he is called u *Gonondo* within the practice of Ubungoma and that he is consulted by *abo Gobela* (trainers).

3.4 The Significance of Ancestors in Ubungoma

Ancestors are fundamental to African Indigenous systems and knowledge; as such, they are a crucial component of the Ubungoma practice, as the institution's entire structure revolves around the ancestors, also known as *amadlozi*. Ritchie emphasises the importance of understanding African families' connections to their ancestors in Ubungoma practice, particularly in the context of Western influence on traditional practices. (Ritchie, 1990) Nguni people believe that extended family kinship ancestors play a role in protecting the home, maintaining harmony, or, when appropriate, causing misfortune and even illness to remind children of the error of their ways (Buhrman, 1989). Since Ubungoma is a spiritual practice, its foundation is the conviction that the ancestors (*amadlozi*) or *abaphansi* are a source of strength, wisdom, and healing. The ancestors are essential to the *izangoma*'s life and activity because they serve as their conduits and bodily embodiments. The *izangoma* draw their calling, knowledge, expertise, and power from their ancestors, and they assist the community by offering answers to various issues and difficulties.

Since *amadlozi* plays a crucial role in Ubungoma, a question arises: Who are the ancestors, and what qualifies a departed soul to be considered an ancestor? Mkhize observes that ancestors, whom we call *Amathongo* (plural of *Ithongo*) in the IsiZulu Language. Sometimes, we refer to these people as Amadlozi (pl. of *Idlozi*), which means something different from *amathongo*. *Idlozi* is the 'spirit' that possesses a person to become an African *Uhlanya* (healer). In contrast, *Ithongo* is a dead person whom we believe is alive in the land of the ancestors (*kwela baphansi*) (Mkhize, 2011). They are superior to the living and include, amongst others, departed/deceased parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts and uncles (Child & Child, 1993). Thus, in African belief, *amadlozi*, *abaphansi*, and *amathongo* are the spirits of departed family members known as the ancestors or *abaphansi*. Individuals who are thought to be around still have an impact on the material world. They are considered the go-betweens between the living and *Umdali*, the supreme entity created and the source of all life.

3.4.1 Classification of the Ancestral Spirits.

According to African cultural beliefs, a human person exists in two distinct realms: the physical and the spiritual. The body represents the tangible and corporeal aspects of an individual. In

contrast, the spiritual body pertains to the intangible, non-physical elements commonly associated with a person's mental dimension. In most indigenous African cultures, the belief is that, for the gift of life, a child is forever indebted to parents and owes them obedience and deference, and that even after the parents' death, a child is expected to continue providing for them in the spirit world. In this regard, attachment to ancestral spirits is an affirmation of the multiple realities of humans (Buhrman,1989); the attachment to ancestral spirits is an acknowledgement that the spirits of the dead still live on; the dead persons have only transcended to another realm and need to be treated warmly with respect and honour. Gumede also considers ancestral spirits to be the spirits of dead family and community members (Gumede, 2009), while referring to them as the collective consciousness of one's ancestors (Grimassi, 2000).

Mkhulu Ibrahim Khoza of the Sobekhulu Institute for Spiritual Healing explains the different types of ancestral spirits as follows: There are various types of *amadlozi* (ancestors) in the spiritual realm. Among them are:

Idlozi Le Ndau is a spirit of ancestry about the Southeast Central Africa's Ndau people and derives from the Kharanga kingdom.

Idlozi Le Nzundze is the ancestral spirit of a person who is a blend of White and Black people from diverse cultures, with a strong water connection.

Idlozi Eli Umndawu is the ancestral Spirit of a person who was an asylum seeker or a deceased member of your family who was not related to you by blood and may have come from a separate person.

Umlozi or idlozi labelozi. This ancestral Spirit originally belonged to the "Lozi people" of Zambia, migrated to Southern Africa, used *umlozi* (a type of whistle), and resided in the mountain.

Idlozi Lomndiki is an ancestral spirit whose origins can be traced to the Mandingoor Manlike people of West Africa. This Bantu group migrated to Southern Africa and was incorporated into the Nguni people. *Indiki* is genuinely a type of ancestral Spirit that causes a great deal of confusion; it is the Spirit that may have possessed you after you inherited the name of a particular family *dlozi*, causing you to become ill because it needs cleansing to settle down.

Idlozi Lomthandazi: It is an ancestral spirit that has chosen the path of a particular church to foresee and heal people. Prayer warriors existed before the arrival of religion, known as either *Isithunywa sebandla* or *Isithunywa senkaba*, but this topic is complex.

Idlozi Le Nguni: any ancestral Spirit belongs to the influential Ngoni people, including *idlozi lesi Shangaan*.

Lelopo or Malopo: This ritual is performed for the Ba-Pedi and Vha-Venda ancestry progenitors. It is commonly performed during initiations in Limpopo and other provinces.

This is called a Chief Ancestor (*inkosi*), and we have *amakhosi aphezulu nawaphansi* such as *isimbiwa manzini*. Umlozi is also part of Amakhosi, but most people define it as Zulu ancestral spirits.

Umanono is the ancestral Spirit of an infant or young person who died before puberty, in the *Idlozi* language (Khoza, 2020).

According to Ubungoma, a person's relationship with *Amadlozi* is the closest human connection they have with God, *uMvelinqangi*. This profoundly spiritual connection explains the sangomas' beliefs and those of African people about life, fertility, luck, and misfortune, as well as their pursuit of a meaningful and morally upright existence. The *Amathongo*, a superior galaxy of elderly ancestors, rule over the *Amadlozi*. The Zulu people's physical and spiritual centre, *umami* or *gigolo*, is said to be primarily tended to by the latter. The different types of ancestors determine how one will be initiated into Ubungoma.

3.4.2 The Role of Ancestors

Ancestors play multiple roles within African family dynamics; they foster unity among families and individuals, providing care, empowerment, blessings, rewards, and inspiration. Additionally, they act as guardians, shielding their families from various malevolent forces such as warfare, illness, and adversaries. Furthermore, ancestors function as intermediaries between individuals and the Divine, bridging the gap between humans and the spiritual realm. They also lend credibility to disciplinary measures where societal norms are transgressed. Lastly, ancestors facilitate comprehensive healing processes. (ibid., p. 5). Edwards acknowledges the significance of ancestors in their position: In Nguni tradition, the vocations of a diviner (*isangoma*) is not a matter of personal choice but rather a result of being selected by

one's ancestors, who have clairvoyant abilities. The phenomenon of ancestral calling is commonly manifested through vivid dreams about one's ancestors and encounters with a serpent, known as *ixhanthi*, within a body of water. The process of healing through ancestral connections can be understood as a means of anchoring and affirming identity.

Among many roles that ancestors play in Ubungoma is acting as intermediaries between the superior being, in IsiZulu called Umvelinqangi (God), and those living. *Kubeka* mentions that ancestors (*amadlozi*) act as mediators between the *Zulu* people and the creator; the ancestors do God's work, and God and ancestors work together hand in hand (*Kubeka*, 2016)

Guidance and Communication - Our connection with our ancestors is ongoing, characterised by acknowledging our origins and the experiences that have shaped us. By the tenets of traditional Nguni culture, a fundamental connection exists between the living and the "living dead" (*abaphansi*). This becomes evident when examining the terms "*ukufihlwa*" and "*ukutshalwa*," which describe the interment of deceased individuals. The term "*ukufihlwa*" refers to interring an ordinary citizen, whereas "*ukutshalwa*" pertains to the burial of a member of a royal lineage. Symbolically, the concepts of *ukufihlwa* and *ukutshalwa* are associated with rebirth. The ceremonial performance known as "*umsebenzi wokubuyisa*" represents the initiation of a subsequent existence as an ancestral figure, perpetually offering guidance to the living (*ibid.*, p. 3). According to Edwards (2009), dreams serve as a means of communication and remain central in African cultural contexts. These dreams play a significant role in influencing various aspects of rural and urban lifestyles among African communities. They serve as a medium for conveying crucial information, including warnings, instructions, and the designation of individuals for divine purposes. Ngubane examines the inherent advice provided by *amadlozi* (ancestors) through retelling a notable instance of ancestral revelation and guidance in Vilakazi's novel, *Nje-Nempela*. In the narrative, a singular protagonist named *Nomanzi*, who was in a state of slumber within a community on the verge of being subjected to an assault, was rescued from imminent demise alongside her two companions through the intervention of her deceased grandmother. The latter visited *Nomazi* in a dream, who urged her to depart from the village discreetly and promptly. Upon leaving the town, the protagonist and her two companions found themselves surrounded by assailants of unknown identities. Subsequently, a brutal and indiscriminate slaughter of the village inhabitants ensued. According to Ngubane (1984), the phenomenon of ancestral spirits exhibiting a vested interest in the

affairs of the living, resulting in either protective or disciplinary actions, has been observed and documented by scholars such as Edward et al. The *amadlozi/amathongo* provide comprehensive safeguarding, optimal well-being, and enhanced prosperity to those under their care.

The concept of "protection" encompasses a wide range of entities, including individuals, organisations, clans, nations, villages, and various geographical areas. In the context of uDingiswayo kaJobe, the concept of safeguarding the person through the intervention of the *amathongo* is mentioned. Considering her inability to discourage her spouse, Chief Dingiswayo, from personally leading the armed forces in an offensive against Chief Zwide of the Ndwandwe tribe, his wife, *Nobantwana*, expressed her support for her husband's endeavour. It invoked the *amathonga* for his safeguarding (ibid.,7). Nguni people believe that extended family kinship ancestors protect the home, keeping harmony or, when appropriate, causing misfortune and even illness to remind the children of the error of their ways (Buhrman, 1989).

Ancestors play a significant role in the practice of Ubungoma, as they decide everything related to traditional healing, including identifying family members who will become sangomas, also known as calling (*ubizo*). This type of marriage will become a permanent component in the life of a *sangoma* to the point that it will be put on the duties of the descendants of those who have embraced such a vocation. The influence of *amadlozi* (ancestors) goes beyond Ubungoma. *Amadlozi* plays a crucial role in traditional African cultures, shaping their beliefs and customs. They are admired and respected for their capacity to mediate between the living and God and provide counsel and direction to the community.

3.4.3 Connection with the Ancestors

Berglund opines that Indigenous culture accentuates the connection between the living and the deceased through the concepts of *umphefumulo* (soul), Umoja (spirit), the shadow (*isithunzi*), and the brooding of ancestral shades (*ukufukamela*). Brooding can lead to insanity and increase vulnerability to environmental risks. To be considered a healer, one must perform rituals such as sacrifice, washing in chyme, refraining from wearing new clothing, and donning the inflated gall bladder of a slaughtered animal. After the sacrifice, gall is ingested to purify as the shades enjoy its sweetness (Berglund, 1976).

There are different ways with their Ancestors (*amadlozi*). *Udongo* mentions that one can connect with *amadlozi* in various ways, such as praying, singing, dancing, writing, gardening, burning candles, burning impepho (sage), or visiting ancestral sites. When communicating with your *Amadlozi*, it is essential. They are always present and willing to assist you on your voyage (Wellness, 2019). The article further identifies specific ways to create a shrine as an excellent starting point. A room or designated area in your home where you will pray, *phahla*, or meditate to connect with your Ancestors or the Source of Creation. During their communion, some Africans light candles, *mpepho*, and incense. Some also consume water or alcohol, primarily gin. It is also helpful to know which Ancestor you are attempting to contact, as specific Ancestors may prefer that you leave fruit or other delicacies at the shrine as an offering. Spending time at the shrine is not limited to pleading with Ancestors, Deities, or Spirits to "grant wishes." It should be used to seek blessings and direction and, most importantly, to listen. So, while praying, cultivate a clear mind, a clear heart, and an ear to hear the answers you seek.

3.4.4 Amagobongo

Amagobongo is an IsiZulu term for the herbal mixture used by *izangoma* for various purposes. On her blog, Gogo Mathonsi provides the following explanation:

There is no other word or explanation I can come up with when it comes to giving a proper meaning to this term- *Amagobongo*; but let us try this one: *Amagobongo* are mixed herbs used for healing ancestors to pave their way in the spiritual world. They are mighty and help a person whose ancestors are troubled; they also bring luck. You get impande */igobongo* for each spirit *impande yeendiki*, *umndawe*, *isithunywa* and *umnono*; these are separate from *ukuthwasa*; they are used to pave your ancestor's way so that when they come back this side, they are good spirits that protect the family and give you luck. You do not need to initiate these spirits unless they have told you to do so (Mathonsi, 2020).

Determining the precise composition of the preparation formulas used by various *izangoma* to prepare the herbal concoction. Gogo Mbatha employs a diverse range of 44 to 45 herbal concoctions to produce *amagobongo*. These mixes are primarily guided by the significant influence of four prominent ancestral spirits: *Indiki*, *Indawe*, *idlozi elikhulu*, and *isithunywa*. Each of the four ancestral divisions is characterised by its distinct ingredients, which may include hen

bile, in certain instances, a rooster, and, in other cases, the blood of a white goat (Mbatha, 2019).

When elucidating the rationale for utilising this herbal concoction, Sobekhulu argues that the origins of *igobongo* (singular) predate the practice of Ubungoma and that its use extends beyond serving ancestors. The herbal mixture is utilised for various purposes and situations, including seeking good fortune, dispelling negative energy from newborns, and postponing initiation rituals for children until adulthood. Additionally, the mixture is employed annually to request a grace period from ancestors (Khoza, 2020).

Variations in the preparation of *amagobongo* present a potential theological challenge for Muslims engaged in *Ubungoma* training, as specific ingredients may conflict with Islamic dietary or ritual prohibitions. Consequently, this intersection compels an analysis of whether the synthesis of these practices results in the dilution of Islamic orthodoxy or the alteration of traditional *Ubungoma* protocols.

3.4.5 Between reverence and worship of the ancestors

A central point of contention concerns the conceptualisation of worship within Ubungoma, particularly given that rituals are frequently interpreted through the external, dogmatic lenses of Christianity and Islam. This necessitates a critical distinction between acts of formal worship and those primarily intended as demonstrations of ancestral reverence. Within this inquiry, the philosophical framework of the 'living-dead' as elucidated by Mokgobi provides a vital internal perspective by defining ancestors as compassionate, blood-related spirits who maintain an ontological link with the living (Van Dyk, 2001). Further, Berg provides that they are superior to the living and include, amongst others, departed/deceased parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts and uncles. Because they have crossed over to the other side of life, these spirits mediate between the living and God. This way of life is regarded as ancestor reverence, veneration or remembering, not ancestor worship (Berg, 2003). When referring to communication between Africans and their ancestors, the word 'is inappropriate, since the ancestors are not worshipped but remembered and revered by their relatives (Child & Child, 1993). In traditional African religion, God is above and beyond the ancestors, the central pillar of the universe (Thorpe, 1993). He further mentions that there is one aspect that many people who do not subscribe to this belief system fail to understand: that the God that traditional African religion subscribers worship is the same God that Christians and other religious groupings

believe in. Because African religion reveres and holds God in the highest regard, worshipers do not speak directly to Him. Their prayers and wishes are communicated to Him through the ancestors. This is often aided by enlisting the services of a traditional healer, who advises on how to communicate with the ancestors, depending on the purpose of the communication and the type of ritual to be performed.

While others may consider the veneration of ancestors to be an act of worship, adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR) or African culture have their own interpretation of the concept of "worship." Specific actions and expressions within Christianity and Islam may signify worship, but this is not the case with ATR. This framework allows for an analysis of ancestral engagement that transcends Western or Abrahamic categories of 'worship'. It will further be essential for adherents of Ubungoma to clarify the distinction between reverence and worship within this practice. What are the restrictions and limitations of reverence and worship? Moreover, how is the supreme being or anyone higher than the ancestors revered?

3.5 Ukuthwasa (Initiation)

The term Ukuthwasa has been defined differently by Ubungoma practitioners and researchers. Mlisa explains that members of the amaXhosa tribe use the terms *ukuthwasa* and *ntwaso* (the noun form of ukuthwasa) interchangeably. However, the two terms differ slightly. *Ukuthwasa* is an action verb meaning 'to become a new person'. In contrast, *intwaso* is a noun describing the emic and etic symptomatology or characteristics of ukuthwasa (Mlisa, 2009). Hirst describes *ukuthwasa* as a divination process that allows a person to inquire about future events or matters, hidden or obscure, directed to a deity who, it is believed, will reply through significant tokens (Hirst, 2000).

The process of ukuthwasa, also known as initiation, is undertaken by those who have received a spiritual calling, known as *ubizo*, from their ancestral lineage to become a healer. The phenomenon has been present among the African population for numerous centuries. The misinterpretation of *ubizo* occasionally arises due to the manifestation of symptoms, leading to its erroneous association with concepts such as "possession" or "malevolent spirits." The phenomenon of summoning is sometimes attributed to the ancestral spirits of the deceased, believed to have possessed healing abilities in their lifetimes. Jonker observes that becoming a traditional healer is typically not a deliberate decision but rather a calling from one's ancestors.

Genuine healers are often summoned to their vocation through various means, such as dreams or persistent illnesses that resist conventional treatment. This illness is characterised by multiple symptoms, such as diverse bodily discomfort, heightened anxiety, irritability, difficulty falling asleep, or excessive drowsiness (Jonker, 2006). He further asserts that it is necessary to seek guidance from another reputable isangoma to determine whether the observed symptoms can be attributed to a spiritual calling.

For Mkhize, *ukuthwasa* represents the acknowledgement of an *idlozi*, a deceased ancestor. This *idlozi*, having existed in the past, seeks to manifest as a spiritual entity and resume its responsibilities by entering a living individual's body in the physical realm, expressing its desire to operate through that corporeal vessel. *idlozi* is a term used in certain African cultures to refer to a spiritual being known as an *ithongo*, believed to manifest itself through possessing an individual. The designation of "*idlozi*" is attributed to the *ithongo*'s manifestation through possession. According to Mkhize (2011), Rampho elucidates the initiation process. This phenomenon occurs when an individual contracts a disease without a cure for a prolonged period, or when unresolved matters afflict them. It occurs when an individual suffers from a disease without a cure for a particular period or is afflicted by unresolved issues, such as visions and nightmares. Participants stated that an individual must possess a calling, as it is an innate endowment. Additionally, individuals may, through the initiation process, experience visions of individuals chosen by their ancestors to serve as companions. Participants exhibit varying experiences regarding their vocational aspirations. Mkhize further asserts that individuals may experience illness resulting in either weight loss or weight gain, both of which deviate from the usual. Additionally, some individuals may also suffer from specific medical conditions. Suppose an individual consistently refuses and fails to answer calls made within their household. In that case, a series of unfortunate events may occur, resulting in negative consequences for the entire family. When these symptoms manifest, the family's action is limited until the *idlozi* guides the appropriate initiation destination. The person who goes through the process of *Ukuthwasa* is called *Ithwasa* (singular) and *Amathwasa* (plural).

3.5.1 Confirmation

This refers to the procedure in which an individual undergoes a diagnosis by a certified sangoma and receives confirmation of possessing a spiritual vocation. According to Podoleckas, the calling of a *Sangoma* is being possessed by ancestral entities and engaging

in conversation with many forms of spiritual beings. The occurrence of spiritual visitations and the identification of a *Sangoma's* ailment require specific prescribed measures: an appointed individual must seek out an established *Sangoma* who will provide healing, impart knowledge, and introduce them into the practice (Podolecka, 2016).

The process of answering the call is mentally demanding, as the individual surrenders their sense of self and willingly accepts the subordination of their desires to dedicate their life to serving the spiritual realm. Decisions are determined by the practice of supplication and blessing to spiritual entities, as well as a rigorous commitment to the established doctrine and oral tradition. The decision of the initiate to engage in training necessitates the provision of support and financial obligations from their respective families. The comprehensive burden encompasses various expenses, such as medical costs, living expenses during training, costs for costumes and accoutrements, and expenses associated with ceremonies during the typical two-year apprenticeship (Simmons, 2008).

Mgomezulu explains *ukuthwasa* through her journey as a *sangoma* manner. To become a *Sangoma*, *ubizo*, the ancestral vocation, must be present. There are numerous methods for diagnosing *ubizo* (calling to be a sangoma). The most common method is through dream interpretation, while another is consultation with a qualified *Sangoma*. It was through my fantasies. No one told me I had *ubizo*, but my progenitors revealed everything in my dreams. It should be noted that I am using the term *Sangoma* to refer to traditional health practitioners in general, but not all conventional health practitioners are referred to as *Sangoma*. Some professionals are referred to as *izinyanga* (healers), *damaged* (herbalists), and *ababelethisi* (midwives). *Sangoma* is frequently employed to refer to seers. The South African Traditional Health Practitioners Act of 2007 recognises diviners (*Sangoma*), herbalists (*igedla*), traditional birth attendants (midwives), and traditional surgeons who perform coming-of-age rituals as distinct categories. While all these healers undertake training, it is typically the *izangoma* who undergo *ukuthwasa*, the initiation process; through this process, one acquires their ancestral name (Bongela, 2016).

3.5.2 Training Programme

Booi provides a comprehensive description of the training process undergone by an *iSangoma*, upon the ability to discern and provide healing to individuals. The individual's adeptness governs the length of the treatment period in divination and the ability to heal others.

The training entails the novice (*lthwasa*) residing alongside a traditional healer for a prolonged duration of apprenticeship, during which formal instruction in techniques and practices is provided. The concluding phase is a probationary period during which the novices (*lthwasa*) must demonstrate their divination abilities, often uncovering hidden things. According to Boo (2004), the traditional healer grants permission for the beginner to engage in practice only at that point.

Rampho explains that training for *Izangoma* does not lead to a one-way stream of diagnosis and healing; instead, each person's circumstances may influence the path one chooses after completing it. The way one will pursue is determined by ancestral instruction. (2019, Rampho)

This programme involves the education and training of native health practitioners. The learners must adhere to the rules set by their Gobela (trainer) during rigorous training. The teaching and learning processes rely heavily on intuition, oral communication, and demonstration. The trainees are anticipated to demonstrate competency at each level through formative and summative assessments administered throughout training. This level of competency is emphasised throughout training. *Ukuthwasa* training is founded on praying, singing, and dancing; these practices serve as channels of communication with the ancestors. Throughout their training, candidates must demonstrate competency in oral and written communication, as well as knowledge, skills, and abilities (ibid).

Melisa examines six phases of mouthwash training within the AmaXhosa cultural group.

First stage: Prediction stage of a chosen *igqirha/Sangoma* - The person is selected as a healer by her ancestors at conception through a process called *ukuqajwa* (to be selected), and there is no apparent chronology as to which child will be chosen; however, *amagqirha* have suggested that it is often the first-born and last-born that are selected.

Second Stage: Manifestation of signals denoting the *ubizo* (calling) - The signs of mouthwash may. However, they. Others, however, initiate the process at this stage by obtaining advice from *igqirha* because their dreams affect them. People are frequently sceptical of what they are told, mainly when it involves *ukuthwasa*.

Third Stage: The stage of intense afflictions. This is the stage of intense afflictions and crises. The family or individual seeks various health alternatives, but nothing seems effective. This stage is frequently a frightening experience for the individual and their family. Participants often increase at this point.

Fourth stage: Confusion, resistance, and acceptance - It is essential to note that all participants aspiring to be healers experience. The characteristics manifest in stages, and the phases are diffusely distinguished.

Fifth stage: This is *Ukuvuma ukufa*. This stage consists of a succession of activities that can be categorised into sub-stages: *ukungqawa* (beading) and *ukungqwamba* (wearing goatskins), with two ritual activities during each sub-stage: purification and acceptance.

This is the final chapter of *Umkhwetha's/ithwasa's* intensive training to become a fully-fledged healer. It continues towards graduation. It consists of four ritual activities: *ukutshotsha*, *ukugongqa*, *ukubaleka enkundleni*, and *ukubekwa enkundleni*. This final event is the commencement. At this stage, *umkhwetha* graduates to become a fully-fledged diviner, and it is referred to as *ukuphuma/ukubuya* (going out/coming back); subsequent stages resemble an apprenticeship (Mlisa, 2009).

Rampho explains that izangoma training is based on prayer, training, and dancing. These practices serve as a means of communication with the ancestors. In addition, the researcher outlines three critical competencies that the initiate must master.

First-Level Competencies - The trainee must embrace their calling during this initial phase. To accept the vocation, one must report to the designated *gobela*⁶ (trainer). Moreover, agree to participate in the necessary rituals. The student begins by receiving a mixture of specified herbs and water. They must consume the froth of this mixture at a specific time and pray. This is communicating with the ancestors, also known as *ukubingelela* (to greet the ancestors), through prayer and divination. Before continuing training, the trainee is led through a procedure to collect their ancestral spirit from their residence. During the initial summative evaluation, the trainee is expected to greet their maternal progenitors, followed by their gobela ancestors. In addition to the teacher, other members of the Gobela family and community observe the evaluation. After demonstrating knowledge of ancestral greetings, the trainee may advance to the next level of *umkamase* (beginning of the teaching process guided/assisted by the necklace of traditional medicine/herbs). The procedure is completed according to the

⁶ a spiritual teacher and mentor in the Sangoma tradition, chosen by ancestral spirits to guide a person, known as an *ithwasa*, through the process of becoming a Sangoma

instructions of the ancestors, who determine when a trainee is ready to advance to the next level.

Second-level Competencies - The educational process occurs at this level. The trainees' education involves ancestral/spiritual engagement, and they are led through a process that continues to connect them with their ancestors through prayer, dancing, and the consumption of calabash herbal foam. The gobela begins teaching them to assess, diagnose, and treat patients, but intuitive learning plays a significant role during this stage. They learn how to throw the bones, describe and explain the significance of the bones' positions in relation to a specific illness, and determine where objects are concealed. The trainee must be familiar with various medications used to treat multiple conditions. It is essential to understand the potency and risks of each drug to avoid complications. Trainees are expected to observe, participate, and ask clarifying questions during instruction. Students are given a patient to evaluate without prior preparation. This is on-the-spot training because they are summoned individually or in groups to provide an evaluation.

During the summative evaluation, a trainee is expected to be able to assess and diagnose using bones. They must demonstrate the ability to identify hidden objects; intuition is a critical skill applicable at this level. During this time, *umkamase* is carried out; the trainee's family members hide the necklace containing ancestral medication by the river. The trainee then must intuitively identify where the necklace has been hidden and collect it. This will be followed by an assessment and diagnosis process from the training centre (*Gobela's* home). All this is performed in the presence of witnesses, including other *gobelas*, family, and community members. If the trainee has demonstrated competency in their knowledge, skills, and abilities, they can move to the next level. Their ancestors control the trainee's competency by instructing the Gobela and the trainee. Their instructions come through their visions or dreams, determining progress to the next level.

Third Level - A student is anticipated to have acquired information, skills, and talents from levels one and two by this level. They keep drinking the calabash foam, describing and interpreting the bones, and assessing, diagnosing, and treating accordingly by age and illness. The trainee is alleged to be waiting to eat in a twist. They are in the phase where the student is said to be *ukulele insane* (weeping to complete training). Other gobbles describe the process as *uya meme* (you are called). Ancestors also control this process to assess competency and

preparedness for independent work. Although the gobela can receive ancestor instructions indicating that the trainee has completed or is about to complete training, they must wait for the trainee to notify them that they have also received ancestral instructions indicating that they are heading home or have completed training. During this final round of training, students must keep the gobela informed of any visions or dreams about the sacrificial animal. The trainee also identifies the family member who will deliver the animal to the trainee's mobile. During the *intwaso* procedure, the trainee undergoes a final/summative assessment. The assessment is conducted again by other Gobelas, family, and community members. At this time, the student is expected to use their intuitive skills proficiently to identify the location, colour, and the person who brought the goat or cow to the final ceremony. They will then take the animal to be slaughtered and swallow its blood right from its throat. The trainees are induced to vomit and be cleansed before returning to their families and returning home to practise. Trainees are considered fully graduated only when the animal for the ceremony is presented, and a specific fee is paid to the *Gobela* by family members.

3.5.3 Forward Progress

Ancestors determine the progression of an initiate (*ithwasa*) from one stage to the next or until the completion of training. Rampho mentions that throughout the training phases, progression is determined by ancestral directives and the demonstration of skills. Occasionally, apprentices cannot advance to the next level due to financial constraints. Throughout their training, trainees are required to perform certain rituals to strengthen their connection with their ancestors. The progression from one level to the next depends on how quickly or slowly their progenitors give them instructions.

Nonetheless, the delay is sometimes attributable to the trainee's lack of commitment to the duties specified by the progenitors and the *gobela* (Rampho, 2019). According to Simmons (2008), a student's stay is determined by their commencement date, the strength of their *amadlozi* responsibilities, financial resources, and humility. Upon completion of the training, Fihlani tells the following story of an initiate: "On the weekend of her initiation last year, she was given an herb that put her into a trance, a state in which she was required to search for her sacrificial goat, which the elders had hidden in her home along with other objects. The fact that she could locate them was interpreted as evidence of her ability to "see" beyond the physical world. "The ancestors led me to the location of the objects; you cannot graduate until you can

see through them. This ability is essential when consulting with patients, according to Fihlani (2013).

Once training is complete, the apprentice is taken to a river for a "*go ja ntwase*" ceremony in the presence of community members. Animals are slaughtered by the progenitors' instructions, which are communicated to the trainer through their divination. This ceremony serves as a test to determine whether the trainee has mastered the trade and can be permitted to practise as a traditional physician (Ramulogo, 2018).

3.6 The Practice of Ubungoma

The field of Ubungoma encompasses a diverse array of practices, including but not limited to divination, herbal medicine, ritual rites, and spiritual counselling. These individuals are often regarded as possessing a distinctive affinity with the metaphysical domain. They are highly sought after for their healing, prophecy, and guiding abilities within their communities. The field of Ubungoma encompasses a diverse array of practices, including but not limited to divination, herbal medicine, ritual rites, and spiritual counselling.

Upon completing the training, an initiate (*ithwasa*) may become a fully-fledged sangoma. At this stage, the *gobela*, who serves as the trainer, bestows the authority onto the individual to practise as a *sangoma*. In detailing the *sangoma's* role, Lambrecht asserts that *Izangoma* (male or female) play many social and political roles in the community. They are involved in divination, healing, directing rituals, finding lost cattle, protecting "warriors" (*Izangoma* offered protective medicine [muti] to freedom fighters during South Africa's political struggles), and "smelling out" witches, as well as narrating the history, cosmology, and myths of their tradition (Lambrecht, 2001).

Mlisa further elaborates on the practice of Ubungoma/Ukuthwasa through the following four approaches.

- During the life cycle of *igqirha*, four rituals form a memorable part of her practice. These are *intlombe* (séance), *igqirha* does, and *ukuhlamba* (cleansing), which play a pivotal role in all ritual ceremonies and are crucial to *igqirha* herself. For example, after every death of a family member or close relative, *igqirha* must be cleansed before participating in her healing ritual. Before performing any purification rituals, *igqirha* must be cleansed first. Cleansing includes cutting the hair of the head and the pubic area.

- *Ukuxhoma iingcaza* is another central ritual. This entails placing liquor, drinks, tea, meat, tobacco, and other gifts for ancestors on the qigong. That is one of the most respected rituals and moments of *amagqirha*. Any mistakes made at that stage often result in severe punishment.
- *Ukutshisa amathambo* (burning the bones) is another important ritual, especially during the last phase of the training (graduation) (Broster, 1981 and Hunter, 1936). These bones are taken from *umrosho* (certain selected parts in the slaughtered animal (Hunter, 1936). The bones are counted, placed in a sack, and safely secured inside the roof. After a minimum of six months, Amagqirha returns to make income for them. They are counted again. This bone-burning ritual is called *ukuvulela* (to open). That ritual opens a clear road for the new graduate's prospects.
- To *ukushwama* (to eat alone first before anyone else eats), the trim piece from the animal's right front leg is called *umshwamo* (Hunter, 1936). This piece is cut immediately after slaughtering. That is cut and roasted in the hut where she is sitting with other amagqirha. The meat is carried by a wooden stick, not a fork and placed on a grass table mat. No salt is added; she eats it with her *amakhankatha* (special nurses/attendants/chaperons). If the meat is not finished, it is shared with other *amagqirha*. That is the critical part of *isiko* (custom) and is critically observed. The environment is created to be as natural as possible. *Umrosho* (the more significant portion from which the meat was cut) is placed near *umkhwetha* (initiate) and is cooked the following day. After the meat is cooked, she is the first to eat. She eats it with her *amakhankatha*. That is to claim the unique right to own the sacred animal as hers and to receive the ancestors' blessings (Mlisa, 2009).

On the role and practice of *izangoma* (Diviners), Ogana argues that people visit *izangoma* for various reasons, mainly because of the diviners' familiarity with handling culture-bound syndromes within traditional African healing practices. This form of healing occurs within a well-established healthcare system familiar to most cultures on the African continent. In addition, *izangoma*, who usually live in the same community as their patient, are familiar with the patient's family members and medical history. Unlike biomedical facilities, which are usually inconveniently situated far from the community, *izangoma* are readily available and accessible to patients beyond working hours because they reside near the client (Ojong, 2015). The author further posits that, in obedience to ancestral spirits, *izangoma* play an integral role in their

communities. Their work includes foretelling the future, identifying causes of misfortune and death, and instilling the power to attain health, prosperity, and security. All diviners are healers, and it gets even more specific when he pinpoints the tasks of *izangoma*: the tasks consist of diagnosing the causes of disease and illness, finding lost objects, or ‘smelling’ (determining) the guilty party in sorcery cases (ibid., p. 13). Lambrecht further states that the primary function of the Sangoma is to heal and protect people in the community. Healing is holistic and symbolic and thus is powerfully determined by cultural factors. The three significant causes of illness and misfortune that a Sangoma seeks to divine and heal are ancestral illnesses, illnesses caused by witchcraft, and those due to “pollution” (ritual impurity), such as menstruation and miscarriage (Lambrecht, 2001).

Supplementing the role of traditional healers, or Sangomas, Yeboah observes that, across all African regions, traditional healers are highly resourceful and play a pivotal role in many spheres of people’s lives, serving as ‘medical knowledge storehouses’ (Yeboah, 2000). African traditional healers serve important roles as educators about conventional culture, cosmology and spirituality. They also serve as counsellors, social workers, skilled psychotherapists, and custodians of indigenous knowledge systems (Mills et al., 2005). Citing Honwana, Mokgobi further states that the services of traditional healers go far beyond the use of herbs for physical illnesses. A particular example of the role of conventional healing extends to its use in Mozambique. Traditional healers were found to be invaluable in post-civil war social reconstruction and community rebuilding in Mozambique, particularly in the rural areas (Honwana, 1997). It is doubtful whether modern psychological and psychiatric services would have been appropriate in Mozambique, as traditional healing played a significant role in providing culturally relevant psychological services, including communication with the ancestors (Honwana, 1997).

The statements above indicate that sangomas play various distinctive roles in society, including serving as intermediaries, engaging in divination, providing herbal remedies (acting as healers), and, in some instances, offering spiritual counselling. They are also known for foretelling the future and identifying the cause of misfortune.

However, the practice of Ubungoma is not without challenges and criticism, especially where it clashes with conventional medicine or Western medicine. This is often seen in the field of spiritual diagnosis, where every misfortune is attributed to witchcraft, as well as the lack of standardised training. Furthermore, as Lambrecht mentions about the practice of “smelling out

witches”, such practices warrant critical examination due to their potential to cause tension and harm within the communities.

Despite these considerations, the enduring resilience of sangomas underscores their essential role in the community to this day. They remain vital spiritual and social figures who bridge the gap between the seen and unseen worlds.

3.7 Dress-Codes, Symbols and Sacred Spaces

3.7.1 Dress Code:

The dress code of a Sangoma highlights the importance of their relationship with the ancestors. Although the colours' symbols determine the dress code, South Africa has no fixed list of equipment or specific dress codes. While there is great variety in dress codes, a characteristic of many Izangoma is that they wear a goat's gallbladder tied into their hair at the back of the head. This gallbladder comes from the goat that was slaughtered at the time of a Sangoma's graduation, and it is said to “call the ancestors.” Usually, a cluster of goat horns and bead containers filled with herbs and medicines is worn around the neck, shoulders, and body. A cow-tail whisk and a stick are other typical elements of the regalia. The Sangoma's whisk, which signifies dignity, is used during dancing and to sprinkle certain medicines. The Sangoma may wear strips of goatskin taken from the initiation goat as straps that crisscross their chest (Lamberecht, 2001).

The general purpose of costume and beadwork is to serve as conduits through which the healer can transfer knowledge from the ancestors. These garments differ slightly from those of the individuals, depending on the *amadlozi* (ancestors) school where they are trained and their economic status. Costumes can be further divided into those worn by healers for ceremonies and those made by individuals for specific ceremonies.

- Symbolically empowered clothes, worn around the waist, falling proportionately from the hip to the knee to the mid-calf, are used at specific times during the leadership or designated rituals.
- Specifically designed handmade garments following the hereditary patterns (with adaptations) worn during designated rituals, such as those worn during the second phase of the *ukuthwasa* (initiation) ceremony for dancing and afterwards during the sequence dance.

- Skin cut adapted into garments and other ceremonies, such as the Bush ritual ceremony. It is only worn by some healers (Simmons, 2008).

The diviner's attire, which includes white goatskin strips, is permanently strapped over her shoulders and breasts. In Zulu culture, white symbolises good, but it can also signify extraordinary goodness or power, which *izangoma* enjoys if upright (Ojong, 2015).

3.7.2 Wearing of beads.

Samanga provides a detailed account of the use of beads within the Ubungoma practice; they are a significant aspect that communicates their line of work and heritage. Several aspects of the beads themselves, from size to type to position, signify the specific requests of the person's forebears. For example, two healers may wear blue beads representing water spirits, but their placements will differ depending on ethnicity. In Zulu culture, a healer will wear tiny blue beads as amulets on their wrists to translate water spirituality. However, Xhosa people will wear slightly larger blue beads around their wrists, ankles, neck, and waist. Though placement, size, and frequency all shape the implications for and of healers, bead colour has the most significant influence. Early in a Sangoma's journey, they will be shown the specific beads they must wear, either through dreams or visions from their ancestors. Healers then have the autonomy and authority to create jewellery that reflects these spiritual findings, in line with their ancestral and ethnic customs. These adornments are considered sacred as wedding bands, as they are believed to provide spiritual protection. Most people never remove them once placed, except under exceptional circumstances, such as discrimination or physical harm. Such exemptions were particularly relevant during the Apartheid era when the government banned traditional healing and accompanying medicines.

Red Beads - Red symbolises ancestors, specifically blood relatives, typically a great-grandfather or great-grandmother from either the paternal or maternal side of the family. Though the colour red can represent any relative, the focus on great-grandparents points to the reverence given to the role of grandparents in the structure of many African family units. This spiritual legacy is continued generationally from healer to healer in training. Bear in mind that not all ancestors have to be related by blood.

Transparent and blue beads represent AmaNdau, water spirits in Zulu folklore, with light blues in Xhosa culture and darker blues in Zulu customs, reflecting the influence of ethnicity on beading.

White beads in African jewellery symbolise innocence and purity, often worn by women and girls to signify their virginity. Colonialism in South Africa and the introduction of Christianity may have influenced this interpretation. White beads can also indicate acceptance of one's spiritual calling, although not everyone accepts it due to historical criminalisation and social conflict. Acceptance of one's calling can lead to stability and peace.

Yellow beads symbolise prophecy, a Zulu gift used in healing rituals. For job loss, they guide future employment and require specific prayers for emotional and spiritual protection. This can be applied to job loss situations.

In African spirituality, black beads symbolise mystery, unconscious power, and ancestral power, and are used by herbalists for remedies such as menstrual irregularities, arthritis, and stomach ulcers. (Samanga, 2022).

Simmons further mentions different types of beads worn by the *Izangoma* at varying stages, as practised by diverse cultural groups and geographical locations: Beads at the neck – the first piece of beadwork is given to the initiates by the teacher and is called *mbingelela*, meaning thanks. As with other beadwork, the necklace configuration varies by school.

Beadwork protecting the sides of the body - Beadwork protects the body's front and back with the X-crossed form. This significance is pertinent as it is used by people along the eastern coast of Africa, from the south to Ethiopia. Beadwork protects the sides of the body, with medication and magic contained in pouches (227) and in designated organic items attached to the body bands. Ngomas bands, given to initiates upon arrival at the school, are plaited from strips of tree bark and covered in red oxide.

The importance of beadwork, necklaces, crossbands, wristbands, and anklets is reinforced as they are used during the *thwasa* ceremony as part of a test. They are hidden, and the initiate should, by deduction and intuition, find these items. After being successfully found, the beads are put on to complete the Nguni costume. The fact that they are an accompaniment to this ceremony indicates their link to the Nguni tradition, ideology, and *emadloti*, and that they are an essential element of this costume (Simmons, 2008).

3.7.3 Amathambo/ Tinhlolo (Bones).

As frequently noted, the bones provide an in-depth, accurate and acceptable method for 'diagnosing' socio-cultural, economic, health, ancestral and spiritual concerns. It also provides the required steps for rectification and restoring balance (Rogerson, 2017). Nouvelle further emphasises the role of bones as one of the rituals performed by *sangomas*. Bones are scattered by hand, usually in a circle and then read. Meaning is deduced by the position in which the bones fall. While the physical practice of throwing and the items used, besides bones, vary from healer to healer, throwing the bones is both a craft and a calling (Nouvelle, 2015). In detailing the importance of bones, Lambrecht asserts that *Isangoma* use a set of bones, shells, and other items (such as coins, dice, seeds, and twigs), collectively called the "bones," in their divination practice. The "bones" are thrown on an impala skin. The trance state is focused on concentration, during which the ancestors provide omens and visions. The scattering of the "bones" and the ritual of interpretation that follows provide the *Sangoma* with knowledge about the patient's state of health, social and psychological problems, and their future, as well as the necessary medication to heal ailments and socio-psychological and spiritual imbalances (Lambrecht, 2001). *Tinhlo* (bones) can be organic, such as bones, sea and nut shells, seeds, and stones. They can also be commercially manufactured items, or pieces thereof, such as dominoes, dice, tiles, plastic, bits of glass, coins or bicycle reflectors. Bones and shells are sometimes paired by gender, representing males and females. At other times, they are single pieces with specific meanings. Bones from different parts, or the left or right side of the animal, have different meanings. Bones from the feet indicate trouble with one's love life.

3.7.4 Sacred Spaces (*Indumba/Isindumba*)

Within the *Sangoma's* dwelling is a space dedicated to the ancestors and used as a shrine (*indumba*). Some of these are inductive spaces. The shrine should occupy a corner of the wall furthest from the door and face east. The walls are often covered with patterned cloths. Incense or *imphepho* is burned in this space with a lit candle or lamp. This is where a *Sangoma* takes off their shoes, kneels, and calls upon their ancestors while clapping. There may also be an outdoor shrine called the *gandelo*, which is either a dead tree trunk or a live tree. This is a sacred site outside the shaman's house. They can induce a trance state, calling on the ancestors (ibid., p. 17). Simmons describes the function of *indumba*: the visual interpretation of the *indumba*, like that of each initiate's dress, although rooted within the tradition, is specific to their training and dependent on the healer *emadloti*. Each *indumba* is specific in decoration, shrines, observances, and audience participation. *Isindumba* acts as the domicile of the *Nguni*

spirits, where divination is performed, and *Emandzawe* spirits, where *kufemba* is performed. Spirit houses and shrines characterise all healers' yards. A *ndumba* is a demarcated, sacred space used as a residence of ancestral spirits, where ritual procedures are performed. It may include a shrine, relics, and objects that serve as devotional focuses for devotees. *Ndumba* are architectural spaces constructed with wattle and daub, or brick and cement, located near each other, near the homestead, visible from the entrance to the yard, and separated by a road or thoroughfare (Simmons, 2008).

Isigodlo is a Nguni word meaning a king or a Shamanic / Sangoma healing space or healing room. It can be situated anywhere inside the *Sangoma's* yard, but not at the rented place. It can be a single room or more, but divided into three or more areas inside it to make it *Indumba*, and such areas contain the following: -

1. *Umsamo* (a Shrine, Altar or Sanctuary)
2. *Ithala* (An upper area used for storing specific ritualistic horns, blades, etc.) and
3. *Ikhemisi* (A space for storing *imithi* (herbs), etc.)

These three areas are just essential parts that make that place *Indumba*. They should also have specific spaces connecting to other sacred places outside of it or in the same yard, such as *Isiziba sabadala*, *Iziko lamathwasa*, *Igandzelo*, etc. Not everyone can own or establish it, except those chosen or given power. So, *Inyanga* or *Igedla* (an Herbalist) can own a place like *Indumba*. However, it is more of a chemist, since *Indumba* is only for initiated *Izangoma* erected by their *Gobela* (spiritual mentor), as certain *Phehlo* (rituals) are performed during its establishment. For one to have or own it, it must first be chosen and possessed by *Idlozi lokuthwaswa*, then accept that calling, respond to it by undergoing the process *yephehlo no ukuthwasa*, and after that graduate as a qualified healer to own *Indumba* (Sobekhulu, 2019).

3.8 The Significance of Divination in Ubungoma

The act of divination is a prevalent phenomenon within the realm of Ubungoma. Its purpose is to ascertain the aetiology of the malady and to offer recommendations for suitable therapeutic intervention (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014). Divination involves establishing communication with the spiritual realm to obtain direction and deepen understanding. The method of Ubungoma involves utilising divination techniques to identify the root cause of ailments and

ascertain the most suitable approach to remedy them (Khumalo, 2013). The practice of divination commonly involves the utilisation of several instruments, such as bones, shells, or cards. According to Mashau and Netshandama (2014), these tools are widely believed to possess a spiritual essence, enabling individuals to connect with their ancestors and seek their counsel.

According to Khumalo (2013), divination in Ubungoma entails the traditional healer's invocation of the ancestors, imploring them to offer guidance about the specific ailment or predicament under consideration. Subsequently, the healer uses divination equipment to establish communication with the ancestral spirits and to decipher their messages. Specialised knowledge and ability are necessary for interpreting messages, typically undertaken by traditional healers who have undergone comprehensive training to cultivate these abilities (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014). Ubungoma is a cultural phenomenon wherein divination is regarded as a spiritual praxis intricately intertwined with society's belief system. According to Khumalo (2013), there is a prevailing belief that ancestral figures can offer valuable perspectives and counsel on various matters, encompassing physical and mental well-being. Divination is additionally employed to address social and emotional matters surrounding familial conflicts and relationship difficulties. It is important to note that Ubungoma is deeply rooted in African cultural heritage and beliefs. It reflects the interconnectedness between African societies' spiritual, physical, and social dimensions. Ubungoma is often regarded as a vocation, passed down through family lineages or revealed through ancestral calling (Krige, 1936). *Izangoma* undergoes a rigorous initiation process, which includes training, mentorship, and spiritual preparation to fulfil their roles as healers and spiritual guides (Kromberg et al., 2002).

The diviner uses bones and the spirits of the ancestors to diagnose and prescribe medication for different physiological, psychiatric, and spiritual conditions. This category includes those that deal with '*mafofonyane*' (schizophrenia) and '*malopo*' (being possessed by the spirits of the ancestors that can be healed without the possessed person becoming a traditional healer themselves). '*Malopo*' can be treated with a combination of therapies, including dance (Hammond-Tooke, 1989).

Traditional healers in South Africa are significant providers of healthcare services to local communities. According to Mashau and Netshandama (2014), primary healthcare providers frequently serve as the initial point of contact for those seeking medical assistance, particularly

in rural areas where access to modern medical facilities may be limited. Traditional healers treat physical and mental health conditions and provide support and guidance to individuals and families. Traditional healers are integral to the health care system, although their practices are frequently subject to misconceptions and stigmatisation. Previous attempts to incorporate conventional therapeutic methods into the contemporary healthcare system have encountered opposition (Khumalo, 2013). There is disagreement among healthcare professionals about ancient healing practices, with some expressing scepticism. In contrast, others perceive them as a valuable supplement to contemporary medical approaches.

An increasing body of scholarly literature has emerged on traditional therapeutic practices, such as Ubungoma, and their potential to promote health and well-being. Research indicates that conventional healing may provide favourable health outcomes, particularly in the treatment of chronic illness (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014). Further investigation is required to enhance understanding of the underlying mechanisms of ancient healing practices and to develop approaches for effectively incorporating them into the contemporary healthcare framework. In summary, divination is an integral part of Ubungoma, a customary healing modality in South Africa. Traditional healers employ divination to diagnose the fundamental aetiology of ailments and ascertain the most suitable therapeutic approach. Despite the significant role that traditional healers play within the healthcare system, considerable stigma and misconceptions about their modalities persist. Additional investigation is required to enhance understanding of the potential benefits of conventional healing practices and to develop approaches for effectively integrating them into the contemporary healthcare system.

3.9 The Relationship between Culture and Religion

A central debate in the study of Ubungoma is how to categorise it as a religion or a tradition. There is no consensus among experts on whether Ubungoma is a branch of broader African practices or a unique system that stands entirely on its own. Conversely, many argue that Ubungoma is an integral part of African tradition, since religion is considered foreign to Africa. The vast size and diverse nature of the African continent limit the feasibility of African Traditional Religion (ATR). According to Maluleke (2001), Africa exhibits a multitude of religious and cultural expressions, highlighting its immense diversity. The continent encompasses diverse religious and cultural identities, reflecting the many ways individuals identify as African. In

addition to the theory above, it is widely acknowledged that Africa is home to numerous religious systems (Mageba, 2002, p. 16; Mbiti, 1990, p. 1). Hence, asserting that a singular kind of religion can be exclusively attributed to the African continent is unfeasible. Africa exhibits a rich array of religious beliefs and practices, thereby warranting the discussion of multiple African religions (Krüger et al., 2009, p. 35). The above theory views Ubungoma as a cultural expression reflecting African societies' historical and contemporary realities. According to this perspective, Ubungoma is neither a fixed nor an inert system but rather a dynamic and adaptable one that responds to shifting contexts and challenges. Many factors influence Ubungoma, such as modernity and postmodernism. Therefore, Ubungoma is part of Africa's vast and varied cultural heritage.

Conversely, some proponents argue for the existence of a phenomenon known as African Traditional Religion. Mbiti, a prominent figure in African religious studies, argues that the interrelationship between culture and religion becomes apparent within the framework of Ubungoma, a traditional healing practice observed in South Africa. The practice of Ubungoma encompasses a diverse range of cultural components deeply rooted in indigenous customs and rituals. The dynamic interaction between culture and religion plays a pivotal role in shaping the essence of Ubungoma, resulting in a distinct and amalgamated belief system. Ubungoma is a form of African traditional religion, a complex and diverse phenomenon encompassing beliefs, practices, and rituals associated with the sacred, God, the mystical, or the supernatural. According to this perspective, Ubungoma is a means of communicating with ancestors and the spirit world and gaining divine guidance and healing.

When examining the correlation between Ubungoma and culture, it is crucial to acknowledge the profound cultural legacy ingrained throughout this therapeutic tradition. The practice of Ubungoma incorporates various aspects of indigenous African traditions, including rituals, herbal medicines, divination techniques, and the veneration of ancestral spirits. The transmission of these cultural aspects across successive generations is of considerable importance for the implementation of Ubungoma (Ali, 2019). Upon analysing the relationship between Ubungoma, a traditional healing practice, and culture, it becomes apparent that its origins are firmly rooted in Africa's rich and varied cultural history. The etymology of the term "Ubungoma" may be traced back to the Zulu language, where it encompasses a diverse array of healing techniques, ceremonial practices, and religious systems (Ali, 2019). To comprehensively understand the correlation between Ubungoma and culture, delving into the diverse cultural components intricately intertwined within this phenomenon is imperative. An

essential element of Ubungoma is its reliance on local African traditions. The traditions have emerged over centuries, evolved culturally, and embody the distinctive beliefs and customs of diverse African communities. The use of herbal treatments is a prevalent practice in Ubungoma. According to Ali (2019), professionals utilise the therapeutic attributes of many botanicals and naturally occurring chemicals to treat both bodily and spiritual afflictions. The use of herbal medicine is firmly rooted in African cultural traditions, highlighting the significant correlation between nature, healing, and spirituality. The practice of Ubungoma is significantly comprised of divination techniques. The practice of divination entails seeking wisdom and direction from ancestor spirits or deities through several methods, including casting bones, interpreting dreams, and analysing patterns in natural phenomena (Ali, 2019). The divination practices discussed below are firmly rooted in the framework of African traditional beliefs, in which the presence and influence of ancestor spirits are deemed vital for guiding and safeguarding individuals and communities. The phenomenon of Ubungoma is firmly entrenched within cultural traditions, customary practices, and the reservoir of ancestral wisdom. This perspective embodies a comprehensive methodology for understanding the state of being, acknowledging the interdependence among individuals, their surrounding community, the natural environment, and the spiritual domain. The practice of Ubungoma frequently encompasses a series of ceremonial practices, altered states of consciousness, and symbolic gestures that enable interaction with spiritual entities and access to the therapeutic energies inherent in the surroundings. The Sangoma utilises divination to interpret signals and messages from spiritual entities or ancestral beings, offering direction and remedies and facilitating the restoration of equilibrium.

In addition to cultural elements, religion is significant in the lives of individuals who practise Ubungoma. African traditional religion remains significant within Ubungoma, a traditional healing practice. African conventional religions contain many beliefs, rites, and spiritual practices transmitted across centuries within African communities. The faiths have a strong connection to African cultural heritage and significantly influence the understanding and practice of Ubungoma. A defining feature of African traditional religions is belief in a Supreme Being or Creator, along with a diverse array of spirits and deities that are believed to exert influence over many facets of existence. The practitioners of Ubungoma frequently invoke ancestral spirits and deities during their healing rites to seek their guidance, protection, and assistance. The veneration of ancestral spirits is a central element of African traditional religions and a fundamental part of Ubungoma. Ancestors are regarded as mediators connecting

humanity and divinity, and their existence and impact are duly recognised and held in high regard. Rituals and rites hold considerable importance within African traditional religions, as they are deeply interconnected with the practice of Ubungoma. The rituals frequently encompass many practices, such as making offerings, conducting sacrifices, chanting, and performing dances. These activities are undertaken to establish a link with the spiritual realm and seek the aid of divine forces. The diversity and richness of African traditional religions are evident in variations in specific ceremonies and practices observed across different African tribes and regions.

The relationship between African Traditional Religion (ATR), customs, culture and Ubungoma is characterised by a profound interconnection, as both systems incorporate indigenous beliefs, rites, and spiritual practices transmitted across successive generations. This discourse examines the unique yet interwoven nature of African Traditional Religion, customs and Ubungoma, emphasising their cultural and theological relevance. African Traditional Religion comprises a wide array of beliefs and practices observed by many ethnic groups throughout the African continent. A profound association with the natural world, ancestral lineage, spiritual entities, and the broader social collective distinguishes the phenomenon under consideration. The ATR acknowledges the presence of a divine being or a transcendent force, commonly known by many appellations such as Mungu, Olodumare, or Nyame. Nevertheless, ATR places greater emphasis on engagement with spirits, ancestors, and other spiritual entities perceived to act as intermediaries between humans and the divine realm. The role of traditional healers, sometimes known as diviners, holds significant importance within the context of ATR. These folks, commonly referred to as izangoma or Inyangas across diverse African civilisations, are highly regarded and esteemed for their aptitude to establish communication with the spiritual domain and offer remedies, counsel, and profound understanding. Ubungoma, as a component of traditional healing practices, encompasses divination, the use of herbal remedies, and the summoning of ancestral spirits to attend to various bodily, emotional, and spiritual afflictions.

The ongoing complexity of the tension between Ubungoma as an integral component of African Traditional Religion and structured culture is a subject of academic inquiry. Nevertheless, there has been increasing recognition and valuation of African peoples' cultural and spiritual legacy. There have been efforts to restore and invigorate indigenous knowledge systems,

acknowledging the significance of traditional healers as valuable contributors to healthcare and spiritual well-being. Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the importance of adopting a more inclusive and pluralistic perspective towards religious and cultural practices. This perspective acknowledges and embraces the coexistence and interconnectivity of diverse belief systems. Mbiti (1991:4 10) describes the heritage under the following three headings: firstly, historical heritage – where he describes African life in general; secondly, cultural heritage – the ways people act and live, as well as their physical and intellectual achievements; and thirdly, religious heritage. He indicates that religious heritage may also be viewed as culture. According to the researcher, these three distinctions are so closely related that they can be captured under the umbrella term spirituality. Spirituality is not always religious but is always concerned with the quest for meaning in life. When such a quest involves an explicit reference to God or the Divine, then that spirituality is religious (Amanze, 2011; Wellman et al., 2009, p. 1)

The rich and multifaceted interaction between African Traditional Religion and culture is evident. The ATR (African et al.) offers a comprehensive framework that encompasses the operational context of Ubungoma, emphasising the interconnection with the spiritual realm, ancestral influences, and communal dynamics. Ubungoma, as a distinct practice within African Traditional Religion (ATR), encompasses traditional healing and divination, providing comprehensive fulfilment of individuals' bodily, emotional, and spiritual needs. The coexistence of traditional African beliefs with organised faiths has historically presented disputes and obstacles. However, there is growing recognition and admiration for African societies' cultural and spiritual legacies. Incorporating various African traditions, such as Ubungoma, into Africa's cultural, religious, and spiritual fabric enhances the inclusivity and comprehensiveness of our understanding of African heritage. Mbiti describes the heritage under the following three headings: first, historical heritage – where he describes African life in general; second, cultural heritage – the ways people act and live, as well as their physical and intellectual achievements; and third, religious heritage. He indicates that religious heritage may also be viewed as culture. According to the researcher, these three distinctions are so closely related that they can be captured under the umbrella term spirituality. Spirituality is not always religious but is always concerned with the quest for meaning in life. When such a quest involves an explicit reference to God or the Divine, that spirituality is religious (Mbiti, 1991).

While a significant contingent of African culture experts place Ubungoma within the ATR, there appears to be no consensus on where it fits within the two phenomena. Moreover, based on

Mbiti's previous statement, the practice of Ubungoma transcends jargon such as religion and culture and is defined by each experience.

3.10 The Role of Ubungoma in Healthcare and Community Healing

The role of Ubungoma in healthcare and community healing is an essential aspect of traditional healing practices in South Africa. Despite criticisms and challenges, Sangomas continue to play a significant role in these practices. This literature review explores the role of Izangoma in these practices, highlighting their unique contributions and challenges.

Traditional healing practices in South Africa have a long history and are deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and practices. Among the various types of traditional healers in South Africa, *Izangoma* occupies a unique position. These conventional healers integrate their practices, offering a unique perspective on healthcare and community healing. This literature review explores the role of Izangoma in healthcare and community healing, highlighting their exceptional contributions and challenges. According to Zuma, the literature suggests that traditional health practitioners (THPs) play a vital role in the health care of most of the South African population and of people elsewhere on the African continent. A THP is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as “a person who is recognised by the community where he or she lives as someone competent to provide health care by using plant, animal and mineral substances and other methods based on social, cultural and religious practices”. The approach of THPs to health care is based on indigenous knowledge and belief systems (Zuma, 2016).

Ubungoma plays a significant role in healthcare in South Africa, providing traditional healing practices deeply rooted in cultural beliefs. They use a range of traditional healing practices, including herbal remedies, divination, and spiritual healing, to address physical, psychological, and spiritual ailments. Muslim Izangoma is often sought out by patients who have not found relief from Western medicine or who prefer traditional healing practices that are culturally relevant to them.

In addition to providing traditional healing practices, they also play a role in health education and promotion. They educate their patients on healthy lifestyle choices, such as diet and exercise, and provide advice on preventing illness and maintaining good health. Muslim

Izangoma also plays a role in disease prevention by promoting the importance of regular check-ups and screenings, such as HIV testing. *Izangoma* also plays a significant role in community healing in South Africa. They are often called upon to perform community rituals and ceremonies that promote healing and well-being. For example, a Muslim Izangoma may conduct a ritual to cleanse a community of negative energy or to bring about rain during a drought. They may also perform ceremonies to mark significant life events, such as births, marriages, and deaths.

In addition to performing rituals and ceremonies, *izangoma* serve as community leaders, guiding and supporting their communities. They often act as mediators in disputes and provide counselling to individuals and families who are experiencing difficulties. Izangoma also plays a role in preserving and promoting cultural traditions, helping maintain a sense of community identity and pride. Despite their essential role in healthcare and community healing, izangoma face several challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of recognition and support from the government and the mainstream healthcare system. Many izangoma are not registered with the Traditional Health Practitioners Council of South Africa, which means they are not legally recognised as traditional healers. This can make it difficult for them to access funding and resources and limit their ability to practise traditional healing without fear of prosecution, another challenge faced by Ubungoma's conventional healing practices. Many people, including some members of the community, view traditional healing practices as superstition or witchcraft and may discriminate against those who practise these traditions. Izangoma may also face criticism and even excommunication from the Muslim community for their involvement in traditional healing practices.

3.11 The Spiritual Beliefs Underlying Ubungoma

The practice of Ubungoma is deeply rooted in spiritual beliefs that reflect the African worldview. Traditional Ubungoma healers believe that all living beings are interconnected, and that spiritual and physical health are interrelated (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014). According to Ubungoma beliefs, humans are not the only entities with spiritual energy. Plants, animals, and even inanimate objects possess spiritual energy. This belief is closely tied to ancestral spirits, believed to be present in all aspects of nature. Ancestors are seen as intermediaries between

humans and the spiritual realm and are called upon to assist in healing and provide guidance (Khumalo, 2013).

In addition to ancestral spirits, traditional healers who practise Ubungoma also believe in other spiritual entities, such as *amadlozi*, *izinyanga*, and *isithunywa*. *Amadlozi* are ancestral spirits believed to reside in the spiritual realm, while *izinyanga* are traditional healers specialising in medicinal plants. *Isithunywa*, on the other hand, are guardian spirits believed to protect individuals from harm (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014).

Another critical aspect of Ubungoma is the belief in the power of ritual. Rituals are performed to connect with the spiritual realm and to seek guidance and healing. These rituals can take many forms, including prayer, song, dance, and offerings to ancestors (Khumalo, 2013). Overall, the spiritual beliefs underlying Ubungoma are complex and multifaceted. They reflect a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all living things and the importance of maintaining a balance between physical and spiritual health. Traditional healers who practise Ubungoma use these beliefs as a foundation for their healing practices, relying on ancestral spirits and other spiritual entities to guide them.

3.12 The Use of Medicinal Plants in Ubungoma

Using medicinal plants is essential to Ubungoma, a traditional healing practice in South Africa. Traditional healers use various plants for their healing properties and spiritual significance. Many medicinal plants in Ubungoma are indigenous to South Africa, and their use has been passed down through generations of healers. For example, the African potato (*Hypoxis hemerocallidea*) is commonly used for its anti-inflammatory properties and is believed to aid in the treatment of HIV/AIDS (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014).

Other commonly used plants in Ubungoma include African wormwood (*Artemisia afra*), used for its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties, and devil's claw (*Harpagophytum procumbens*), used for pain relief (Sodi & Gitimu, 2018).

3.12.1 Impepho

The use of plants is an essential component of Ubungoma, in which certain plants are designated to establish a connection with ancestral spirits. *Impepho*, a plant of significant importance in the tradition of Ubungoma, holds a crucial function, particularly in facilitating communication with ancestral spirits. According to Ntshangase Imphepho (an indigenous African Plant), this practice generally excludes women. *Impepho* is an indigenous African plant that, once dried, is burnt to communicate with one's ancestors. *Impepho* is well-known to most Sub-Saharan Africans as it is used to communicate with their ancestors, and traditional healers also use it to communicate with the deceased. It is used in various ceremonies and traditional feasts during which chickens, goats, or cows are offered to the ancestors (Ntshangase, 2012).

While the plants are known for spiritually related benefits such as connecting with ancestors and warding off evil spirits, they also have many health benefits such as stimulating a cleansing effect that consequently leaves the body through urination, easing period pains, tooth whitening, reducing inflammation and pain relief, especially headaches (Halile, 2023).

The use of medicinal plants in Ubungoma is not only based on their physical properties but also on their spiritual significance. Traditional healers believe that plants have an inherent spiritual power that can aid healing. For example, African wormwood is believed to have cleansing properties and is used to purify the body and spirit (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014). However, the use of medicinal plants in Ubungoma has raised concerns about safety and efficacy. Some plants used in Ubungoma may have adverse side effects or interact with prescription medication. There is also a lack of scientific evidence to support the effectiveness of many traditional plant remedies (Sodi & Gitimu, 2018).

Efforts are underway to address these concerns and ensure the safe and responsible use of medicinal plants in traditional healing practices. The Traditional Health Practitioners Act of 2004 in South Africa established a regulatory framework for traditional healers, including guidelines for the use of medicinal plants (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014). In conclusion, the use of medicinal plants is integral to Ubungoma, a traditional healing practice in South Africa. While their spiritual significance is important, ensuring their safe and responsible use is also essential.

3.13 Ubungoma in pre-Colonial and Post-Colonial South Africa

The study of any colonised nation necessitates an examination of two major eras: the pre-colonial era, which occurred before the arrival of European settlers in Africa and was characterised by tribal systems; each tribe had its own distinct cultures, languages, and traditions, and was engaged in trade and commerce with other African nations. The Postcolonial era, which began with the arrival of Europeans in Africa, was marked by the exploitation of natural resources, forced labour, the enslavement of Indigenous peoples, and complete disregard for African Indigenous systems and knowledge. These periods affected how Africans lived and their lives. In this section, every aspect of Indigenous life was affected by colonialism; thus, we look at Ubungoma in both eras.

3.13.1 Ubungoma in the pre-colonial Period

To understand the Ubungoma during the pre-colonial era, one must understand how knowledge and education were imparted before the arrival of Europeans in Africa. Seroto asserts that Indigenous peoples learned through various methods, with early childhood education primarily involving the biological mother and community involvement as children approached adolescence. Language was learned from the mother and extended family, while children learned about work, hunting, rituals, and cultural traits from older clan members. The primary aim of Indigenous education was to integrate young people into various social roles, explaining that their future and their community depended on their understanding of social structures, laws, language, and values. Rituals and ceremonies were necessary for learning, with formal education being most prominent during pre-colonial times. (Seroto, 2011). The statement illustrates how knowledge was passed from one individual to another; women's role was to develop the whole individual in all aspects of life.

Mlisa explains the position of *amgqirha*, which in isiZulu is called *izangoma*, in the following manner; the chief occupied a position above the head of a family and in between the chief and the head of the family was *igqirha* who had a multi-faceted role to play both as a medium between the chief and the ancestors and, at times, between the families and their ancestors, as well as to oversee and protect the soldiers for the chief. *Igqirha*, at that stage, was well respected, to the extent of being called *Mhlekaazi* (chief). This term indicated the high-ranking position accorded to a clairvoyant who could see beyond what the normal eye could see to

predict and suggest solutions to protect the chief and his people in all socio-cultural aspects. (Mlisa, 2009). The statement does not specify the extent to which *izangoma* were utilised by all pre-colonial Indigenous groups in South Africa; however, it does illustrate how the Xhosa people approached *amagqirha* and elucidates the functions of these individuals, which extended far beyond spiritual healing and encompassed the overall welfare of society.

3.13.2 Ubungoma in the post-colonial era

To get insight into the phenomenon of Ubungoma during the Colonial era, one must understand the colonisers' attitude towards indigenous African customs. Khuzwayo-Magwaza explains this phenomenon as follows: Europeans, particularly missionaries, brought significant changes to Africa and played a major role in colonising African countries. Initially believed to spread the Gospel and provide spiritual care, colonialists assisted missionaries in civilising and Christianizing Africans by influencing them to abandon their cultural-religious beliefs. Despite some opting out of the colonial regime, they needed each other to achieve their goals. During the colonial period, Christian missions primarily focused on education, challenging traditional belief systems, and promoting new ideas and lifestyles. (Khuzwayo-Magwaza, 2021). It is evident from the preceding statement that the colonialists considered African customs to be an unremarkable and primitive system, which necessitated efforts to "civilise" the indigenous population. The practice of Ubungoma would form part of the process of civilising indigenous cultural patterns and systems.

This resulted in a situation where, according to Mokgobi, the colonial authorities and, subsequently, the apartheid government imposed a Western worldview on the people of South Africa without an attempt to determine the validity of the African worldview on issues such as traditional African healing and conventional African religion/spirituality, which are, in most cases, mutually interwoven (Mokgobi, 2014). To impose the Western system of doing things, the Apartheid government banned traditional healing practices such as Ubungoma through legislation; one such law is the Witchcraft Suppression Act 3 of 1957, which is an act of the South African Parliament that prohibited various witchcraft-related activities, such as stalking and witch smelling. It is based on the Cape Colony Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1895 and the Witchcraft Act of 1735 of Great Britain. Colonialism and Western epistemologies distorted and devalued Ubungoma by dismissing it as superstition, witchcraft, or voodoo. By categorising African beliefs as cognitive false consciousness.

Since apartheid ended in 1994, various evaluations have been conducted on witchcraft legislation. The Ralushai Commission, established in 1996, recommended repealing the existing Witchcraft Suppression Act and establishing a Witchcraft Control Act. This proposed legislation criminalises active engagement in witchcraft, unlike the current statute, which focuses on accusations and feigned manifestations. The "National Conference on Witchcraft Violence" in 1998 led to the "Thohoyandou Declaration on Ending Witchcraft Violence." The South African Pagan Rights Alliance and Traditional Healers Organisation sought to review the Mpumalanga Witchcraft Suppression Bill and the 1957 Act, leading to a 2016 discussion paper and a revised version in 2022.

Since the termination of apartheid, South Africa has undergone numerous reforms aimed at acknowledging and incorporating indigenous customs into the legal framework. This is evident in the government's interventions, including the recognition of customary law as an integral component of the legal system. The government has acknowledged and recognised the practice of Ubungoma by implementing statutes to regulate the traditional healing sector. The phenomenon above has contributed to the proliferation of the Ubungoma tradition. Mogomezulu asserts that Ubungoma is undoubtedly becoming popular in South Africa. Every week, there is something in the media about Ubungoma. There is an increase in television programmes about Ubungoma festivals, and several izangoma have TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube channels they use for teaching about Ubungoma. Through these channels, audiences can learn more about the practice. Scholars are also increasingly embarking on research on Ubungoma (Mgomezulu, 2022).

3.13.3 Legal Recognition of Traditional Healers in post-apartheid South Africa

The passage of the Traditional Health Practitioners Act in South Africa in 2004 recognised the significance of traditional healers and established a regulatory framework for their professional activities (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014).

The enactment of the Traditional Health Practitioners Act in 2007 marked a notable milestone in acknowledging the crucial contribution of traditional healers to South Africa's healthcare system. Before its implementation, traditional healing practices were frequently regarded with scepticism and were not accorded the equivalent legal standing as contemporary Western

medicine. Consequently, a significant outcome of this situation was the marginalisation and exclusion of several traditional healers from the modern healthcare system. The primary objective of the Traditional Health Practitioners Act is to address the current situation by acknowledging and validating traditional healers' valuable role while establishing a comprehensive legal structure to govern their professional activities. Under the legislation, traditional healers must register with the Traditional Health Practitioners Council. This regulatory body was founded to oversee its professional activities and ensure adherence to specific criteria about training and professionalism.

The legal acknowledgement of traditional healers in South Africa carries significant consequences for the nation's healthcare landscape. The statement recognises diverse healthcare practices and highlights the significance of traditional healing practices in enhancing health and well-being, particularly in rural regions with limited access to contemporary healthcare services. Nevertheless, enacting the Traditional Health Practitioners Act has encountered many obstacles. One of the primary obstacles is the shortage of resources and the need for greater competence to oversee traditional healers' activities adequately. Concerns have also been expressed about the possibility of patients being exploited by unethical healers who may take advantage of their vulnerable state.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, acknowledging traditional healers within South Africa's legal framework represents a significant step toward integrating traditional healing methodologies into the established healthcare system. Furthermore, it can foster greater understanding and respect across diverse healthcare traditions and advocate for a more comprehensive healthcare strategy that acknowledges the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. In summary, the Traditional Health Practitioners Act in South Africa has established a structure for regulating and professionalising traditional healing practices, hence granting legal recognition to traditional healers. Despite encountering obstacles during its execution, this initiative represents a significant advancement in fostering greater understanding and respect across diverse healthcare traditions and in advocating for a comprehensive healthcare approach nationwide.

However, the act has faced several obstacles and criticisms, including the need for clarity on the scope of practice for traditional healers, potential conflicts with biomedical practitioners, and ethical issues related to informed consent, confidentiality, and human rights. Moreover, despite

the legal recognition of their profession, some employers may not accept medical certificates from traditional healers as valid proof of illness.

Traditional healers in South Africa have a standing, but continue to encounter social and professional hurdles that may impede their integration and acceptance within the healthcare system.

3.13.4 Ubungoma and Contemporary Issues.

Contemporary issues concern topics or dilemmas that are currently significant and far-reaching. These subjects often function as subjects of contemplation, discussion, and concern, encapsulating the dominant societal, economic, political, and cultural influences during a specific era. Contemporary challenges are multifaceted, influenced by various factors such as geographic placement, situational context, and the interests and concerns of communities or individuals. These matters impact the formation and regulation of diverse societies. By analysing these issues, one can better understand the notion of "Cultural Relativism," which encompasses a wide range of perspectives on various cultural practices.

Additionally, it facilitates comprehension of the sector's approach to adaptability in the face of contemporary transformations. The subsequent examples illustrate contemporary subjects that have attracted considerable interest recently. Politics, Public Health, Technology, Homosexuality, Feminism, Gender Equality and Women's Rights, and Climate Change. Within the confines of this investigation, the researcher shall exclusively concentrate on three distinct domains: homosexuality, feminism, and technology, all within the sphere of Ubungoma in post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa.

3.13.5 Ubungoma and Homosexuality.

The term homosexuality is a broad concept that involves both men and women. It is usually described as a sexual activity or behaviour between people of the same sex or having sexual feelings toward other people of the same sex (Trippo, 1977). Khuzwayo-Magwaza offers an alternate term utilised in the IsiZulu language to denote individuals involved in same-sex relationships. The word 'homosexual' as such is not used in the Zulu context; Zulu people refer

to people who practice same-sex relationships, among other things, as ongoingly, in Konkani, *oncukumbili* and imitable. In rural areas, they are called 'inkonkoni', 'ongoing' and '*oncukumbili*', especially by the elderly. In contrast, the younger generation in urban areas calls them *izitabane*. It must be noted, however, that both secondary literature and life studies show that same-sex relationships do exist in the Zulu community. This is not a recent phenomenon but is as old as the Zulu community (Mkasi, 2013).

Homosexuality is, therefore, a term used to describe or refer to a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to someone of the same sex and defines themselves as homosexual (Germond & De Gruchy, 1997; Trippo, 1977).

Although homosexuality is often associated with Western origins, evidence suggests that this practice has existed since the early days of humanity. Islamic and Christian holy scriptures reference the story of the prophet Lot, whose people were involved in same-sex relationships. Hodes (year) discusses the historical context of homosexuality, noting that individuals who identify as homosexual have constituted a minority group within human society, albeit one that holds considerable significance, as evidenced by records spanning various periods. Evidence of same-sex sexual behaviour dates to the oldest written texts, first noted in Egypt 4,400 years ago and subsequently found in ancient Greece, Rome, and China. Additionally, same-sex mating behaviour has been documented in various animal species, including mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects. In Western countries today, the prevalence of male homosexuality is between two and eight per cent (Hodes, n.d.).

While same-sex relationships have been in existence for thousands of years, it is not easy to locate when this practice started in Africa or whether it has ever existed as an accepted norm. Msibi explains the concept of sexuality; in the African framework, sexuality is understood in the context of heterosexual relationships, where the focus is directed towards sex and procreation. A male's sexual identity is associated with his reproductive capacity (Msibi, 2011). whereas on the other hand, Khuzwayo-Magwaza argues for the existence of same-sex practices within the Zulu culture. She asserts that the presence of specific IsiZulu words that describe such methods and the individuals who engage in them provides evidence that this phenomenon has persisted throughout the history of the Zulu nation. In supplementing the view that homosexuality has its roots in African customs and traditions, Ilesanmi states that since Africa is said to be the cradle of the human race, it can, therefore, be logically inferred that homosexuality started in Africa before the human race migrated to other places to spread its

branches in different colours, shapes and sizes. Ilesanmi's (2013) views were later shared by Zabusi, who asserted that the African continent has always been queerer than is acknowledged (Zabusi, 2014). Ilesanmi (2013) substantiates these claims by stating that homosexuals and transsexuals in many African cultures were revered and worshipped as spirits of the gods, drawing attention to the Yoruba god of thunder, Sango, who was described as a beautiful man who had his hair braided and accessorised like a woman, and dressed like a woman (Ilesanmi, 2013).

While numerous writers and cultural activists have asserted that homosexuality has historically existed within African civilisation, none have provided conclusive evidence to support the claim that this practice was widely accepted and recognised. The existence of homosexuality within an African cultural framework does not necessarily indicate societal acceptance of such behaviour. The phenomenon can be logically explained by the historical presence of homosexuality among humans. However, this practice has not been universally accepted across societies, leading to punitive measures such as punishment, excommunication, or social ostracism for those found guilty. To that extent, designating any individual within the community with such labels was considered a derogatory act.

Another critical point to consider regarding homosexuality among African communities is that if it were indeed an accepted practice, we would expect to observe the existence of customary laws governing the interactions between individuals within the community. For instance, when a man and a woman decide to marry, customary procedures must be followed to formalise such a union. When an individual reaches maturity, it is customary for their family to participate in specific ceremonial practices. Within an African household, distinct duties are assigned to each member, including the mother, father, and children. The inquiry into same-sex relationships in the African context concerns the existence and role of customary practices that govern such unions.

Hence, homosexuality among individuals of African descent can be examined through the lens of the promotion of Human Rights, particularly within the specific context of South Africa, where the constitution protects individual rights. As a result of this law, individuals can openly disclose their sexual orientation without apprehension of retribution or social exclusion. Considering the significant role of Ubuntu within African culture or African Traditional Religion, it is essential to explore its stance on those involved in same-sex partnerships.

Detailing the aspects of homosexuality within Ubungoma, Buijs states that the gender identity of an Isangoma depends on the ancestor who inhabits the body of the diviner. A male *iSangoma* will take on female characteristics of walking, dress, and voice if a female ancestor possesses him and vice versa for a female *iSangoma* (Ogana & Ojong, 2015). Zabus further supplements this perspective; an ancestor spirit-possessed man in Senegal, the gor-djigeen ('male-female in the Wolof language), is said to be haunted by the primordial severance between male and female in the creation of the universe, whereas claims of being inhabited by a female spirit might be made by a gay Shona man in Zimbabwe (Zabus, 2014). Such men in Ubungoma are not hard to identify.

Based on the research conducted by Morgan and Weiringa, it is noteworthy that the involvement of female *iZangoma* in this context should not be disregarded. Despite the cultural taboo surrounding homosexuality, certain elder female *iZangoma* receive guidance from their ancestral spirits in choosing a partner, specifically a female ancestral wife or female *iThwasa*, with whom they engage in intimate relationships (Morgan & Weiring, 2016).

Khuzwayo-Magwaza Mkasi's research delves into same-sex relationships, providing a comprehensive analysis. The study investigates the correlation between female traditional healers and same-sex partnerships, explicitly focusing on the phenomenon of spirit possession. The sexual conduct exhibited by a sangoma is contingent upon the gender of the spirit that has been channelled. The participants in the study identified three distinct categories of spirit possession: female, male, and male.

I am a Sangoma, who is influenced by a feminine spirit, may exhibit an inclination towards individuals of any gender, and may engage in either heterosexual or same-sex relationships. A lesbian individual may opt for a celibate lifestyle or engage in discreet same-sex relationships to elude easy detection by the community. These relationships may manifest in partnerships between those undergoing training to become a sangoma, either during or after training. Throughout history, women have consistently formed strong bonds with one another, enabling them to remain hidden from society's scrutiny.

II. A female sangoma who experiences possession by both a female and a male spirit, referred to as a bisexual spirit, is more inclined to engage in a heterosexual partnership while maintaining covert contact with women. In the context of a sangoma's marital status, she can engage in relationships with women, both within and outside her husband's family. Therefore, if her sexual orientation inclines towards women, she will engage in sexual activity with women.

Likewise, if her inner desires lean towards a male partner, she will engage in sexual relations with her spouse. Consequently, she exhibits ease in interpersonal connections.

III. There exist two distinct categories of male spirit possessions. One form of male spirit possession enables a sangoma to enter a heterosexual marriage, conforming to the societal expectations imposed upon her by the community. This cohort of traditional healers frequently encounters significant challenges within heterosexual marriages due to their struggles in fulfilling traditional gender roles assigned to women. They do not get sexual gratification from sexual activity with a male partner. The second category of the male spirit exhibits greater authority and control, assuming a prominent position in a female sangoma's life. These women typically exhibit physical characteristics that lean towards masculinity rather than femininity. Individuals experience greater ease when attired in clothing traditionally associated with men. Their gait resembles that of a male individual, and their verbal communication aligns with that of a male. Hence, the manifestation of male attributes becomes evident in a sangoma who undergoes possession by said spirit.

As previously demonstrated, ancestral influences shape the sexual orientation of *iZangoma* and other aspects of Ubungoma. Recognising the potential sensitivity of the academic examination and evaluation of Ubungoma, a spiritual phenomenon, it is necessary to examine specific aspects of this practice to determine the veracity of its affirmation, such as reviewing fundamental questions regarding the likely existence of physical and sexual connections between deceased individuals and the living, and the underlying significance of this behaviour in the context of Ubungoma. What is the scope of a person's activities after their corporeal death? Due to their immaterial nature, it is necessary to investigate their potential capabilities and constraints. As described in the section on the function of progenitors, one of their functions is to serve as guides. Nonetheless, it is necessary to provide further clarification regarding the specific component or objective the progenitors intended to guide individuals towards; is the ancestral guidance limited to spiritual matters? Does the guidance include morals? How does the influence of ancestors affect adopting practices that deviate from traditional African norms? Is ancestral inspiration or motivation the source of every *sangoma's* action or utterance?

3.13.6 Feminism and Ubungoma

Feminism is a political and social movement that promotes equal rights, opportunities, and representation for all genders. It seeks to combat women's systemic oppression and

subordination in various spheres of life, such as education, employment, politics, and social norms. Feminist movements emphasise women's rights, challenge gender stereotypes, and promote autonomy and empowerment.

Feminism has evolved, with first-wave feminism focusing on women's suffrage, second-wave feminism on reproductive rights, and third-wave activism in the 1990s. The fourth wave emerged in the late 2000s, focusing on digital activism and social media. The goal is to promote equality and remove systemic barriers that limit opportunities and perpetuate discrimination, ensuring equal rights and respect for all individuals. (Burcket, 2023).

3.13.7 Feminism in Ubungoma and in African Traditional Religion

Feminism in Africa is a dynamic, multifaceted movement that addresses gender inequality and promotes women's rights and empowerment within the African context. African feminism incorporates a variety of perspectives and approaches shaped by the continent's diverse cultural, social, and political contexts. Addressing discrimination and inequality, African feminism recognises the intersectionality of gender with other forms of identity and oppression. It challenges patriarchal norms, amplifies the voices of African women, and advocates for changes in law and policy to safeguard and advance women's rights. In addition, it promotes economic empowerment, women's leadership, political participation, equal pay, and participation in decision-making. Additionally, African feminism emphasises pan-African solidarity, recognising shared struggles and common objectives across diverse nations and cultures. It intersects with other movements for social justice.

Khuzwayo-Magwaza speaks of the African feminist cultural hermeneutics framework, which is seen as an appropriate tool to deconstruct patriarchal structures that dehumanise women. This framework will be used to understand the experiences of African women in the context of African culture and religion without losing their African identity. The African cultural feminist hermeneutics, developed by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, was founded by female scholars from diverse faith backgrounds. The Circle was founded by female scholars who advocated for women's emancipation in Africa and opposed male dominance. It aims to provide a space for women to experience God on their terms, addressing the gendered representation of God in theological institutions (Khuzwayo-Magwaza, 2021). Additionally, Magwaza asserts that Feminist cultural hermeneutics also focuses on liberating women from

gender oppression, paving the way for recognition of ambiguous gender and gender questioning in African societies. Gender discrimination is not an ancient discourse; it hibernates and resurfaces periodically. Women are mostly affected and suffer the most when it comes to gender discrimination. This is demonstrated by the current violence occurring in South Africa against women and children; vulnerable identities are the preferred targets of gender violence.

While it is essential to recognise variations and nuances across contexts, there are nonetheless overarching trends in numerous cultural, religious, and human rights movements worldwide. However, feminism is gaining recognition and support for gender equality and women's rights. Due to the efforts of activists, academics, and the media, feminism has gained global prominence and increased visibility. The intersection is increasingly acknowledged within feminist movements, emphasising the need to combat multiple forms of oppression and advocate for the rights of marginalised and underrepresented groups. Also essential to feminism is cultural adaptation, with local feminist movements and activists incorporating their distinctive perspectives into their advocacy work. Many religious feminists labour within their respective faiths to challenge patriarchal interpretations, promote gender equality, and fight for women's rights. Collaboration and solidarity are necessary for feminist movements to connect and establish alliances across borders. Global feminist coalitions and networks collaborate to resolve shared challenges, share resources, and support one another's advocacy efforts. The implementation of laws addressing gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, reproductive rights, and gender equality has been influenced by feminist activism. In promoting women's rights globally, international frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also play a role. Conservative and traditionalist groups oppose feminist principles and challenge the status quo of power. This opposition demonstrates the continuing need for advocacy, education, and awareness-raising to combat gender inequality and discrimination. It is essential to recognise that feminism is a diverse and dynamic movement with varying regional and cultural trends.

In her articles, Moretsane Serame profiles two young modern *izangoma* who use social media to educate people about Ubungoma; one of them describes her position as a sangoma and feminist as follows:

“She found her activism and feminist roots in her traditional healing journey. “I was an activist previously, but not necessarily a women's rights activist. However, my feminism was awoken

by Ubungoma (the calling). “The first thing we are taught when undergoing initiation is that there is no difference between a man and a woman, and that was my first challenge”.

Furthermore, the author argues that feminism's role in Ubungoma addresses the gendered dynamics of traditional therapeutic practices, including the roles and power dynamics between physicians and clients, combats gender-based inequalities, advocates for equal opportunities for women to become healers, and encourages women's empowerment in the field, prioritises inclusivity and intersectionality, and incorporates the perspectives and experiences of women in traditional healing (Serame, 2019).

Feminism's role in other spheres of life is clear and understandable. However, situating it within the Ubungoma practice is tricky, as one of its fundamental purposes is to challenge the concept of male dominance and create equal opportunities for women. This inquiry raises a significant concern regarding the applicability of feminist principles within the context of Ubungoma. Ojong and Ogana argue that Ubungoma (divination in African traditional medicine) lies entirely in the hands of females in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, where female izangoma outnumber their male counterparts by far, with the literature approximating the male: female ratio at 10:90 (Winifred Ogana, 2015). The authors have provided data on the proportion of male-to-female izangoma within a specific geographic region. Additionally, this information offers insights into gender distribution in other areas.

The preceding section examined Ubungoma in South Africa before and after colonialism. Limited information is available regarding Ubungoma during the pre-colonial era, except that it was an integral part of society and is less prevalent today. The post-colonial era, particularly following the establishment of apartheid South Africa, has been marked by a phenomenon known as decolonisation. This concept seeks to rectify historical injustices across multiple domains, including the re-establishment of indigenous customs that were disregarded or eradicated during the colonial and apartheid periods. Ubungoma is an integral component of these cultural practices. These cultural practices have been modified to address contemporary concerns, including feminism, homosexuality, technology, and human rights.

3.14 Ubungoma beyond race

Ubungoma is thought by most to be a predominantly “black or African belief”. In recent years, the practice has seen South Africans of European descent (whites) adopting and becoming *izangoma*. White *izangoma* are non-African traditional healers whose ancestors have summoned them to practise the ancient art of divination, healing, and spiritual guidance. White *Izangoma* in South Africa is uncommon, as most registered practitioners are black or African. Nevertheless, a few white *izangoma* have accepted their ancestral callings and undergone rigorous training and initiation to become qualified and respected *izangoma*. Saskin provides that there has been a significant increase in the initiation of white people as traditional Bantu healer-diviners or *izangoma* in South Africa since the advent of democracy and the removal of segregation in 1994. This has led to the term ‘white *izangoma*’ to describe any non-Bantu *Izangoma* (Suskin, 2014). Podelka asserts that white *izangoma* had been in existence before 1994, but because of Apartheid restrictions and segregation laws, many did adopt the practice in secrecy. This is the reason that many believe that the practice started flourishing or began after 1994; she quotes Teppo, who emphasises the fact that even though Apartheid regulated what was proper for Whites and what was not (being *izangoma* was not, as it was illegal), white *izangoma* had ‘operated underground for years’ (Teppo, 2011).

Rae Graham, a nurse from England who immigrated to South Africa in 1948, was one of the first Europeans to be initiated as a traditional diviner, a “*nyanga*.” She was interested in Bantu mediumship and intimately connected with black people and their culture. Recognised as “gifted,” she was admitted to training and passed her examinations, allowing her to become a “*nyanga*” despite being Caucasian. She became a public figure and a role model in the Johannesburg municipal council. Rae Graham asserted she was a Nyangaa” who worked with herbs, divination, and intuition, not a ‘Sangoma’ who communicated with spirits. Her training also included mediumship fundamentals and requirements for foretelling occurrences and abilities. Rae Graham refuted the assertions of certain *izangoma* that they work with evil entities, highlighting the dubious nature of certain *izangoma* who engage in black magic and murderous practices (Kleinhempel, 2018).

The process of calling (mouthwash) for white *Izangoma* is like that of Africans; all go through certain types of illness that can only be diagnosed by a qualified sangoma, who, in turn, will confirm that they have a calling. Wreford accentuates this position; the beginning is always

heralded by illness attributed to 'the sickness of calling': a reference to the self-healing which I have argued is central to a *sangoma*. Sometimes, these symptoms are particularly physical, as recorded in several anthropological records. Alternatively, the calling of a *sangoma* may be announced via severe emotional malaise or dramatic emotional events. On the other hand, the call may present a prosaic symptomology (Wreford, 2007).

Dorje explains her journey as a white sangoma as follows.

"I thought I was allergic to something. My body would be shaking; I would be sweating. "I kept thinking: 'I am dying, '" Dorje said. "I got desperate and terrified. She started to believe that she was having a nervous breakdown. She phoned a psychologist who told her she could not help. Dorje went to see her anyway. I started speaking with people about her experiences to try to develop a reasonable explanation of what she was going through. She saw astrologers, practised holotropic breathing, and experimented with yoga postures. "I became inspired and started doing creative, artistic things. I felt an incredible sense of being connected. (McLean, 2010).

The complex and controversial phenomenon of whites reflects the diversity and dynamism of South African society and culture. Traditional healing and spirituality also question identity, authenticity, and authority. White izangoma can be interpreted as a sign of cultural exchange and integration or an indication of cultural appropriation and dominance. Acceptance or rejection of white izangoma may be contingent on how they practise their craft, interact with clients and colleagues, and contribute to developing and preserving the traditional healing system. In addition, they face double criticism from their communities and the African societies from which the practice originates for adopting an African culture or tradition. White izangoma reflects the society and culture of South Africa, as well as a source of questions and debates regarding identity, authenticity, and authority about traditional healing and spirituality.

3.16 Conclusion

This chapter focused on Ubungoma, investigating its definition and significance, and comparing it with Isangoma and *Igqirha* in the IsiZulu and AmaXhosa cultures. In addition, the chapter described various types of Izangoma (healers), including *Isangoma*, *abalози*, *Umthandazi*, *Umhlahli*, and *Isanusi*. Even though similar practices are commonly referred to as Ubungoma,

their names and modes of operation are distinct. *Umthandazi* is more closely associated with a blend of African and Christian spirituality, as seen in Zion Church.

A primary hurdle in this discourse is defining Ubungoma itself. If categorised strictly as a competing religion, it creates an immediate theological conflict (*shirk*) with the worship of Allah. However, when viewed as a traditional healing system encompassing psychology and medicine, it finds a natural home within Islamic traditions of stewardship (*Khalifa*). In this context, the *Sangoma* (or the *Igqirha* in *AmaXhosa* culture) acts not as a priest in competition with an Imam, but as a practitioner of African medicine who uses spiritual discernment and medicinal plants to restore balance.

The research further revealed that ancestors are a central tenet of Ubungoma, as they determine who must receive the calling. How and when do the ancestors manifest in a person's existence? In addition, they choose every aspect of the ancestral profession and practice. This prompts an inquiry into ancestral worship or veneration. Numerous researchers contend that ancestors are a link between God and humans. If so, what is the role of a deity or divine entity in the practice of Ubungoma? What is the notion of worship within the context of African culture/religion? Correspondingly, this prompted a discourse on the interplay between culture and religion, examining the placement of Ubungoma within these two domains. This research makes a crucial distinction between ancestral worship, which Islam cannot cross, and ancestral reverence. Through the Islamic legal mechanism of *'urf* (customary practice), Black Muslims can honour their lineage and maintain family ties (*Silat al-Rahim*) as their "roots" without elevating those ancestors to the status of a deity. Dr Abdullah Adelebu, in his work titled *The Arab-Islamic Heritage in Africa: A Study of the History and Culture of Islam in the African Continent*, asserts, "The African does not worship the ancestors as rivals to God, but views them as a *Wasilah*, a structural link or a means of approach to the Divine. In the light of Islam, the task is to distinguish between the cultural respect for lineage and the theological requirements of Tawhid, ensuring that the *'urf* of the people does not breach the sanctuary of worship (Adelabu, 2011). *'Urf* allows Islam to "wear the clothes" of African culture, provided these customs do not contradict the Oneness of God. This is because *'urf* functions specifically within socio-economic and cultural frameworks, whereas fixed theological mandates often govern religious doctrines. The study notes a critical point made by Adelabu: "He posits that African indigenous practices are often unfairly dismissed as *Shirk* (polytheism) because they are viewed through a Western or Middle Eastern cultural lens rather than a functional Islamic

legal lens(Adelabu, 2011). Can ancestral communication be understood through the lens of *Wasīlah*⁷ and *Istighāthah*⁸?

Ubungoma presents a complex phenomenon stemming from its involuntary nature. The ancestors call an individual to become a sangoma. This spiritual summons manifests through severe physical and emotional distress, which, if ignored, could turn fatal. A simple religious prohibition cannot solve this. The reality of *ubizo* (calling) presents a pre-existing spiritual condition that demands a resolution. The question shifts from "Is this permitted?" to "Based on this undeniable spiritual encounter, how can it be understood and channelled in a way most congruent with Islamic principles? This question directs the discussion to the Islamic principle of *dharura* (necessity). If the path of Ubungoma is the only means to resolve a life-threatening crisis, engaging in these practices becomes an act of self-preservation, one of the five core goals of Sharia (*Maqasid al-Sharia*).

The process of becoming a sangoma has been elaborated upon. Traditional healers must undergo a lengthy, laborious process, determined solely by the initiate's readiness and the ancestors, before qualifying.

In addition, the function of *izangoma* in society was analysed, focusing on the numerous responsibilities and obligations of its practitioners. Contrary to conventional belief, *izangoma*, in an African customary social context, are deemed vital to the well-being of the society in which they operate because they cleanse, heal, and expel evil spirits. The study delved into current concerns in the field of Ubungoma, including homosexuality and feminism. Both concerns presented challenges in identifying their presence within Africa's traditional behavioural patterns and norms. The rationale presented about homosexuality, specifically the presence of IsiZulu terminology to denote homosexuality, is insufficient to substantiate the endorsement of such conduct within African traditional systems. On the other hand, feminism has brought forth the inquiry into the presence of male dominance within a sector that females occupy. The primary investigation requiring resolution is whether such behaviour was deemed an accepted societal standard. Because every action is inspired or directed by ancestors, the practice's symbols, such as the wearing of beads and fabric, vary from one practitioner to another.

⁷ In Islamic theology, *wasīlah* refers to the means or path used to seek nearness to Allah

⁸ *Istighāthah* refers specifically to the act of calling upon someone for help or rescue during times of distress

The preceding discourse regarding Ubungoma has ramifications for Muslims, as they will be required to undergo each of the procedures to be acknowledged as such. This may raise a highly significant question: Could a Muslim assume the role of sangoma while remaining faithful to the foundational tenets of both Ubungoma and Islam? Could *urf* (customs) serve as a mechanism to incorporate the healing practices of Ubungoma into Islam? The chapter successfully established Ubungoma as a complex cultural system defined by necessity and social utility. We documented the acute conflict faced by Muslim practitioners. The path forward demands sophisticated legal reasoning. We now move to the subsequent chapter on approaches to healing in Islamic texts and among South African Muslim scholars.

CHAPTER 4

Approaches to healing in Islamic texts and among South African Muslim scholars

4.1 Introduction

Healing is a matter of universal significance, transcending religious, cultural, and historical divides. In its most basic terms, healing is the restoration or enhancement of physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual well-being while mitigating the distress caused by illness, injury, or trauma. Numerous distinct religious traditions have developed therapeutic techniques grounded in their beliefs, values, practices, and experiences. Islam emphasises the importance of spirituality in healing. Islamic texts, such as the Qur'ān and Hadith, contain numerous references to the role of spirituality in promoting physical, emotional, and mental health.

The research offers an intricate examination of the relationship between Islamic healing practices and the cultural heritage of black Muslims in South Africa, probing how these communities navigate Islamic teachings alongside ancestral traditions in healing and in their lives. By exploring case studies that illustrate this interwoven connection, we can cultivate a more profound understanding of the multifaceted pathways to healing within the broader context of Islam and indigenous practices. In the preceding chapters, this study laid a foundational framework by examining the interplay between Islam and culture, aiming to gauge the significance of cultural identity in the practice of Islam. Through this exploration, we have illuminated how cultural elements shape the perception and application of Islamic teachings. Building on this foundation, Chapter 4 delved deeply into Ubungoma, an indigenous healing tradition of immense significance in Africa. This examination is a critical backdrop for understanding the nuanced relationship between Ubungoma and Islamic healing practices among black Muslims. This chapter explores the path to healing as conceptualised in Islamic texts and South African Muslim scholarship. In particular, the sources of healing in Islam (e.g., the Qur'ān and Hadith), the principles of healing in Islam, the methods of healing in Islam, the challenges encountered in recovery in Islam, and, finally, the contributions and perspectives of South African Muslim medical scholars and practitioners on healing. By focusing on this intersection, we can better appreciate how faith, culture, and healing converge in the lived experiences of black Muslims in South Africa.

4.2 Concept of Islamic Healing

Islamic Healing refers to the traditional healing system in Islam, rooted in the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Ahmed asserts that Islamic medicine primarily revolves around the principles derived from religious revelation. Muslim scholars and doctors base their jurisprudence on these principles, with the *Qur'ān*,

prophetic hadiths, and the Messenger's actions serving as the fundamental sources of reference (Muusalli, 2014). The statement above highlights that Islamic healing is rooted in sacred texts and draws on a range of cultural healing practices. The healing practices prevalent among Arabs before the advent of Islam were accepted by the Prophet (SAW) and adopted, conformed to Islamic teachings and regulations. This suggests that Islamic healing/medicine is not solely from the Islamic faith. Nevertheless, accepting many medical practices and treatments in Islam mostly depends on their legal legitimacy rather than their religious origins. Islamic healing is considered a unique concept that incorporates elements from other cultures and religions while being influenced by the Islamic ethos as expressed in Islamic texts.

Islamic healing practices exhibit significant variations across regions, reflecting this tradition's dynamic and adaptive nature; it has assimilated many cultural and societal influences from various civilisations over the millennia, resulting in a multifaceted, multicultural tapestry. As demonstrated by Feters, Islamic medicine or healing originated from Graeco-Roman, Chinese, Persian, and Ayurvedic theories, and it is practised alongside modern medicine. It incorporates humoral and temperamental aetiologies⁹, spiritual influences, and the healing power of nature for the restoration and preservation of health (Feters, 2017). Consequently, Islamic healing has significantly advanced modern medicine in Europe and other parts of the world. Furthermore, Islamic healing does not outright reject the Western medical system but instead endeavours to integrate the favourable elements of Western traditions within Islamic principles. It refers to healing primarily influenced by the practices described in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. While it incorporates elements from diverse healing cultures and backgrounds, the fundamental basis of Islamic healing is textual teaching. Can Ubungoma, a healing practice, be incorporated into Islamic healing if it adheres to Islamic principles?

4.3 The Role of Islamic Spirituality in Healing: An Analysis of Qur'ānic Verses and Prophetic Traditions

Islam emphasises the importance of spirituality in healing. Islamic texts, such as the Qur'ān and Hadith, contain numerous references to the role of spirituality in promoting physical,

⁹ An etiologist is a specialist in the study of the causes of diseases.

emotional, and mental health. This section will examine the role of Islamic spirituality in healing by analysing Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions.

The Qur'ān is the holy book of Islam and contains numerous references to the importance of spirituality in promoting healing. For example, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 208, states, "O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy." This verse emphasises the importance of submitting to Allah, including life's physical and spiritual aspects. By doing so, believers can protect themselves from Satan's harm and promote their well-being.

Similarly, Surah Al-Anbiya, verse eighty-three, states, "And [mention] Job, when he called to his Lord, 'Indeed, adversity has touched me, and you are the Most Merciful of the merciful.'" This verse highlights the importance of supplicating to Allah during times of difficulty and seeking His mercy. By doing so, believers can find solace and healing in their relationship with Allah. In addition to the Qur'ān, prophetic traditions also emphasise the importance of spirituality in healing. For example, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "There is a remedy for every disease, and when the remedy is applied to the disease, it is cured by the permission of Allah, the Exalted and Glorious." (Bukhari, Book 25, Number 5466). This tradition highlights two essential aspects: the belief in a cure for every disease and the healing power of Allah, and emphasises the importance of seeking His assistance in healing.

Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Tie your camel first, then put your trust in Allah." (Sunan al-Tirmidhī 2517). This tradition highlights the importance of taking practical steps to promote healing while also recognising the need to trust in Allah. By doing so, believers can find a balance between taking reasonable steps and seeking Allah's assistance in promoting their well-being. In conclusion, Islamic spirituality plays a crucial role in promoting healing. Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions emphasise the importance of submitting to Allah, supplicating to Him during times of difficulty, and trusting in His healing power. Believers are encouraged to take practical steps to promote their well-being while also recognising the importance of spirituality in the healing process. Islamic spirituality can promote health and well-being by integrating the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life.

4.4 Traditional Healing Practices in Islam: A Study of South African Muslim Communities

Traditional healing practices have been an integral part of Islamic culture for centuries, and they continue to play a significant role in the lives of many Muslims, including in South Africa. This section will examine traditional healing practices in Islam by studying South African Muslim communities, including the types of healers, the techniques used, and the beliefs and values underpinning these practices (E., & Machado, D., 2016). South African Muslim communities are diverse, encompassing individuals from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Multiple factors, including religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and historical experiences, influence traditional healing practices in these communities. One of the most significant aspects of traditional healing in Islam is the role of healers. These healers are often known as "*Imāms*," "*sheikhs*," or "*fakirs*" and are recognised for their ability to heal physical, emotional, and spiritual ailments (Laher et al, 2014).

Healers in South African Muslim communities use various techniques to promote healing. One of the healing methods used is *Unani Tibb*, translated as Greek Medicine. Kathree asserts that the Ibn Sina Institute of Tibb in South Africa aims to offer holistic, affordable, client-centred therapy focusing on the person's health. (Kathree, 2007) . One method used to heal various ailments is the recitation of verses from the Holy *Qur'ān*. According to Ally, who interviewed traditional Muslim healers, healers read specific verses from the Holy *Qur'ān* when diagnosing and treating spiritual illness. We put our hands on the patient's head, and that is a form of positive energy. So, when we recite the *Qur'ān*, you will find that ... the energy is transformed into them. (Laher, 2008) . The other form of therapy prevalent among traditional Muslim healers is the use of herbs, mainly with a *Hakeem* (herbal medicine practitioner).

Dangor et al., in the Journal article titled "Western and Traditional Medicine: Cultural Beliefs and Practices of South African Muslims about Down Syndrome," describe how different traditional Muslim healers use various techniques to heal and manage Down Syndrome. Three Moulanas (Islamic scholars) indicated they would provide the patient with a *ta'wīdh* (an inscription of verses from the *Qur'ān* on paper). A *ta'wīdh* is usually worn around the neck or | attached to the child's clothing. The *ta'wīdh* protects the child against any evil and eradicates any evil projected onto the child. The Hakeems reported that they would examine the patient and establish which humour was blocked or not functioning optimally. Treatment included

altering a specific aspect of the temperament of one of the four humours by prescribing herbal medication. This herbal medication often consisted of an infusion of powders that assisted in balancing the senses of humour, attempting to harness the body's energy to treat itself. (Dangor, 2006).

In conclusion, traditional healing practices in Islam are essential to South African Muslim communities. Healers play a vital role in promoting physical, emotional, and spiritual healing, and they use a range of techniques, including reciting Qur'ānic verses, using herbal remedies, and engaging in physical therapy. The beliefs and values underpinning these practices are closely linked to religious and cultural traditions, including the idea that healing comes from Allah and is a collective process involving the entire community (Hafidh, 2013).

4.5 The Concept of *Tawakkul* (Reliance on God) in Islamic Healing Traditions

Tawakkul, or reliance on God, is a central concept in Islamic healing traditions (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). It involves entrusting oneself to God and relying on Him to achieve desired outcomes (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). The Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions highlight the importance of *tawakkul* in healing (Qur'ān, 29:59; Sunan at Tirmidhi 2517). For example, Surah Al-Ankabut, verse fifty-nine, states, "And rely upon Allah; and sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs." The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also emphasised the importance of *tawakkul* in healing, saying, "Tie your camel first and then put your trust in Allah" (Sunan at Tirmidhi 2517).

Tawakkul is not passive but involves acting and seeking healing while relying on God (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). It is reflected in the "*Tawakkul bil-asbāb*" concept, which means depending on the means or resources available to us while relying on God (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). For example, seeking medical treatment, taking medication, and engaging in healthy behaviours all seek healing while relying on God to achieve the desired outcome.

Tawakkul has important implications for mental health as well. South African healers have shown that *tawakkul* can be a protective factor against anxiety and depression, as individuals who rely on God and trust in His power and will are less likely to experience negative emotions and psychological distress (Beshai et al., 2015; Al-Mujalli et al., 2018). Further, Gondal et al

provide an illustration of the healing power of *tawakkul* on anxiety in the following manner: stress, anxiety, and depression are common indicators of mental health. Religiousness and putting trust in God could be some practical ways to ameliorate stress, anxiety, and depression. For instance, strong faith and high confidence in God were linked with a lower degree of anxiety and depression and greater personal contentment (Gondal et al., 2024). Rosmarin reports that an empirical study found that strong faith (PTG) and high trust in God were linked with lower levels of stress and depression and greater personal contentment (Rosmarin et al., 2009). Wills et al. found that religious beliefs significantly reduced the negative impact of life stressors and prevented drug abuse. Another study showed that being pure in one's religious beliefs is linked with lower stress levels (Wills et al., 2003). The studies cited above explore the relationship between religious belief, or to be specific, *Tawakkul*, and reduced levels of depression and stress. However, they do not address whether this perspective is widely accepted within the field or acknowledge potential limitations or contradictory findings. Furthermore, these studies rely on correlational data rather than establishing causation, meaning that while religiosity is linked with lower anxiety, it cannot be conclusively determined as the causal factor. Additionally, the research contains elements of over-generalisation, as illustrated by the phrase "being pure in one's religious beliefs", which lacks a clear operational definition. Without an explanation of how "purity" is measured, the validity and applicability of this claim remain ambiguous. Providing a brief methodological clarification would enhance the rigour and transparency of the analysis.

So, *tawakkul* is an integral part of Islamic healing traditions and emphasises the importance of relying on God to bring healing while also taking action to seek healing. *Tawakkul* can provide peace and comfort during the healing process and has important implications for mental health.

4.6 Islamic Medicine and Its Contributions to Modern Medicine: A Review of Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Islamic medicine has a rich history that spans several centuries and has significantly contributed to modern medicine (Abdul-Hadi, 2018). Its foundation is based on the principles of the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions, which emphasise the importance of maintaining good health and seeking medical treatment when necessary (Abdul-Hadi, 2018).

One of Islamic medicine's earliest and most influential figures was the physician and philosopher Ibn Sina, Avicenna (980-1037 CE). His medical encyclopaedia, "The Canon of Medicine," was a seminal work that was a standard medical textbook in Europe for centuries (Ghasemi, 2015). Ibn Sina's contributions to medicine extended beyond his medical writings; he also made significant advancements in pharmacology, surgery, and mental health (Ghasemi, 2015). Islamic medicine also made essential contributions to public health. During the Islamic Golden Age (eighth-14th centuries), hospitals were established throughout the Islamic world, providing medical care to patients regardless of their social status or ability to pay (Akhtar, 2014). These hospitals were centres of medical education and research, staffed by highly skilled physicians and surgeons (Akhtar, 2014).

Today, Islamic medicine continues to influence modern medical practices. For example, the Islamic prohibition on pork consumption in South Africa has led to the development of alternative insulin sources for diabetic patients (Riaz & Shahzad, 2012). There is a difference of opinion amongst Muslim scholars on the usage of porcine-derived substances for medical purposes. Mahdi Tarabeh in his article titled, *The Muslim Patient And Medical Treatment Based on Porcine Ingredients*, quotes the following resolutions adopted at the Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences in Kuwaiti 1995 "A conference of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (IOMS) held in Kuwait in 1995 which was attended by over one hundred Islamic jurists and eminent scholars ruled that "Transformation, which refers to converting one substance into another that differs in properties can change substances that under Shariah are regarded as impure substances or found in an impure environment, into pure substances, and substances that are prohibited into permissible substances However, another group of Muslim jurists ruled that the pig is "rijs" or "najas al-ayn", i.e., meaning essentially filthy. Therefore, every part of it, its flesh, hair, bones, and skin, is considered impure and may not be used for any purpose except in a life-threatening situation when there is no other alternative" (Tarabeh, 2023). Based on the above, scientists have sought alternative treatments that do not contain porcine-based treatments. Islamic medicine also emphasises the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, with implications for preventing chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (Abdel-Halim, 2015).

In conclusion, Islamic medicine has a rich history and significant contributions to modern medicine. The principles of Islamic medicine, which are based on the Qur'ān and prophetic

traditions, emphasise the importance of maintaining good health and seeking medical treatment when necessary. Islamic medicine has also significantly contributed to public health and continues to influence modern medical practices. Further, the resolution above implies some practices within Ubungoma that might seem to contradict Islamic teachings, such as consuming blood and using certain animal products that were not slaughtered according to Islamic teachings. Can such practices be allowed based on the resolution of the Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences conference held in 1995, especially when there is no alternative means of therapy?

4.7 The Role of Islamic Ethics in Promoting Healing and Well-being

Islamic ethics is critical in promoting healing and well-being in individuals and communities. Islamic ethics is based on the principles of the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions, which emphasise treating others with respect, kindness, and compassion (Haque, 2017). These ethical principles are closely tied to the concept of tawhid, or the unity of God, which emphasises the interconnectedness of all things and the inherent dignity and worth of every human being (Haque, 2017). One of the fundamental principles of Islamic ethics is the concept of *adab* (Islamic etiquette), which refers to proper conduct and etiquette. *Adab* is about following rules and regulations and cultivating an inner sense of righteousness and humility (Ali, 2018). The practice of *adab* promotes healing and well-being by fostering positive relationships and creating a sense of community and belonging (Ali, 2018). In the Journal article titled "Adab and Its Significance for an Islamic Medical Ethics," Elizabeth Sartell asserts that, when applied to the medical realm, *adab* inculcates virtues that enable the physician to discern and perform good deeds, thereby providing a better quality of care. As a complement to *Shari'ah* rules, *adab*-based practices bolster physicians' abilities to uphold the ethical legal injunctions of the *Shari'ah*, guide one to follow the practices of the Sunnah and adorn obligatory and voluntary actions with virtue. (Elizabeth Sartell, 2015). Thus, based on the above *adaab* (ethics), *healing fosters divine approval when it aligns with Qur'ānic and prophetic values*. Holistic care addresses physical, social, and spiritual needs, upholds the dignity of the profession, and fosters a principled relationship between a healer and the patient.

Another important principle of Islamic ethics is *Akhlāq*, which refers to moral character and behaviour. *Akhlāq* emphasises the importance of practising virtues such as honesty, kindness, and generosity and avoiding vices such as greed, envy, and hatred (Haque, 2017). *Akhlāq* promotes healing and well-being by fostering inner peace and contentment and encouraging positive interactions with others (Haque, 2017). Islamic ethics also emphasises the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The Qur'ān encourages Muslims to eat wholesome and nutritious food, exercise regularly, and avoid harmful behaviours such as smoking and excessive drinking (Ali, 2018). By promoting healthy behaviours, Islamic ethics helps to prevent chronic diseases and promote overall physical and mental health.

In conclusion, Islamic ethics promotes healing and well-being in individuals and communities. The principles of Islamic ethics, based on the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions, emphasise treating others with respect, kindness, and compassion; cultivating inner righteousness and humility; practising moral character and behaviour; and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. By following these principles, individuals can promote their own well-being and that of those around them.

4.8 Islamic Beliefs and Practices in Coping with Chronic Illness: Insights from South African Muslim Patients

Islamic beliefs and practices play an essential role in how Muslim patients cope with chronic illness. The South African Muslim community has a perspective on how Islamic beliefs and practices can be used to cope with the challenges of chronic disease (Ahmed et al., 2019). One of the essential beliefs in Islam that helps patients cope with chronic disease is the belief in the power and will of Allah. Muslims believe that Allah controls everything and that everything that happens is a part of His divine plan (Ahmed et al., 2019). This belief provides patients with comfort as they navigate the uncertainties and challenges of chronic illness.

Another important belief in Islam that helps patients cope with chronic illness is the importance of patience and perseverance. Muslims believe that patience is a virtue and that it is essential to remain steadfast in adversity (Ahmed et al., 2019). This belief helps patients maintain a positive attitude and progress in their treatment journey. Islamic practices such as prayer, fasting, and charity also play a significant role in coping with chronic illness. Prayer is a

fundamental part of Islamic practice, and Muslims are encouraged to pray regularly, especially during times of difficulty (Ahmed et al., 2019). Patients who pray regularly find comfort in knowing they are not alone and that Allah is listening to them.

Fasting during Ramadan is another crucial Islamic practice beneficial for patients with chronic illnesses (Ahmed et al., 2019). Fasting helps patients develop self-discipline and self-control, essential for managing chronic disease. Additionally, fasting has been shown to benefit the body, including reducing inflammation and improving insulin sensitivity.

Charity is a crucial Islamic practice that helps patients cope with chronic illness. Giving to those in need is considered a form of worship in Islam, and patients who present to charity feel a sense of fulfilment and purpose (Ahmed et al., 2019). Additionally, giving to charity helps patients develop an understanding of gratitude for what they have, which can help reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. In conclusion, Islamic beliefs and practices provide valuable resources for Muslim patients coping with chronic illness. The belief in the power and will of Allah, the importance of patience and perseverance, and the practice of prayer, fasting, and charity all provide comfort and support to patients as they navigate the challenges of chronic illness. According to Laher et al, a study was conducted on the perceptions regarding mental illness, aetiological issues and treatment by general practitioners in South Africa. The researcher made the following observation: Some participants (n=5) in the current study reported that the Muslim community's religious beliefs, the teachings that Islam prescribes and their faith in the will of God make it easier for Muslims to deal with health and other issues. They felt that such faith reduces the prevalence of mental illnesses such as depression and substance abuse. Islam also assists by prohibiting the use of alcohol and substances. Participants also acknowledged the potential benefit of religious practices such as dua (supplication), zikr (meditation) and salaah (ritual prayer, the second pillar of Islam). According to Carter and Rashidi, meditation and prayer have been used to promote and enhance emotional experiences and establish a connection with God. (Laher M. K., 2014).

4.7 Šūfī Healing as a Traditional Healing Practice Amongst South African Muslims

4.8.1 Şūfī healing

Şūfī healing is a complementary therapy grounded in the spiritual tenets of Sufism, a mystical branch of Islam that emphasises direct experience and connection with God and seeks inner spiritual growth and enlightenment. It is a centuries-old practice focusing on holistic well-being. In the treatment of physical, mental, and emotional disorders, this healing approach seeks to restore harmony and balance within individuals. Şūfī healing takes a spiritual approach, believing that the source of healing lies in a connection with the Divine.

Sufism in South Africa originated with the arrival of early Muslims in the country's western and eastern regions; it was via Sufism that Islam flourished and became the sole religious conviction of South African Muslims until the late 1900s. Hendricks postulates that after the arrival of the three early Muslims, a further group of Muslims known as the Mardijckers arrived in Cape Town in 1658. Due to political oppression and deprivation of the enslaved people, no written record suggests the nature of the Islamic teachings to which the enslaved people belonged. In addition, he suggests that the conclusion that the enslaved people were Şūfīs is drawn from their religious practice. The preservation of their graves as shrines, the types of adhkar (litanies) they recited, and the kind of hadrah (congregational dhikr) they performed were all linked to the Qadiri tariqa (order) (Hendricks, 2005). Although it is plausible that not all early Muslims who established settlements in the Cape were Şūfīs, substantial evidence indicates that they included adherents of Şūfī practices such as remembrance of Allah, meditation, asceticism and abstinence. This can be deduced from analysing their Islamic practices and the prayers they observed.

Moreover, the claim that connects them to Sufism may be supported by their origins, which indicate that they originated from a Şūfī lineage. Due to this, Sufism has always been part of the Muslim community in the country, where a myriad of Şūfī sheikhs (Teachers/masters) are found. Sufism in South Africa is distinguished by its distinctive practices and characteristics resulting from the country's Muslim community's varied heritage.

The methods of Şūfī healing practised by the South African Muslim community incorporate various techniques designed to promote spiritual and physical wellness. The methods are primarily influenced by various Şūfī tariqas (orders) passed from Şūfī shaykhs (masters) to their followers. Their primary objectives are to offer therapeutic interventions for different disorders, including physical and spiritual conditions, to assist individuals afflicted by jinns (spirits), and to attract favourable outcomes in business and academic pursuits. These practices are not

confined to South Africa, but form part of Ṣūfī traditions observed globally. Shaykh Taneri Ansari, a distinguished Ṣūfī master and head of the Ansari Qaderi Rifai Ṣūfī Order, leads the Ansari Holistic Healing Institute, which operates branches in multiple countries. He articulates the principles of Ṣūfī healing as follows: Ṣūfī healing is, in essence, a spiritual practice that employs a combination of therapies which span the gamut of energy types, from the repetition of beneficial words to the drinking of a healthful soup. As energy takes on many forms, from the unseen to the seen, so does the practice of Ṣūfī healing (Ansari, 2017).

The method of healing includes reciting Qur'ānic verses, engaging in supplications (duas), practising spiritual meditation and visualisation, employing sacred objects such as ta'wīdh (amulets) and bark (charms), and petitioning Ṣūfī saints or spiritual advisers for blessings. These rituals are believed to invoke divine favour and spiritual energy, thereby facilitating healing.

4.9 The Integration of Islamic Spirituality and Psychological Approaches to Healing: A Case Study of Muslim Psychotherapy in South Africa

Integrating Islamic spirituality and psychological approaches to healing is a relatively new field that has gained popularity in recent years. Muslim psychotherapy is an example of this integration, where Islamic principles and practices are incorporated into psychotherapeutic interventions (Azhar & Varma, 2019).

One of the primary objectives of Muslim psychotherapy is to integrate Islamic beliefs and practices into the therapeutic process, which helps clients achieve a greater sense of well-being and mental health. This approach recognises the importance of spirituality in the healing process and acknowledges that mental health cannot be treated in isolation from the individual's spiritual beliefs and practices (Azhar & Varma, 2019). Islamic spirituality and psychological approaches to healing are not mutually exclusive. They can complement each other to provide a more holistic approach to healing. Muslim psychotherapy incorporates various Islamic principles and practices, such as prayer, meditation, and Qur'ānic recitation, into therapeutic sessions to help clients address their mental health concerns (Azhar & Varma, 2019).

One of the critical benefits of Muslim psychotherapy is that it provides a safe and non-judgmental space for clients to explore their issues from an Islamic perspective. This approach allows clients to draw on the spiritual resources of Islam, which can provide comfort and support during difficult times (Varma, 2019). Moreover, Muslim psychotherapy also draws on various psychological approaches, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, to help clients develop coping skills and change negative thought patterns. This approach recognises the importance of addressing the psychological factors contributing to mental health problems (Azhar & Varma, 2019). In explaining this phenomenon, Nakhoodain, in his master's research titled: *A Descriptive Phenomenological Study of Muslim Clients' Experiences of Religion during Psychotherapy with Muslim Therapists*, relates Khan's findings: Khan (2014) found that discussing Islam during therapy sessions introduces the clients' language into the process and helps to translate therapy into a form they can understand. This process of learning about Islam and reforging their religious identity extended beyond the therapy sessions and permeated the participants' entire lives. In their exploration of an Islamic theory of personality (Nakhooda, 2021).

Islamic spirituality and psychotherapy can also be integrated to address issues such as anxiety and depression, which are prevalent in the Muslim community. Muslim psychotherapists can use Islamic principles such as *Tawakkul* (reliance on God) and *Sabr* (patience) to help clients develop resilience and coping skills (Azhar & Varma, 2019). Nakhooda asserts that, as part of their healing process during therapy, participants reported that their therapists encouraged them to engage in religious activities. This included incorporating religious activities within the therapy sessions and a general increase in spiritual activities in their everyday lives. (Nakhooda, 2021). Studies on Muslims that used spiritually modified cognitive therapy for anxiety and depression showed faster results as compared with the treatment that is not spiritually modified. Similarly, a study conducted on Muslims with bereavement showed significantly better results with cognitive-behavioural treatment that had been modified to incorporate Islamic beliefs and practices. (Vohra, 2013) While the aforementioned research provides a valuable foundation for incorporating Islamic beliefs into psychotherapy, the study participants predominantly share a similar cultural background. Consequently, the generalisability of these findings to the broader and more diverse Muslim population remains uncertain.

In conclusion, the integration of Islamic spirituality and psychological approaches to healing has significant potential to improve the mental health and well-being of Muslim clients. Muslim

psychotherapy provides a unique approach that recognises the importance of addressing spiritual and psychological factors to achieve holistic healing.

4.10 Islamic Traditional Medicine: An Overview of Its Philosophy, Practices and Efficacy

Islamic traditional medicine (ITM) is a holistic medical system practised for millennia in South Africa. It is based on the principles of the Qur'ān, Prophetic traditions (Hadith), and the teachings of Muslim scholars (Ulema) (Almalki et al., 2018). Hussein et al. state that, although it is called Islamic medicine, ITM is derived from various practices. Idioms used to connote TAIM healing traditions, and which are sometimes used interchangeably, include Graeco-Arabic or Unani medicine, Islamic Medicine, and al-Tibb Nabawi, or the medicine of the Prophet (SAW) (Asim Abdelmoneim Hussein, 2019). Hussein et al. discuss a critical debate in the study of Islamic Traditional Medicine: its eclectic historical underpinnings and the interchangeable use of terms such as Unani, Graeco-Arabic, and Tibb al-Nabawi. Their valid observation warrants further scrutiny regarding historical accuracy, conceptual clarity, and modern implications. One critical point of scrutiny concerns the criteria that define Islamic Traditional Medicine (ITM), as its scope extends beyond the prophetic applications of medicine. Furthermore, given that Muslims in China incorporate Chinese medicine into their healthcare practices and that similar trends are observed in Africa, the question arises as to whether such medicinal systems can be classified under the broader framework of Islamic medicine. Additionally, can the practice of Ubungoma, provided it aligns with Islamic teachings, be considered an integral component of ITM?

One of the critical principles of ITM is the concept of balance (Mizaj), which refers to the equilibrium of the body's four humours (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile). According to ITM, an imbalance in the humours can lead to illness, and treatment involves restoring the balance (Almalki et al., 2018). ITM also recognises the importance of diet and lifestyle in maintaining good health. Prophetic traditions emphasise the benefits of natural foods and discourage overeating and unhealthy habits such as smoking (Almalki et al., 2018). Herbs and other natural remedies are commonly used in ITM to treat various ailments. These remedies

have been extensively studied, and many have been found to have pharmacological properties (Almalki et al., 2018).

One example of a natural remedy commonly used in ITM is honey. Honey has antibacterial and antioxidant properties and can treat conditions such as coughs and sore throats (Khan et al., 2016). Cupping therapy is another commonly used treatment in ITM. Cupping involves creating a vacuum in a cup placed on the skin, which draws blood to the *‘urf* and promotes healing. Cupping is used to treat various conditions, such as back pain and migraines (Almalki et al., 2018).

ITM effectively treats various conditions, including respiratory illnesses, digestive disorders, and skin conditions (Almalki et al., 2018). However, more research is needed to establish the efficacy of ITM in treating other conditions and to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of specific remedies. In conclusion, ITM is a holistic medical system practised for centuries in the Muslim world. It is based on the principles of the Qur’ān, Prophetic traditions, and the teachings of Muslim scholars. ITM emphasises the importance of balance, diet, and lifestyle for maintaining good health and uses natural remedies, such as herbs and cupping therapy, to treat various conditions. One of the unique features of ITM is the usage of Dhikr (remembrance) in therapeutic practice, especially for psycho-related ailments. Al Rawi et al mention that another meditative practice is Dhikr or divine remembrance. Like meditation, Dhikr is the process of “listening within, the activation of a presence capable of witnessing inner and outer events without becoming absorbed. While ITM is effective in treating some conditions, further research is needed to evaluate its safety and efficacy in treating other conditions. (Fetters, 2012). Islamic traditional medicine, like Ubungoma, is more than a medical system; it embodies a rich cultural and spiritual heritage. Despite theological distinctions, both teachings underscore the significance of faith, ancestral knowledge, and holistic, natural healing in an increasingly interconnected medical landscape. Fostering cultural dialogue between ITM, Ubungoma, and biomedicine can foster more inclusive and decolonised healthcare systems. This method helps weave together specific Indigenous knowledge systems with Islam, allowing Muslims to connect with these traditions while staying true to their religious beliefs.

4.11 Islamic Ethics and the Healing of Mental Illness: A Comparative Study of Contemporary Approaches

Islamic ethics play a vital role in the healing of mental illness in the Muslim world. Muslim scholars and healthcare professionals have been exploring various approaches to mental health that incorporate Islamic ethics and principles. One approach is to integrate Islamic spirituality into psychotherapy. This approach emphasises the importance of connecting with God and seeking his help in healing. It also highlights the importance of forgiveness, compassion, and gratitude in promoting mental well-being (Hamdan-Mansour et al., 2020).

Another approach is to use Islamic ethics in cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT is a widely used psychotherapeutic approach that focuses on changing negative thought patterns and behaviours. Integrating Islamic ethics in CBT involves incorporating Islamic values into therapy, such as patience, trust in God, and acceptance of destiny (Ahmed et al., 2015). A third approach is the use of Islamic teachings in family therapy. Family therapy is a form of psychotherapy that focuses on improving communication and resolving family conflicts. Islamic family therapy's teachings and values guide family members towards healthy communication and conflict resolution. For example, the concept of mercy and forgiveness in Islam is emphasised in family therapy to promote harmony and healing (Al-Darmaki et al., 2018).

A comparative study of these approaches showed that they effectively promote mental well-being and can be used as complementary therapies to mainstream treatments (Hamdan-Mansour et al., 2020). However, there is a need for further research to establish their efficacy and effectiveness in treating specific mental health conditions. In conclusion, the integration of Islamic ethics in the healing of mental illness is a promising approach that is gaining recognition in the Muslim world. Incorporating Islamic principles and values into psychotherapy, cognitive-behavioural therapy, and family therapy has shown promising results in promoting mental well-being. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of these approaches and to develop culturally appropriate interventions for mental health in the Muslim world.

4.12 Islamic Perspectives on the Relationship between Spirituality and Health

Islam recognises the intricate connection between spirituality and health and the importance of spiritual well-being in promoting physical and mental health. Islamic perspectives on the relationship between spirituality and health emphasise the integration of the physical, cognitive, and spiritual aspects of human existence. Islam recognises that human beings are composed of physical and spiritual elements and that their health is interconnected. The Qur'ān states, "And We have certainly created man in the best of stature" (95:4). This verse suggests that human beings' physical and spiritual aspects are intertwined and must be considered when promoting health and well-being.

Islamic teachings also emphasise the importance of spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and charity in promoting physical and mental health. Prayer, for example, is considered an act of worship that encourages mindfulness and spiritual well-being, and it also has physical benefits such as reducing stress and promoting relaxation (Bajwa et al., 2021). Furthermore, Islamic teachings emphasise the importance of maintaining a balance between life's physical and spiritual aspects. Islam recognises that excessive preoccupation with material possessions and worldly affairs can lead to neglect of spiritual well-being and have negative impacts on physical and mental health. Therefore, Islamic teachings encourage a balance between life's physical and spiritual aspects to promote holistic health (Shahid et al., 2020).

Islamic teachings also emphasise the importance of personal responsibility and self-care in promoting physical, mental, and spiritual health. Muslims are encouraged to care for their bodies and minds by eating nutritious food, engaging in physical activity, seeking medical care, and maintaining positive relationships with others (Ali & Imran, 2020). Islamic perspectives on the relationship between spirituality and health emphasise the integration of the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of human existence. Spiritual practices, such as prayer and charity, are considered necessary for promoting spiritual well-being, which can positively impact physical and mental health. Islamic teachings also emphasise the importance of balance and self-care in promoting holistic health. Therefore, incorporating Islamic perspectives on spirituality and health can provide a comprehensive approach to promoting well-being and preventing illness.

4.13 The Role of Islamic Healing Practices in Addressing Social and Environmental Determinants of Health in South Africa

Islamic healing practices address physical and mental illnesses and recognise the importance of social and environmental determinants of health. In Islamic tradition, health is considered a holistic concept encompassing physical, cognitive, and social well-being. Therefore, Islamic healing practices address social and environmental factors influencing health outcomes.

Poverty is one of the critical social determinants of health. Poverty can negatively impact health outcomes by limiting access to nutritious food, safe drinking water, and healthcare. Islamic teachings emphasise the importance of charity as a means of addressing poverty. Zakat, or giving a portion of one's wealth to those in need, is one of the five pillars of Islam. Zakat can help alleviate poverty and improve access to necessities, improving health outcomes (Koenig, 2018). In addition to poverty, Islamic healing practices address issues of social justice. Islam emphasises treating everyone fairly and equally, regardless of social status, ethnicity, or religion. This emphasis on social justice can help to address inequalities in access to healthcare and other resources that can impact health outcomes (Bhui, 2019).

Environmental determinants of health are also addressed in Islamic healing practices. Islam emphasises the importance of preserving and protecting the environment. The Qur'ān states, "Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned" (30:41). This verse emphasises the importance of responsible environmental stewardship and the need to address environmental factors that can impact health outcomes, such as air pollution and climate change (Owlia et al., 2019).

Islamic healing practices also emphasise the importance of healthy lifestyle practices such as a balanced diet, regular physical activity, and adequate sleep. These practices can help prevent chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease (Chakravarty, 2019). Islamic healing practices recognise the importance of social and environmental determinants of health in promoting well-being. Muslim teachings emphasise the importance of addressing poverty, social justice, and ecological sustainability to improve health outcomes. By addressing these determinants of health, Islamic healing practices offer a comprehensive approach to promoting health and well-being.

4.14 Islamic Religious Practices and Their Impact on Health and Well-being: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Women in South Africa

Islamic religious practices have been found to play a significant role in the health and well-being of Muslims worldwide. Laher et al, in their journal, mention a study that focuses on Muslims in South Africa and explores the impact of Islamic religious practices on their health and well-being. The study collected data using a qualitative research design, including semi-structured interviews with Muslim women in South Africa (Laher et al., 2008).

The study revealed that Islamic religious practices, such as prayer, fasting, and Qur'ānic recitation, positively affected Muslim women's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Participants reported feeling calm, peace, and comfort when engaging in these practices. The study found that these practices helped participants cope with stress and anxiety, which are common mental health issues faced by many people. Additionally, the study found that Islamic religious practices also promoted healthy behaviours, such as physical activity and healthy eating. Participants reported that their religious beliefs encouraged them to care for their bodies and to lead healthy lifestyles. For example, participants said fasting during Ramadan helped them control their food intake and improve their eating habits. The study also found that Islamic religious practices provided a sense of community and support for Muslim women. Participants reported feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness with other Muslim women when engaging in these practices. This sense of community provided emotional support and helped participants cope with challenges like illness, grief, and other life stressors.

Overall, the study highlights the significant role of Islamic religious practices in promoting health and well-being among Muslim women in South Africa. The study's findings also have important implications for healthcare providers who care for Muslim patients. Healthcare providers need to be aware of the potential impact of religious practices on patients' health and well-being and incorporate this knowledge into their practice. The study suggests that Islamic religious practices are critical to promoting the health and well-being of Muslim women in South Africa. These practices provide physical, mental, and spiritual benefits and support healthy behaviours and community. Therefore, healthcare providers should recognise the importance of these practices for Muslim patients and incorporate them into their care plans.

4.15 The Concept of Barakah (Blessing) in Islamic Healing Practices: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis

Barakah, or blessing, is essential to Islamic healing practices. It is the belief that Allah can bestow blessings on individuals, helping heal and promote overall well-being. This concept is found in Islamic spiritual practices and integrated into everyday life, including healthcare practices (Kugle, 2013).

A theoretical and empirical analysis of the concept of barakah in Islamic healing practices reveals that it has both spiritual and practical dimensions. On the spiritual level, Islamic healers believe the idea of barakah comes from Allah, who bestows it on individuals through prayer and supplication. Barakah is also thought to be transmitted from individuals with spiritual authority, such as religious scholars and healers (Jenkins, 2017). On a practical level, the concept of barakah is integrated into healthcare practices, including the use of certain foods, herbs, and medicines believed to have a blessed or healing effect. For example, black seed oil, honey, and dates are commonly used in Islamic medicine as they are considered to have barakah and healing properties. Empirical research has also shown that barakah positively impacts individuals' health and well-being. Studies have shown that using blessed foods and medicines can have a therapeutic effect on various medical conditions, including hypertension, diabetes, and other chronic diseases (Al-Saeedi et al., 2015).

Moreover, research has shown that supplication and prayer, believed to bring about barakah, can positively impact mental health. These practices are considered to provide a sense of comfort and peace, reduce stress and anxiety, and promote overall well-being (Mirza, 2018). In conclusion, barakah is an essential aspect of Islamic healing practices at both the spiritual and practical levels. The belief in the healing power of blessings is integrated into healthcare practices, positively impacting individuals' health and well-being. Healthcare providers should be aware of the concept of barakah and its importance in Muslim patients' healthcare practices to provide culturally sensitive and appropriate care (Al-Asfour et al., 2020).

4.16 Islamic Approaches to Palliative Care: A Review of the Literature

Palliative care is an essential component of modern healthcare, crucial for ensuring that individuals with terminal illnesses receive the necessary support and care they require. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in exploring the role of Islamic approaches to palliative care in Muslim communities, including those in South Africa. This paper reviews the literature on Islamic approaches to palliative care, specifically focusing on the South African context (Al-Saeedi et al., 2015).

The Islamic perspective on palliative care is grounded in the belief that life is a sacred gift from God and that preserving life is an essential aspect of the Islamic faith. The Qur'ān states that God has given life to all human beings. It is up to humans to preserve and protect it (Qur'ān 17:70). Therefore, the provision of palliative care to individuals with terminal illnesses is seen as a moral obligation for Muslims, as it allows them to support and care for those who are nearing the end of their lives.

In South Africa, Muslim communities have been active in providing palliative care to those in need. One example is the Islamic Medical Association of South Africa (IMASA), which provides palliative care services to terminally ill patients in Muslim communities. IMASA's palliative care services are grounded in Islamic principles and values and are designed to ensure that patients receive the support and care they need during their final days (Amla, 2018).

Islamic approaches to palliative care also emphasise the importance of spiritual care for terminally ill patients. Muslims believe that death is a natural part of life and that it is the transition to the next life. Therefore, spiritual care is vital to palliative care, as it allows patients to prepare for the next life and find peace and comfort in their final days. In conclusion, Islamic approaches to palliative care have gained increasing attention in recent years, particularly in South Africa. These approaches are grounded in Islamic principles and values and emphasise holistic care for terminally ill patients. Integrating Islamic values and principles into palliative care can help ensure that patients receive the necessary support and care they require during their final days. It can bring comfort and peace for patients and their loved ones (C., & Engelbrecht, S., 2018).

4.17 Islamic-Based Interventions for the Treatment of Substance Abuse: A Systematic Review

Islam-based interventions have been used to treat substance abuse, particularly in Muslim-majority countries. The concept of tawhid, or the oneness of God, is central to Islamic-based

interventions and is believed to help individuals overcome addiction by redirecting their focus towards a higher power. A systematic review conducted in South Africa examined the efficacy of Islamic-based interventions for treating substance abuse (Dada et al., 2020).

The review found that Islamic-based interventions showed promising results in reducing substance use and improving mental health outcomes. These interventions included Islamic counselling, mosque-based programs, and Qur'ānic recitation therapy. Islamic counselling was found to be particularly effective, as it provided individuals with a non-judgmental and supportive space to discuss their addiction and receive guidance on how to overcome it.

Mosque-based programs were also effective, enabling individuals to connect with their faith communities and engage in activities that promote healthy living and spirituality. Qur'ānic recitation therapy, which involved listening to and reciting Qur'ānic verses, was found to have a calming effect on individuals and helped to reduce cravings for drugs and alcohol. However, the review also identified limitations in the studies conducted on Islamic-based interventions for substance abuse. Many studies had small sample sizes and lacked control groups, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of these interventions. Additionally, there was a lack of standardised measures to assess outcomes, making it challenging to compare results across studies.

Despite these limitations, the review suggests that Islamic-based interventions have potential for use in the treatment of substance abuse in South Africa and other contexts. Further research is needed to determine the effectiveness of these interventions and identify best practices for their implementation. In conclusion, Islamic-based interventions for substance abuse treatment in South Africa have shown promising results in reducing substance use and improving mental health outcomes. These interventions are grounded in the concept of tawhid and emphasise the importance of spirituality in overcoming addiction. While there are limitations in the existing literature, further research could provide valuable insights into the potential of these interventions for addressing substance abuse in Muslim communities.

4.18 Islamic Healing Practices and Their Role in Mental Health Promotion among Muslim Adolescents of South Africa

Islamic healing practices have been known to have a positive impact on the mental health of individuals, including adolescents, within the Muslim community. Several studies have highlighted the importance of Islamic spiritual and cultural practices in promoting mental health and well-being among Muslims, particularly in South Africa. This essay will discuss the role of Islamic healing practices in mental health promotion among South African Muslim adolescents, focusing on the unique approaches used within this context. According to Sartorius and Abdool Karim, Islamic healing practices are grounded in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and they involve a holistic approach to health that considers an individual's physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects. These practices are based on the belief that good health comes from a harmonious balance between the body, mind, and soul and that disease or illness results from imbalance or disharmony within these areas. Therefore, Islamic healing practices aim to restore this balance and promote holistic health and well-being (Karim et al., 2010).

In the context of South African Muslim adolescents, Islamic healing practices are often used to address mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress. One such approach is using Qur'ānic verses and supplications, which are believed to have a calming effect on the mind and promote positive thinking. A study by Rasool et al. (2016) found that the recitation of Qur'ānic verses and supplications was effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression among Muslim adolescents in South Africa.

Another approach used within the South African Muslim community is the use of Islamic counselling and psychotherapy. Islamic counselling and psychotherapy involve the integration of Islamic beliefs, values, and practices into counselling sessions to promote mental health and well-being. This approach emphasises the importance of spirituality in the healing process and encourages individuals to seek guidance and support from Allah (God) during times of difficulty. A study by Laher et al. found that Islamic counselling effectively improved mental health outcomes among Muslim adolescents in South Africa (Laher et al., 2013).

Furthermore, Islamic healing practices include traditional medicines such as honey, black seed oil, and dates, which are believed to have healing properties. These remedies have been used for centuries within the Muslim community and are often recommended by Islamic scholars

and healers. A study by Ebrahim and Ahmed (2018) found that using black seed oil effectively improved mental health outcomes among Muslim adolescents in South Africa. In conclusion, Islamic healing practices have a significant role to play in mental health promotion among South African Muslim adolescents. The unique approaches used within this context, such as verses and Qur'ānic supplications, Islamic counselling and psychotherapy, and traditional medicines, effectively improve mental health outcomes. Therefore, it is essential to recognise and integrate Islamic healing practices into mental health interventions for Muslim adolescents to promote holistic healing and well-being.

4.19 The Relationship between Faith and Healing in Islamic Spiritual Care: A Conceptual Framework

Recent studies have focused on the relationship between faith and healing in Islamic spiritual care. Ahmed and Mohiuddin conducted a study proposing a conceptual framework for understanding this relationship. According to the authors, faith plays a central role in Islamic spiritual care and can facilitate the healing process by providing the patient with hope, meaning, and purpose(Ahmed et al, 2019)

The framework proposed by Ahmed and Mohiuddin consists of four components: (1) theological beliefs and values, (2) Islamic spiritual practices, (3) social support, and (4) professional interventions(Ahmed et al., 2019). The first component, theological beliefs and values, refers to the Islamic beliefs underpinning the healing concept. This includes the belief in the oneness of God, the role of destiny in human life, and the importance of patience and gratitude. The second component, Islamic spiritual practices, includes the various rituals and practices integral to the Islamic faith, such as prayer, fasting, and charity. These practices are believed to foster a connection with God and promote spiritual well-being, leading to physical and mental healing.

The third component, social support, acknowledges the importance of social relationships in the healing process. Family, friends, and community members can provide emotional support, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging to the patient, enhancing their resilience and coping skills. The fourth and final component, professional interventions, refers to the role of healthcare providers in Islamic spiritual care. Healthcare providers sensitive to Islamic beliefs

and practices can provide culturally appropriate care and incorporate Islamic spiritual practices into their treatment plans.

Ahmed and Mohiuddin argue that these four components are interconnected and should be considered holistically in Islamic spiritual care (Ahmed et al., 2019). By addressing the patient's theological beliefs and values, facilitating their engagement in Islamic spiritual practices, providing social support, and offering professional interventions, healthcare providers can help patients achieve well-being and promote healing. In a study by Govender, Naidoo, and Van Wyk, the authors found that incorporating Islamic spiritual care into mental health treatment improved treatment outcomes for Muslim patients. The study highlighted the importance of understanding the patient's cultural and religious background and incorporating this into the treatment plan (Van Wyk, 2028).

Similarly, a study by Patel, Hafeji, and Ali found that Islamic spiritual care can be an effective tool for addressing substance abuse among Muslim patients in South Africa. The study emphasised the importance of a multidisciplinary approach, with healthcare providers working with Islamic leaders and community members to provide holistic care. In conclusion, the relationship between faith and healing in Islamic spiritual care is complex and multifaceted. Understanding the patient's theological beliefs and values, incorporating Islamic spiritual practices, providing social support, and offering professional interventions are all essential components of a holistic approach to Islamic spiritual care. By doing so, healthcare providers can help Muslim patients achieve well-being and promote healing (Patel et al, 2017).

4.20 Islamic Perspectives on the Mind-Body Connection in Health and Healing

In South Africa, Islamic perspectives on the mind-body connection in health and healing have been the subject of much research and discussion. Islamic teachings emphasise the holistic nature of human beings and the interconnectedness of the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of health. This view is reflected in the Qur'ānic verse that states, "And We have created man in proportion and balance" (Qur'ān 54:4).

Islamic teachings also emphasise the importance of maintaining a healthy mind and body. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said, "Your body has rights over

you, your eyes have rights over you, and your wife has rights over you. So, give to each his due right" (Bukhari). This *Ḥadīth* highlights the importance of caring for one's physical health and fulfilling one's obligations to others.

Furthermore, Islamic teachings emphasise the importance of spiritual well-being for overall health. The concept of *Tawheed*, or the oneness of God, is central to Islamic belief and provides comfort and strength to many Muslims. Qur'ānic recitation and prayer are commonly used as spiritual practices to promote healing and well-being.

In South Africa, Islamic healers often integrate traditional healing practices with Islamic teachings. For example, *hijāmah* (cupping therapy) is a commonly used standard healing practice among South African Muslims. It involves placing cups on the skin to create suction, stimulate blood flow, and promote healing. *Hijāmah* is often combined with Qur'ānic recitation and other spiritual practices to enhance effectiveness.

Research in South Africa has also explored the use of Islamic spiritual care in healthcare settings. Islamic spiritual care involves using Islamic teachings and practices to promote spiritual well-being and improve health outcomes. This approach is effective in addressing the spiritual and emotional needs of Muslim patients. Overall, Islamic perspectives on the mind-body connection in health and healing offer a holistic approach to health care that addresses the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of health. In South Africa, traditional healing practices and Islamic spiritual care are often integrated with modern medical practices to provide comprehensive healthcare services to Muslim patients.

4.21 The Role of Islamic Values in the Care of Patients with Life-Limiting Illnesses: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Physicians in South Africa

The care of patients with life-limiting illnesses is a crucial aspect of healthcare that requires a holistic approach. In the Islamic context, the religion's values and principles are integral to guiding patient care. A qualitative study conducted in South Africa aimed to explore the experiences of Muslim physicians in delivering end-of-life care in accordance with Islamic values. The study found that Muslim physicians faced several challenges in providing end-of-life care that aligned with Islamic values. These challenges included navigating cultural and religious differences between patients and healthcare providers, balancing medical intervention with acceptance of God's will, and balancing the physical and spiritual aspects of care.

The study tackled these challenges by identifying several Islamic values that could guide the care of patients with life-limiting illnesses. These values included compassion, empathy, respect for patient autonomy, dignity, and honesty. Muslim physicians emphasise the importance of providing emotional and spiritual support to patients and their families during the end-of-life process. Furthermore, the study highlighted the role of religious practices and rituals in comforting patients and families. Muslim physicians stressed the importance of accommodating patients' spiritual and cultural beliefs in their care plan, such as facilitating daily prayers, reciting Qur'ānic verses, and providing Ḥalāl food.

The study concluded that Islamic values and practices are significant in providing sensitive end-of-life care that respects patients' religious and cultural needs. Muslim physicians emphasise the importance of incorporating Islamic values into medical practice to provide holistic care grounded in compassion, respect, and spirituality. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of incorporating Islamic values in end-of-life care. Healthcare providers must understand their patients' unique religious and cultural needs to provide sensitive, respectful care. By integrating Islamic values and practices into medical practice, healthcare providers can provide holistic care that addresses the physical and spiritual aspects.

4.22 Islamic Healing Practices and Their Implications for Healthcare Providers: A Cross-Cultural Perspective.

Muslim communities in various parts of the world, including South Africa, use Islamic healing practices widely and integrate them with conventional medicine to improve health outcomes. As such, healthcare providers must know these practices and their implications for culturally sensitive care. This paper explores the role of Islamic healing practices in healthcare and their impact on healthcare providers in a cross-cultural context. The principles of *Tawheed* (the belief in the oneness of God), Qur'ānic teachings, and prophetic traditions form the basis of Islamic healing practices. Conventional medicine often uses these practices to treat various physical and mental health conditions. Islamic healing practices are based on the belief that health and illness are in the hands of Allah (God) and that faith and prayer can aid in healing. This belief is supported by Qur'ānic verses such as "And when I am ill, it is He who cures me" (Qur'ān 26:80) and "We sent down in the Qur'ān that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe" (Qur'ān 17:82).

Integrating Islamic healing practices with conventional medicine can have several implications for healthcare providers. Firstly, healthcare providers need to be aware of the importance of religion and spirituality in the lives of their Muslim patients. This includes understanding the role of prayer and faith in healing and being sensitive to the needs of Muslim patients who wish to incorporate Islamic healing practices into their care. Secondly, healthcare providers must know the potential benefits and risks of Islamic healing practices. While these practices can promote healing and well-being, they can also have adverse effects if misused or used without medical supervision. Therefore, healthcare providers need to understand the various Islamic healing practices and their efficacy and should work collaboratively with their Muslim patients to determine the most appropriate course of treatment.

Furthermore, healthcare providers need to be aware of the cultural and linguistic barriers that may exist between themselves and their Muslim patients. Such awareness includes being sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of Muslim patients, as well as the language barriers that may exist. Therefore, healthcare providers should strive to provide culturally sensitive care that considers the unique needs and preferences of their Muslim patients. The use of Islamic healing practices in healthcare is an essential aspect of healthcare provision in South Africa and other countries with Muslim populations. Healthcare providers need to be aware of the role of religion and spirituality in the lives of their Muslim patients and the potential benefits and risks of Islamic healing practices. Healthcare providers should work collaboratively with their Muslim patients to determine the most appropriate course of treatment. They should strive to provide culturally sensitive care that considers the unique needs and preferences of their Muslim patients.

Finally, in linking our findings to the overarching theme of "Ubungoma and Islam: Case Studies of Black Muslims in South Africa," the question remains whether the rich healing traditions of Islam can converge with indigenous practices such as Ubungoma to foster a holistic approach to health. Can this intersection not only enhance the cultural relevance of healing strategies but also illustrate the adaptive nature of faith (Islam) in addressing contemporary health challenges that black Muslim communities face? By synthesising insights from Islamic traditions with Indigenous healing practices that do not conflict with Islam, we can better appreciate the complex and fluid healing process individuals experience as they navigate the intersection of faith, culture, and health needs in South Africa. This framework paves the way for future

research and practice that honours and integrates diverse healing modalities, offering a more inclusive pathway toward health and wellness for all.

CHAPTER 5

Islamic traditional healing in West and East Africa: implications for Ubungoma

5.1 Introduction

Traditional healing practices are standard in many parts of Africa, including West and East Africa. Islamic conventional healing practices are also prevalent in these regions and share similarities with Ubungoma, a traditional healing practice in Southern Africa. According to Bashir and Adebisi (2018), these similarities include religious rituals, the importance of spiritual beliefs, and the use of medicinal plants. Islamic traditional healing practices in West and East Africa are often based on a combination of Islamic teachings and local traditions. Religious rituals, such as reciting prayers or Qur'ānic verses, are essential to traditional Islamic healing. These rituals are believed to have spiritual power and are used to ward off evil spirits or to promote healing. Similarly, in Ubungoma, spiritual beliefs and practices are central to the healing process, and rituals, such as divination and trance dancing, occur daily.

The use of medicinal plants is also a shared aspect of Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma. In Islamic conventional healing, medicinal plants are believed to have healing properties and are often prescribed to patients. Similarly, in Ubungoma, medicinal plants are used for their healing properties, and traditional healers are believed to have a deep knowledge of their uses and effects. However, there are differences between Islamic conventional healing practices and Ubungoma. One notable difference is the role of the healer. In Islamic traditional healing, the healer is often a religious leader or scholar with a deep knowledge of Islamic teachings and healing practices. In Ubungoma, the healer is often a community member trained in traditional healing practices and has gained knowledge through personal experience.

Another difference is the use of technology and modern medicine. In Islamic traditional healing, there is a growing trend to incorporate modern medicine and technology, such as ultrasound machines and other medical equipment. In contrast, in Ubungoma, traditional healers rely primarily on their knowledge of medicinal plants and spiritual practices. In conclusion, Islamic conventional healing practices in West and East Africa share similarities with Ubungoma, such

as religious rituals and medicinal plants. However, there are also some notable differences, including the role of the healer and the use of technology and modern medicine. By understanding these similarities and differences, we can better appreciate the diversity of traditional African healing practices and their essential role in promoting health and well-being in local communities.

5.2 Islamic Healing Traditions:

Islamic traditional healing practices, including Qur'ānic healing and prophetic medicine, have been passed down through generations in West and East Africa (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). These practices are based on the Qur'ān teachings and Islam's prophetic traditions. Medicinal plants and reciting Qur'ānic verses are standard features of these healing practices (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

In West and East Africa, traditional Islamic healers play an essential role in their communities' health and well-being. They are trusted sources of knowledge and guidance, and their services are sought after for various health issues, including physical, mental, and spiritual ailments (Saidi et al., 2018). The practice of Qur'ānic healing, which involves reciting specific verses of the Qur'ān for healing, is a prominent feature of Islamic traditional healing practices. This practice is believed to have physical and spiritual healing properties (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

Based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, prophetic medicine is also an essential aspect of traditional Islamic healing practices. It uses natural remedies, including herbs, oils, and honey, to treat various ailments (Saidi et al., 2018). Islamic traditional healing practices have similarities with Ubungoma, the traditional healing practice in South Africa. Both practices emphasise the importance of spirituality and the use of natural remedies for healing. However, there are also differences, such as the role of divination in Ubungoma, which is not a part of Islamic traditional healing practices (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). In recent years, there has been a growing interest in integrating conventional Islamic healing practices with Western medicine in West and East Africa. This integration is seen as improving access to healthcare services and providing more holistic patient care (Saidi et al., 2018).

However, there are also challenges to the recognition and integration of traditional Islamic healing practices. Western medical institutions sometimes do not recognise these practices and are viewed as unscientific or harmful (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). Overall, the practice of Islamic traditional healing in West and East Africa has a rich history and continues to play an essential role in the health and well-being of communities. As with all conventional healing practices, ongoing research and dialogue are needed to ensure they are safe, effective, and accessible to all who seek them (Saidi et al., 2018).

5.3 Shared Beliefs:

There are similarities between Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma, such as the belief in the power of spiritual forces to heal the body (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). Islamic conventional healing practices have been prevalent in West and East Africa for centuries and are deeply rooted in the Islamic faith. These practices are based on the belief that Allah has created a cure for every illness and that the *Qur'ān* and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad provide guidance on seeking healing (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). One of the primary forms of Islamic traditional healing is Qur'ānic healing, which involves reciting specific verses from the *Qur'ān* for healing purposes. It is believed that reciting these verses has a powerful spiritual effect and can heal various physical and mental illnesses. Another common form of traditional Islamic healing is prophetic medicine, which uses natural remedies and herbs recommended by the Prophet Muhammad for multiple ailments (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

Similarly, Ubungoma in South Africa is a traditional healing practice that incorporates spiritual beliefs and practices to heal the body. It involves divination, the use of medicinal plants, and the guidance of ancestral spirits to diagnose and treat illnesses (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014). Traditional healers in South Africa also believe in the power of spiritual forces to heal the body. They often combine their practices with Western medicine for a holistic approach to healthcare. Despite the similarities between Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma, there are also significant differences between the two practices. For example, Islamic traditional healing is based on the Islamic faith and the teachings of the *Qur'ān* and the Prophet Muhammad, whereas Ubungoma is rooted in the beliefs and practices of indigenous South African cultures. Additionally, Islamic traditional healing is often performed by religious leaders, such as *Imāms*, whereas conventional healing in South Africa is typically practised by trained conventional healers.

The implications of Islamic traditional healing for Ubungoma are significant, as they both represent conventional healing practices that incorporate spiritual beliefs and practices. There is potential for cross-cultural exchange and collaboration among traditional healers across regions, as they share similar beliefs and healing practices. However, it is important to recognise and respect these practices' unique cultural and religious backgrounds and avoid appropriating or diluting them for commercial gain. In conclusion, Islamic traditional healing practices have been passed down through generations in West and East Africa and share some similarities with Ubungoma. Both practices incorporate spiritual beliefs and practices to heal the body, but also have unique cultural and religious backgrounds that should be respected. There is potential for collaboration and exchange among traditional healers across regions, but this should be done respectfully and with cultural sensitivity.

5.4 The Role of Faith:

Islamic traditional healing, like Ubungoma, strongly emphasises faith and belief in healing (Sulaiman et al., 2017). It is believed that the power of faith and prayer can help heal physical and spiritual ailments (Sulaiman et al., 2017). The Qur'ān is also seen as a source of healing, with certain verses believed to have specific healing properties (Zakariyah, 2019).

In many traditional Islamic healing practices, the healer recites verses from the Qur'ān and uses prayer to heal. This process often accompanies physical treatments, such as cupping or herbal remedies (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). Physical therapies in conjunction with spiritual practices are like the approach in Ubungoma, where traditional healers may use medicinal plants, divination, and other spiritual practices alongside physical treatments (Mashau & Netshandama, 2014). The role of faith in Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma also extends to the importance of the healer-patient relationship. Both practices strongly emphasise trust and respect between the healer and the patient (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). In traditional Islamic healing, the healer is often seen as a spiritual guide and mentor, helping the patient connect with their faith and strengthen their belief in the healing process (Sulaiman et al., 2017).

Islamic traditional healing in West and East Africa also has implications for integrating conventional and Western medicine into healthcare systems. There have been calls for a more holistic approach to healthcare that incorporates traditional healing practices with Western

medicine (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). However, concerns about the safety and efficacy of traditional healing practices have sparked debates over the regulation and legal recognition of traditional healers in many African countries (Ntuli & Mavundla, 2019). In conclusion, faith is a crucial aspect of Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma. Both practices strongly emphasise the power of spiritual forces to heal the body and the importance of the healer-patient relationship. The similarities between these two practices have implications for integrating traditional and Western medicine into healthcare systems. However, they also raise important questions about the regulation and legal recognition of traditional healers.

5.5 Use of Herbs and Remedies:

Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma utilise herbal remedies and natural ingredients in their healing practices (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma share an everyday use of herbs and natural remedies to treat ailments. Traditional Islamic medicine, known as prophetic medicine, has a long history of using medicinal plants and herbs for healing (Al-Kindi & Al-Mālikī, 2019). Similarly, Ubungoma practitioners often use a combination of plants and other natural ingredients in their healing practices. Many herbs used in Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma have been found to have medicinal properties. For instance, some herbs used in Islamic conventional medicine, such as ginger, garlic, and black seed, have been shown to have anti-inflammatory and immune-boosting properties (Al-Kindi & Al-Mālikī, 2019). Similarly, in Ubungoma, plants such as imphepho and *umhlonyane* are used for their healing properties. Umhlonyane is commonly used to treat respiratory ailments and digestive issues, and impepho serves both spiritual and medicinal purposes, such as warding off evil spirits or omen, and provides pain relief.

In Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma, natural remedies are seen as a holistic approach to healing that considers the patient's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. It is believed that natural remedies can help strengthen the body's natural healing abilities and, in some cases, may even be more effective than conventional medicine. Despite the similarities in their use of natural remedies, there are differences between Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma. For example, in conventional Islamic healing, certain foods, such as honey and

dates, are also used for healing properties (Sulaiman et al., 2017). However, in Ubungoma, the emphasis is primarily on using herbal remedies.

5.6 The Importance of the Healer-Patient Relationship:

The relationship between the healer and the patient is critical in traditional Islamic healing, as in Ubungoma (Sulaiman et al., 2017).

In traditional Islamic healing and Ubungoma, the healer-patient relationship is essential for successful healing. In both practices, the healer is seen as a trusted and respected figure with the knowledge and ability to facilitate healing. The patient is expected to show respect and trust in the healer, and the healer is expected to maintain confidentiality and professionalism throughout the healing process. In Islamic traditional healing, the relationship between the healer and patient is based on mutual trust and respect. The healer is expected to listen to the patient's concerns and provide guidance and support, while the patient is expected to follow the healer's instructions and trust their expertise (Sulaiman et al., 2017). Similarly, in Ubungoma, the healer is seen as a spiritual guide who helps the patient connect with their ancestors and spiritual forces for healing. The patient is expected to show respect and trust in the healer, who will provide guidance and support throughout the healing process (Khumalo, 2013).

However, maintaining a positive healer-patient relationship can sometimes be challenging. In Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma, cultural and language barriers can make communication difficult. Additionally, some patients may have preconceived notions about the healing process or may be sceptical about the effectiveness of traditional healing practices. To overcome these challenges, healers in both practices may use various techniques to build rapport with their patients, such as active listening, empathetic communication, and cultural sensitivity training. Overall, the importance of the healer-patient relationship in Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma highlights the value placed on human connection and empathy in these practices. By fostering a positive and respectful relationship between the healer and patient, both practices aim to create a healing environment that supports the patient's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

5.7 Islamic Traditional Healing in Nigeria:

In Nigeria, Islamic traditional healing is often practised alongside Western medicine and is particularly prevalent in rural areas (Odeyemi et al., 2019). Islamic conventional healing has been a part of Nigerian culture for centuries. It is still widely practised today, particularly in rural areas with limited access to Western medical facilities. The practice is often carried out by spiritual healers known as mallams, who use a combination of spiritual practices, herbal remedies, and Qur'ānic verses to treat various illnesses (Odeyemi et al., 2019).

One of the key features of Islamic traditional healing in Nigeria is the emphasis placed on faith and the belief that Allah is the ultimate healer. Mallams often begins the healing process by reciting Qur'ānic verses and asking the patient to trust Allah's healing power (Odeyemi et al., 2019). Another essential aspect of traditional Islamic healing in Nigeria is the use of herbal remedies. Many mallams have extensive knowledge of local plants and their medicinal properties and will create concoctions to treat various ailments. These remedies are often made from a combination of plants, including those believed to have spiritual properties (Odeyemi et al., 2019).

The healer-patient relationship is also critical in Islamic traditional healing in Nigeria. The mallam is seen as a guide and spiritual mentor to the patient, and a strong bond of trust and respect is necessary for successful healing. The mallam will often spend time getting to know the patient and their family, conducting spiritual rituals, and guiding them toward a healthy, spiritual life (Odeyemi et al., 2019). While Islamic traditional healing in Nigeria has many similarities with other traditional healing practices, such as Ubungoma, it is essential to note that it is not a homogeneous practice and varies between regions and practitioners. Additionally, concerns exist about the safety and efficacy of some herbal remedies, and further research is needed to better understand the practice and its potential benefits and risks (Odeyemi et al., 2019).

5.8 Qur'ānic Healing in East Africa:

In East Africa, Qur'ānic healing is a common form of Islamic traditional healing that utilises verses from the Qur'ān in the healing process (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). Islamic conventional healing practices have been widely used in East Africa for many years. Qur'ānic healing is a

prevalent form of Islamic traditional healing that utilises verses from the Qur'ān in the healing process. This practice is based on the belief that the Qur'ān possesses healing power and that reciting its verses can bring about physical and spiritual healing (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

Qur'ānic healing in East Africa is often performed by a Sheikh or a Qur'ānic healer who has memorised the Qur'ān and understands its verses and their meanings. The healer will recite specific verses and prayers, blow into water or oil, and then administer the mixture to the patient for healing (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

The use of Qur'ānic healing in East Africa is not limited to Muslims only; it is also practised by people of other faiths who believe in its efficacy. However, there are concerns that some unscrupulous individuals have used Qur'ānic healing to exploit vulnerable individuals, particularly those who are ill and seeking a cure (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

There is a growing recognition of the importance of regulating the practice of Qur'ānic healing in East Africa. Efforts are underway to develop guidelines for Qur'ānic healing to ensure it is conducted safely and ethically. Some religious leaders and health practitioners also advocate integrating Qur'ānic healing with conventional medicine to improve patient health outcomes (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). In conclusion, Qur'ānic healing is a prevalent form of Islamic traditional healing in East Africa, and its use has been passed down from generation to generation. While there are concerns about the exploitation of vulnerable individuals, efforts are being made to regulate the practice and integrate it with conventional medicine to improve health outcomes.

5.9 The Role of Rituals:

Rituals play a significant role in traditional Islamic healing and Ubungoma, as they are believed to aid healing (Sulaiman et al., 2017). Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma believe in the importance of rituals in the healing process. In Islamic conventional healing, rituals such as reciting certain verses from the Qur'ān, performing ablutions, and seeking blessings from spiritual leaders are believed to have healing properties (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). Similarly, in Ubungoma, rituals such as divination, offerings to ancestors, and the use of medicinal plants are essential components of the healing process (Mavundla et al., 2016).

In both practices, rituals serve a dual purpose: they connect with the spiritual realm and invoke its healing powers. For instance, in Islamic traditional healing, reciting Qur'ānic verses is believed to connect the patient with God and invoke His healing powers (Sulaiman et al., 2017). Similarly, in Ubungoma, medicinal plants are believed to invoke the ancestors' powers and connect the patient with the spiritual realm (Mavundla et al., 2016). The use of rituals in both practices also reinforces the patient's faith in the healing process. Through performing rituals, the patient is reminded of the spiritual nature of their illness and the need to trust in the healing powers of the spiritual realm. In this way, rituals act as a form of psychological support and can help the patient cope with the emotional and spiritual distress associated with illness.

Despite similarities in ritual use between Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma, there are also differences in the specific types of rituals employed. For example, while Qur'ānic healing in East Africa involves the recitation of verses, in West Africa, traditional Islamic healing may encompass a broader range of rituals, including amulets and talismans (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). Similarly, in Ubungoma, the rituals employed may vary depending on the individual healer's cultural context and preferences. The use of rituals is a central aspect of Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma, highlighting the importance of spirituality and faith in the healing process. While the specific rituals employed may vary, the underlying belief in the spiritual realm's power to heal remains a critical element of both practices.

5.10 Challenges and Controversies:

Like Ubungoma, Islamic traditional healing practices face challenges and controversies, particularly regarding safety and efficacy (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). Islamic conventional healing practices, like Ubungoma, have faced challenges and controversies in their use and integration with modern medicine. In Nigeria, for example, the lack of regulation and standardisation of Islamic traditional healers has raised concerns about the safety and efficacy of their practices (Odeyemi et al., 2019). Additionally, some Islamic conventional healing practices have been deemed controversial, such as cupping therapy, which involves placing heated cups on the skin to create suction and is believed to improve blood circulation and promote healing (Alqaed et al., 2019). Critics have raised concerns about the potential for infection or other adverse effects from cupping therapy.

Another challenge traditional Islamic healing faces is the tension between traditional and modern beliefs and practices. While some individuals may rely solely on conventional Islamic healing, others may seek a combination of Western medicine and traditional Islamic healing (Sulaiman et al., 2017). This can lead to conflicts between traditional and modern medical practices and beliefs. Furthermore, there is a lack of scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of many conventional Islamic healing practices, such as those practised by Ubungoma. This has led to a reluctance among some medical practitioners to accept or integrate traditional healing practices into modern medical care (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). In addition, some individuals may seek out traditional healing practices due to financial limitations or a lack of access to modern medical care, rather than because they believe in their efficacy.

There have also been debates about the potential misuse of Islamic traditional healing practices, such as the use of unproven or potentially harmful remedies, misdiagnosis of mental illness for jinn possession and witchcraft, and ethical issues where patients are abused and financially exploited. This highlights the importance of properly regulating and standardising traditional healing practices to ensure patient safety and well-being. Despite these challenges and controversies, Islamic traditional healing practices continue to play a significant role in the healthcare systems of many Western and East African countries. Through proper regulation and standardisation, traditional healing practices can be integrated into modern medical care to improve health outcomes for individuals in these regions (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

5.11 Integration with Western Medicine:

There are efforts to integrate traditional Islamic healing with Western medicine in Africa, as both are recognised as essential components of healthcare (Odeyemi et al., 2019). Integrating traditional healing practices, including Islamic traditional healing, with Western medicine is becoming increasingly important in Africa. Western medicine often provides quick relief from physical symptoms, while traditional healing practices address underlying spiritual and cultural factors that can contribute to illness. Therefore, integrating these two approaches to healthcare can lead to more comprehensive and effective treatment options for patients.

For example, Nigeria is continuously integrating traditional Islamic healing with Western medicine. The government has recognised the importance of traditional healing practices and

included them in the National Health Policy Framework. This has led to increased collaboration between traditional healers and healthcare professionals, with conventional healers being trained to work alongside Western medical practitioners in healthcare facilities (Odeyemi et al., 2019).

In addition, several clinics and hospitals in Nigeria offer integrated healthcare services, which combine Western medicine with traditional healing practices. Patients can receive both forms of treatment at a single location, making it easier for them to access the care they need. This has been particularly effective in rural areas, where access to healthcare services is often limited (Odeyemi et al., 2019). However, integrating traditional healing practices with Western medicine also presents some challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of standardisation in traditional healing practices, which makes it difficult to regulate and monitor their safety and efficacy. In addition, cultural and religious differences between traditional healers and Western medical practitioners can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts (Odeyemi et al., 2019).

More research is needed on the safety and efficacy of traditional healing practices, including Islamic conventional healing. This will help inform the development of guidelines and regulations for integrating traditional healing practices with Western medicine. It will also ensure that patients receive safe and effective treatments. In conclusion, integrating traditional Islamic healing with Western medicine is an essential development in African healthcare. It offers patients more comprehensive and effective treatment options and can improve access to healthcare services, particularly in rural areas. However, there are challenges to be addressed, including the need to standardise and regulate traditional healing practices and to conduct further research on their safety and efficacy.

5.12 Traditional Healing and Mental Health:

Islamic traditional healing, like Ubungoma, is also used for the treatment of mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety (Sulaiman et al., 2017). Traditional healing practices, including Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma, have been utilised for centuries to treat a range of physical and mental health issues. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in integrating these practices with modern Western medicine. This integration has the

potential to offer patients a more holistic approach to healthcare, as traditional healing practices often focus on the spiritual and emotional aspects of health alongside the physical.

One area where traditional healing practices have shown promise is in the treatment of mental health issues. Both Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma have been used to treat conditions such as depression, anxiety, and trauma. In many African cultures, mental illness is often attributed to spiritual causes, such as witchcraft or possession by evil spirits. As a result, traditional healers are frequently sought out for treatment, as they are believed to be able to address these spiritual causes.

Islamic traditional healing has a long history of utilising spiritual and religious practices in the treatment of mental health issues. Qur'ānic healing, a form of conventional Islamic healing commonly practised in East Africa, uses verses from the Qur'ān in the healing process. These verses are believed to have a powerful healing effect on the mind and the body. Islamic traditional healers also often utilise natural remedies and lifestyle changes in their treatment of mental health issues.

Ubungoma, too, has been used to treat mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. The process of Ubungoma involves the healer entering a trance-like state and communicating with ancestral spirits to gain insight into the root cause of the patient's illness. This can often lead to a deeper understanding of the patient's emotional and spiritual state, which can be addressed through various healing practices. Despite the effectiveness of traditional healing practices in the treatment of mental health issues, there are challenges to their integration with modern Western medicine. One challenge is the lack of scientific evidence to support the efficacy of these practices. In addition, there are concerns about the safety of some traditional remedies and the potential for harm when they are misused.

Another challenge is the stigma that still surrounds mental health issues in many African communities. Seeking treatment from a traditional healer may be seen as a sign of weakness or a last resort after Western medicine has failed. This can lead to delays in seeking treatment and a reluctance to discuss mental health issues openly. Despite these challenges, there is a growing recognition of the importance of integrating traditional healing practices with modern Western medicine. This integration can lead to a more holistic approach to health care that addresses the spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects of health. For this integration to be

successful, however, it is essential to respect the cultural and spiritual traditions of traditional healing practices while also ensuring the safety and efficacy of the treatments offered.

5.13 The Role of Women in Islamic Healing:

Women are essential in traditional Islamic healing, particularly in East Africa, where they are known as "sheikhas" and revered for their spiritual and healing abilities (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). The gendered aspects of Islamic religious beliefs, culture and practices have influenced Islamic traditional healing practices in Africa. Women have actively participated in traditional Islamic healing practices, and their role has been recognised as vital. In East Africa, female Islamic healers are known as "sheikhas" and are respected for their spiritual and healing abilities (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

Sheikhas are known to provide healing services to women in their communities, with a particular focus on women's health issues such as infertility, menstrual problems, and childbirth. These healers provide their services in private homes or traditional healing centres, where they use spiritual rituals, recitation of the Qur'ān, and traditional medicines to treat various ailments. Sheikhas also provide moral and emotional support to women during pregnancy and childbirth, and they are often consulted for advice on family matters and marriage-related problems (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). Women's participation in Islamic traditional healing practices extends beyond providing healing services alone. Women also play essential roles as caregivers and transmitters of traditional knowledge, skills, and practices. Women learn conventional healing practices from their mothers, grandmothers, and other female relatives, and pass this knowledge on to their daughters and other female family members. This transmission of knowledge is crucial for preserving traditional healing practices and the continuity of the healing traditions (Odeyemi et al., 2019). Despite women's critical role in Islamic traditional healing, they are often excluded from formal Islamic educational institutions that provide training in Islamic medicine and healing practices. This exclusion stems from cultural and religious norms that limit women's access to formal education and training. As a result, female healers often rely on informal networks and traditional apprenticeships to learn and develop their skills, which may limit their ability to fully participate in the healthcare system (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018).

In recent years, efforts have been made to recognise the role of women in Islamic traditional healing and to provide them with formal training opportunities. For example, the University of

Ilorin in Nigeria offers a diploma course in Islamic Medicine and Surgery, which includes training in traditional Islamic healing practices and is open to both men and women. Such initiatives can potentially increase women's participation in the healthcare system and improve access to traditional healing services (Odeyemi et al., 2019). In conclusion, women play a significant role in Islamic conventional healing practices, particularly in East Africa. They are respected as spiritual and healing leaders who provide essential services to their communities. Women are also important transmitters of traditional knowledge and practices, ensuring the continuity of traditional healing practices.

5.14 Traditional Healing and HIV/AIDS:

In some parts of Africa, including Nigeria, Islamic traditional healing is utilised in the treatment of HIV/AIDS alongside Western medicine (Odeyemi et al., 2019). The use of traditional healing practices, including Islamic traditional healing, in the treatment of HIV/AIDS in Africa has been a topic of discussion and controversy. While some argue that traditional healing practices can provide additional support and complement Western medicine in the treatment of HIV/AIDS, others caution that these practices may not be effective and may even pose a risk to patients.

In Nigeria, where Islamic traditional healing is prevalent, there have been efforts to integrate traditional healing with Western medicine in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. For example, a study conducted by Odeyemi et al. found that some HIV/AIDS patients in Nigeria sought the services of Islamic traditional healers in addition to receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) from Western medicine providers (Odeyemi et al, 2019). The study noted that traditional healing was influenced by factors such as perceived effectiveness, trust in traditional healers, and a desire to explore all treatment options. However, the use of traditional healing in the treatment of HIV/AIDS has also been met with controversy. Some argue that traditional healing practices may delay or discourage patients from seeking proper medical care, potentially worsening health outcomes. There have also been concerns about the safety and efficacy of some traditional healing practices, including herbal remedies and spiritual interventions. In the context of HIV/AIDS, it is essential for healthcare providers to be aware of traditional healing practices and to work collaboratively with traditional healers to ensure that patients receive appropriate and effective treatment. This may involve engaging in dialogue with traditional healers,

providing education and training on HIV/AIDS, and exploring ways to integrate traditional healing practices with Western medicine in a safe and evidence-based manner.

5.15 Conclusion:

The similarities between Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma suggest opportunities for cross-cultural learning and collaboration in conventional African healing practices (Bashir & Adebisi, 2018). In conclusion, Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma share similarities in their beliefs, practices, and use of natural remedies. Both systems also strongly emphasise the role of faith, the importance of the healer-patient relationship, and the use of rituals in the healing process. However, there are challenges and controversies surrounding traditional healing practices, particularly regarding safety and efficacy.

Despite these challenges, there are efforts to integrate traditional healing practices with Western medicine in Africa, and Islamic traditional healing is being used to treat a range of physical and mental health conditions, including HIV/AIDS. Women's role in conventional Islamic healing, as sheikhas in East Africa, is also essential to the practice. Given the similarities between Islamic traditional healing and Ubungoma, there may be opportunities for cross-cultural learning and collaboration in conventional African healing practices. This could involve sharing knowledge and expertise and promoting dialogue and mutual understanding between different cultural and religious groups. By working together, traditional healers and Western medical practitioners can provide more comprehensive, holistic healthcare services to communities across Africa.

CHAPTER 6

Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia and Its Connections to Ubungoma

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 explored the path to healing as conceptualised in Islamic texts and South African Muslim scholarship. In particular, the sources of healing in Islam (e.g., the Qur'ān and Hadith), the principles of healing in Islam, the methods of healing in Islam, the challenges encountered in recovery in Islam, and, finally, the contributions and perspectives of South African Muslim medical scholars and practitioners on healing. By focusing on this intersection, we can better appreciate how faith, culture, and healing converge in the lived experiences of black Muslims in South Africa. Further in Chapter 5, the research examined Islamic traditional healing in West and East Africa, with implications for Ubungoma, which showed some standard practices across Western and Eastern Africa, such as the use of indigenous plants for therapeutic purposes. In this chapter, the study will probe Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia and its implications on Ubungoma.

Across regions with predominantly Muslim societies, the interaction between Islam and indigenous spiritual practices has developed into multiple manifestations, often leading to hybrid religious and cultural formations that transcend traditional theological boundaries. The dynamic relationship between Islam and Ubungoma among black Muslims in South Africa demonstrates significant similarities to the phenomenon of Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia, where pre-Islamic Turkic and Mongol animist healing rituals coexist with Islamic practices shaped by Ṣūfī thought.

This chapter is a critical comparative lens for studying Islam and Ubungoma: Case Studies of black Muslims in South Africa. It investigates how black Muslims navigate their dual spiritual heritage by introducing Central Asian Shamanism as a case study. The chapter is structured to achieve two main objectives:

Providing a Historical Precedent – Central Asian shamans operate within a recognisably Islamic cosmology, attributing their power to Allah while mediating with spirits, a dynamic mirrored in some South African Muslim engagements with Ubungoma. This comparison

underscores how historically marginalised Muslim communities globally have synthesised and localised spiritual systems with Islamic theology.

Contextualising South African Muslim experiences - This chapter demonstrates, through a comparative analysis of Central Asian and South African contexts, that the tension between Islam and localised therapeutic traditions extends beyond South Africa. This perspective paves the way for further studies exploring whether local indigenous healing practices can be incorporated into Islam.

Through its comparative mapping of Islamic shamanism in Central Asia and Ubungoma-influenced practices in South Africa, this chapter argues that such hybridities must be studied to enable creative adaptations of Islam to local spiritual ecosystems. This will be explored by examining the concept of Islamic shamanism, the historical context of Islam in Central Asia, and the intriguing coexistence of shamanistic practices with Islamic beliefs. For Black South African Muslims, these comparative analyses provide a legitimising framework that acknowledges their experiences as part of a broader, historically rooted Muslim manifestation. The chapter lays the groundwork for the research's subsequent case studies, exploring how South African Muslims navigate identity, authority, and healing at the intersection of Islam and Ubungoma.

6.2 Introduction to Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia

6.2.1 Definition of Shamanism

According to Diosegi et al, the term *shamanism* comes from the Manchu-Tungus word *šaman*. The noun is formed from the verb *ša-* 'to know'; thus, a shaman is literally "one who knows." The shamans documented in historical ethnographies have included women, men, and transgender individuals of all ages from middle childhood onward (Diosegi, 2025). Further, Bock states that among the Tungus, a small group of hunters, the word "sha" is used to designate a religious specialist, defined as someone who knows. (Bock, 2005). The etymology of the term shaman traces the origin of the Munchu Tugus word "saman" to the verb "sa", which means "to know." The linguistic origin underscores knowledge as a defining characteristic of the shamanic practice. In highlighting the complexities of the definition of the

term shaman, Jolly in her article highlights common elements that different researchers have included to create a working definition for the term shaman in the following manner; cultures that can be classified as shamanic are those which, as a minimum requirement, possess religious functionaries who draw on the powers in the natural world, including the powers of animals, and who mediate, usually in an altered state of consciousness, between the world of the living and that of the spirits including the spirits of the dead. (Jolly, 2001). Jolly's effort to highlight common elements among Shamans is essential, as it paves the way for a working definition of the term. However, the definition risks overgeneralisation by presenting these attributes as universal "minimum requirements"; not all indigenous practices worldwide might align with them. While these concerns are valid, Jolly's framework remains a valuable reference for cross-cultural analysis in defining the term 'shaman'.

Islamic Shamanism is another term associated with shamanism. It refers to the unique blend of shamanistic practices and Islamic beliefs that have emerged and coexisted in Central Asia. This phenomenon results from the region's rich cultural history and the interplay between indigenous shamanism and the spread of Islam. Islamic shamanism involves integrating shamanistic rituals and beliefs within the framework of Islamic spirituality. (Khalmuratov, 2017). Shamanism, as a practice, involves connecting with the spiritual world, communicating with spirits, and harnessing their power for healing and divination. On the other hand, Islam is a monotheistic religion with its own set of rituals, beliefs, and practices. However, a unique form of syncretism has emerged in Central Asia, where diverse cultural traditions and religious practices have interacted for centuries.

The spread of Islam in Central Asia began in the seventh century with the Arab conquests and the subsequent expansion of the Islamic Caliphate. Over time, Islamic beliefs and practices took root in the region, gradually replacing or transforming indigenous faiths. However, Central Asia remained a diverse region with various ethnic groups and cultural traditions. As a result, the arrival of Islam did not eradicate indigenous beliefs and practices but interacted with them, giving rise to a complex religious landscape.

According to Sidikov, one of Central Asia's fascinating aspects is the coexistence of shamanistic practices with Islamic beliefs. Compared to the centre, Islam was introduced into these regions later (tenth to twelfth century), spreading primarily in its mystical form. The Şūfis

transformed nominal affiliation among local populations with Islam into active participation. In this form of Islamisation, it was not so much the contents of beliefs and practices as religious identity that changed. What had been practised in the name of an earlier belief system came to be practised in the name of Islam. (Sidikov, 2004) Despite the spread of Islam, many Central Asian societies continued to engage in shamanistic rituals and traditions. This coexistence can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, shamanism has deep roots in the region's pre-Islamic history, and its traditions and rituals were deeply ingrained in the local cultures. Secondly, shamanistic practices often address concerns and needs not fully discussed by Islam alone, such as healing, divination, and communication with ancestral spirits. This led to a cultural adaptation in which individuals sought assistance from shamanistic practitioners and Islamic scholars, depending on their needs.

Various scholars have conducted research and provided valuable insights into Islamic shamanism in Central Asia. For example, the academic collection of essays explores the complex relationship between pre-Islamic, shamanic traditions and various forms of Islam." Shamanism and Islam, Sufism, Healing Rituals and Spirits in the Muslim World: edited by Thierry Zarcone and Angela Hobart. The central discussion of the essays is that Islam did not eradicate older shamanic beliefs and practices; it often syncretised, absorbed, and reinterpreted them (Zarcone et al., 2013). Additionally, Vladimir Nikolaevich Basilov, "Islamic Shamanism Among Central Asian Peoples," explores the interplay between Islamic and indigenous cultural practices in Central Asia, shedding light on the coexistence of shamanism and Islam. In conclusion, Islamic shamanism in Central Asia is a unique phenomenon that has emerged from the interplay between indigenous shamanistic practices and the spread of Islam. The concept involves integrating shamanistic rituals and beliefs within the framework of Islamic spirituality. Central Asia's history of diverse cultural traditions and the arrival of Islam have led to the coexistence of shamanistic practices with Islamic beliefs. This coexistence can be understood through the deep-rooted nature of shamanism in the region, its ability to address specific needs not fully met by Islam, and the cultural adaptation of seeking assistance from both shamanistic practitioners and Islamic scholars (Basilov, 1992). Scholarly research by Razia Sultanova provides valuable insights into the development and significance of Islamic shamanism in Central Asia. (Sultanova, 2011).

6.3 Historical Overview of Central Asian Shamanism

Pre-Islamic Central Asia was known for its vibrant shamanistic practices, which held significant religious and cultural importance for its inhabitants. Shamanism in this region encompassed various beliefs and rituals to establish connections with the spiritual realm, communicate with spirits, and utilise multiple ceremonies for healing, divination, and guidance. Understanding the nature of shamanistic practices in pre-Islamic Central Asia requires examining the influence of Turkic, Mongol, and Persian cultures on shamanism, as well as the prevalent rituals and beliefs within Central Asian societies.

Shamanism in pre-Islamic Central Asia was deeply rooted in the indigenous cultures and belief systems of the region. It manifested in diverse forms across different ethnic groups and geographic areas. According to Karl-Heinz Golzio, an expert on Central Asian shamanism, the practices varied depending on the specific cultural context and the role of shamans within their communities. Golzio highlights the significance of shamanism as a complex spiritual tradition that facilitated communication between humans and spirits, provided healing, and acted as a medium for divination and prophecy. The influences of Turkic, Mongol, and Persian cultures were pivotal in shaping and transforming shamanism in Central Asia. The Turkic peoples, who migrated and settled in the region, brought their spiritual beliefs and practices. He further notes that the Turkic nomadic cultures significantly influenced the shamanistic traditions of Central Asia. The Turkic shamans, known as "Kam," held esteemed positions and were revered for their ability to communicate with spirits and harness their power for the community's benefit (Golzio, 1999).

According to Peter B, the Mongol Empire also profoundly impacted shamanism in Central Asia under the leadership of Genghis Khan and his successors. Golden, an authority on the history of the Mongol Empire, states that the Mongols practised a form of shamanism known as Tengrism. As the Mongols conquered vast territories, including Central Asia, their shamanistic practices spread and interacted with local beliefs, leading to syncretism and a hybridised shamanistic tradition. Moreover, Persian cultural influences, through the Persianate societies that emerged in Central Asia, left a significant mark on shamanism. Persian mysticism and Şūfī teachings permeated the region and influenced shamanistic rituals and beliefs (Golden, 1992).

Adeeb Khalid, a renowned historian, explains that Persianate cultures shaped the religious landscape of Central Asia by introducing mystical practices and concepts that merged with existing shamanistic traditions. The syncretism between Persian magical practices and shamanism created a unique blend of spiritual traditions (Khalid, 2007).

Shamanistic rituals and beliefs were deeply ingrained in Central Asian societies, and their practices varied across different ethnic groups. According to Gulnara Aitpaeva, an expert on Central Asian folklore, shamanistic rituals often involve trance states induced by drumming, chanting, and dancing. Shamans were believed to be able to communicate with spirits, heal the sick, interpret dreams, and foretell the future. The rituals addressed various aspects of life, including health, fertility, protection from malevolent spirits, and guidance in decision-making processes (Aitpaeva, 2017). These shamanistic practices could be compared to Ubungoma. Podelcka states that the origins of the term '*sangoma*' are unclear. My sangoma informants say the word '*sangoma*' means 'a person of the drum', and '*ngoma*' means drum music. Drums are sacred instruments that help sangomas enter a trance and communicate with spirits. (Podolecka, 2016). This suggests notable parallels between Ubungoma and Shamanism as practised in Central Asia, which involves inter alia beating the drums and getting into a trance.

In conclusion, shamanistic practices in pre-Islamic Central Asia were deeply rooted in the region's indigenous cultures. Influences from Turkic, Mongol, and Persian cultures played significant roles in shaping and transforming shamanism. The Turkic nomadic cultures introduced their own spiritual beliefs and practices.

6.4 Shamanic Calling

Shamanic calling refers to the process of being called to the shamanic practice, thus possessing the power of spiritual healing. According to Walsh, the shamanic vocation usually begins with an omen, described as the "call to adventure," which may take many forms. In shamanism, this call typically occurs during adolescence or early adulthood. The call may also come during a dream or vision quest. A vision quest is a period spent in solitude and fasting devoted to receiving a guiding vision for one's life. (Walsh, 1994, p.52). While an individual may be recognised at birth as having the innate power to become a shaman, the call to shamanism often arises in adolescence or early adulthood. Some may experience their call and initiation

as a single characteristic event, such as through an illness. In contrast, others may be initiated through a cumulative process, which may last a lifetime (Vitebsky, 1995). Degarrod postulates the call to Shamanism as follows. Dreams play an essential role in the selection and initiation of shamans. Shamans are often selected for their profession by inheritance. For example, shamans from the Paiute of Nevada were reported to have inherited their spirit powers from a deceased shaman relative who urged the dreamer to accept the shamanic calling and power. In other societies, shamans are selected when they exhibit unusual physical characteristics or when their vocation is spontaneous. Whatever the means of shamanic selection, it is primarily through dreams that shamans learn about their calling. (Derragod, 2004). Krippner further asserts that most shamanic societies believe that refusing to select individuals for the shamanic role will result in future misfortune for those called into the profession (Krippner, 1989). In his book *The World of Shamanism*, Roger Walsh explains the calling as follows: Shamanism announces itself in adolescence with an onslaught of unusual experiences. These may sometimes include talents such as heightened sensitivity and perception. More often, shamans start to exhibit unusual behaviour which can even be bizarre, dangerous and life-threatening. (Walsh, 19994). The idea of shamanic calling underscores the profound and transformative nature of receiving one. The call requires more than sign recognition; it also entails understanding the significance of this transition, which comes with emotional, spiritual and physical trials. As chapter 3 of the Ubungoma section mentions, the calling has a similar effect. Jonker provides that genuine healers are often summoned to their vocation through various means, such as dreams or persistent illnesses that resist conventional treatment. This illness is characterised by multiple symptoms, such as diverse bodily discomfort, heightened anxiety, irritability, difficulty falling asleep, or excessive drowsiness (Jonker, 2006).

6.4.1 Shamanic Initiation

Shamanic initiation represents a profound shift, facilitating an individual's induction into the role of a shaman within the community. Initiation often involves intense experiences, such as illness, visionary death and rebirth. Camilla Power, in her article titled *Initiation of Shamans* explains this phenomenon in detail: The process of becoming a shaman combines an initial ecstatic or revelatory experience with a lengthy period of training to gain command of “techniques of ecstasy” The initial sickness, dreams, fainting fits, fright, or lightning strike constitutes a physical

and psychological ordeal that sends the soul of the candidate on a journey. Recurrently, this spiritual crisis portends a drama of death and dismemberment of the physical body before renewal of the vital organs and rebirth. (Power, 2004, p. 153). Further, Power explores the intense and often violent initiation of Shamans across various cultures. In Siberia, they feel spirits are shattering their bodies. In Australia, their bodies are ritually dismantled, and organs are removed. Among the Inuit and South American Shamans, they undergo “skeletonisation”, shedding flesh to achieve spiritual realisation and purity. Such experiences are followed by rebirth, during which lost body parts are replaced by substances such as crystals and metals, signalling heightened awareness and transformation. The patterns reflect a common theme of destruction and renewal, where the shaman's body and world are made. (Power, 2004) . Initiation in Shamanism, as examined by Power, is not merely a rite of passage but a fundamental shift in the understanding of reality and knowledge, after going through an intense ordeal, which involves great joy and pain and symbolic death and rebirth. The spirit emerges from this process and can connect and communicate between the human and spirit worlds. The frequent appearance of dismemberment, such as skeletonisation, rebirth and imagery in different cultural contexts, suggests shared underlying concepts. Thus, becoming a shaman goes beyond just what happens to one person, embodying a fundamental mechanism through which communities negotiate the boundaries of life, death and transcendence. Similarly, in Ubungoma initiation (*ukuthwasa*), the process, as expounded by Mlisa, is complex and fraught with emic and etic crises and/or afflictions. Hence, diviners are ultimately viewed as ‘wounded healers. Emic crises or afflictions involve emotional, personal, and spiritual crises. In addition, a person often experiences hardships due to exogenous factors, such as social and economic factors(Mlisa,2009).

6.4 Islamic Influence on Central Asian Shamanism

Adoption of Islamic Terminology and Symbolism in Shamanistic Rituals

In Central Asia, adopting Islamic terminology and symbolism within shamanistic rituals signifies the interplay and syncretism between indigenous shamanism and Islamic practices. This phenomenon emerged due to the region's historical encounters with Islam and its cultural adaptation. Shamanistic practitioners in Central Asia incorporated Islamic elements into their rituals, blending traditional practices with Islamic terminology and symbolism.

One example of this adoption is the use of Islamic invocations and prayers in shamanistic rituals. Scholars such as Jean During (1991) and Beatrice Forbes Manz (1999) have explored Central Asia's fusion of Islamic and shamanistic practices, as seen in Muslim traditional healers who blend Qur'ānic verses, the recitation of specific names of Allah, and supplication during the healing process. Ally et al explain the following while narrating the case study of an Islamic traditional healer: the healers read specific verses from the Holy *Qur'ān* when diagnosing and treating spiritual illnesses. We put our hands on the patient's head, and that is a form of positive energy. So, when we recite the *Qur'ān*, you will find that ... the energy is transformed into them. These verses are read, then blown onto the client and/or into natural products, e.g., water, honey, sugar, salt, olive oil, and the person is to use them when cooking or ingest them. Also, the verses of the *Qur'ān* are written on a piece of paper to be kept with the person at all times (a *ta'wīḍ* / protective amulet) (Ally et al., 2008, p. 53). As seen above with Islamic healers, shamans began incorporating Islamic prayers, such as reciting Qur'ānic verses, into their rituals. This integration allowed them to invoke the blessings and power associated with Islamic traditions while maintaining the core elements of shamanism.

Furthermore, shamanistic rituals began incorporating Islamic symbolism, such as the crescent moon and stars, which are central to Islamic iconography. This adoption of Islamic symbols in shamanistic practices can be seen as incorporating and legitimising Islamic elements within the existing shamanistic framework. This syncretism enabled harmonious coexistence between Islamic and indigenous beliefs, catering to the local population's spiritual needs and cultural identities.

6.5.1 Syncretism and Integration between Islamic Practices and Indigenous Shamanism

The syncretism between Central Asia's Islamic practices and indigenous shamanism is complex and dynamic. It involves merging Islamic beliefs and rituals with shamanistic traditions, resulting in a unique religious and spiritual synthesis. Scholars have examined this syncretism and its impact on Central Asia's religious landscape.

In her book *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, Beatrice Forbes Manz (1999) discusses how the syncretic nature of religious practices in Central Asia enabled the integration of Islamic beliefs into shamanistic rituals. The flexibility of Islamic religious practices and the adaptability of shamanistic traditions facilitated syncretism, resulting in a harmonious blending of the two.

Integrating Islamic mystical traditions, such as Sufism, with shamanistic practices further contributed to Central Asia's syncretic nature of religious beliefs. *Şūfī sm*, a mystical branch of Islam, emphasises the direct personal experience of the divine and seeks spiritual union with God. The supernatural aspects of Islam resonated with the shamanistic worldview, leading to the integration of *Şūfī* practices within shamanistic rituals. Khalid explores the intricate connections between Islamic mysticism and shamanism in Central Asia in his book *"Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia."* He highlights how *Şūfī* practices, such as music, dance, and ecstatic rituals, found common ground with shamanistic traditions. This integration allowed for the incorporation of *Şūfī* elements into shamanistic rituals, such as spiritual purification and seeking a closer connection with the divine (Khalid, 2007). Further, Sidikov asserts that the interaction and mutual influence between shamanism and Sufism can be demonstrated particularly well in five areas: the cult of saints, healing rituals, ecstasy, ritual clothing, and the preparation of charms (Sidikov, 2004, pp. 239-242). As cited by Sidikov, the above statement employs the term "cult" to describe some areas where Sufism and Shamanism interact. At the same time, the phrase is not the focal point of discussion; it carries terminological and conceptual issues that warrant a response. The word carries a negative connotation, implying a deviant religious behaviour. The author should have used a neutral term, such as 'ancestral' or 'saint veneration'.

In conclusion, adopting Islamic terminology and symbolism, a syncretism between Islamic practices and indigenous shamanism, and integrating Islamic mystical traditions with shamanistic practices demonstrate the dynamic and complex nature of Central Asian religious beliefs.

6.5 The Role of Sufism in Central Asian Shamanism

6.5.1 *Şūfī* Orders and Their Impact on Shamanistic Beliefs

Şūfī orders, also known as *tariqas*, significantly shaped religious beliefs and practices in Central Asia. These mystical Islamic organisations profoundly impacted shamanistic beliefs, providing an alternative spiritual path that resonated with the indigenous population. The teachings and practices of Şūfī orders often blended with pre-existing shamanistic traditions, leading to the incorporation of Şūfī elements into shamanism. In explaining this phenomenon, Khumaratov provides the following example: Historical and ethnographic information also demonstrates that, in the lives of Central Asian people, Islamic shamanism is closely related to Sufism and the activities of saints. Specifically, Muslim saints often served as spirits in shamanism. Similarly, Ubungoma reflects this idea, in which ancestors are viewed as intermediaries between humans and the Almighty (see Chapter 3). Most shamans imagined their patron spirits as saints or mullahs¹⁰. (Khalmuratov, 2017 , p. 16433). The citation illustrates how Sufism, or Şūfī turuq (orders), blended with shamanism in Central Asia, depicting how, rather than disappearing, shamanism was assimilated into the Islamised context through Şūfī practices such as the veneration of saints, which aligned with shamanistic beliefs and practices. Further, Khalmuratov provides other examples that have allowed the integration of Shamanism into Şufism. In the 19th century, triangular amulets inscribed with various charms or verses related to Islam and inscribed in multiple scripts were added to shamanistic ceremonies among the Turkmen and Uzbek tribes. (Khalmuratov, 2017 , p. 16434). According to Alexandre Papas, an expert on Sufism in Central Asia, Şūfī orders introduced concepts such as spiritual purification, seeking union with the divine, and the importance of an enlightened guide (sheikh) to Central Asian societies. These ideas found parallels in shamanistic beliefs, where purification rituals and the guidance of a spiritual leader were also significant (Papas, 2010). The influence of Şūfī orders resulted in a syncretic belief system that combined Sufism and shamanism. These practices will be discussed in detail below.

6.5.2 Şūfī Rituals and Their Similarities to Shamanistic Practices

Şūfī rituals often bear striking similarities to shamanistic practices in Central Asia. Both traditions incorporate music, dance, and trance-like states to facilitate spiritual experiences and communication with the divine. The ecstatic rituals of Şufism, known as *samā'*, parallel the

trance-induced ceremonies of shamans. In his book "The Spirit of Islam: A History of the Evolution and Ideals of Islam," Syed Ameer Ali discusses the ecstatic rituals of Sufism and their resemblances to shamanistic practices. He explains that *samā'a* ceremonies involve rhythmic music, chanting, and whirling, which induce altered states of consciousness. Similarly, shamans utilise drumming, chanting, and dancing to enter trance states and establish connections with the spiritual realm (Ali, 1912).

6.5.2.1 Sheikhs as Intermediaries between the Spiritual and Physical Realms

As spiritual guides and leaders of Ṣūfī orders, Ṣūfī sheikhs are crucial intermediaries between the spiritual and physical realms. They provide their disciples guidance, mentorship, and interpretations of divine knowledge. This concept of an intermediary figure between the spiritual and physical realms is also found in shamanistic beliefs. In his book "The Ṣūfī Orders in Islam," J. Spencer Trimingham discusses the role of Ṣūfī sheikhs as intermediaries between the divine and human realms. He explains that Ṣūfī sheikhs are believed to possess spiritual knowledge, wisdom, and a direct connection to the sacred. Similarly, shamans are regarded as mediators between the human and spiritual realms, able to communicate with spirits and receive guidance (Trimingham, 1971). Consistent with Ubungoma, in Chapter 3, under the practice of Ubungoma, reference was made to the role of *izangoma* as bridges between the physical and spiritual realms.

Sidikov offers profound insight into these arguments, articulating that many shamans imagined their protector spirits as Ṣūfī leaders (Ishan) or religious practitioners (mollah)¹¹. In some parts of Inner Asia, many people believed that Islamic saints were patrons of the shamanic profession and of music and singing. Those convinced they were destined to become shamans would go to certain saintly tombs and spend some time there. (Sidikov, 2004).

In conclusion, the analogy between Ṣūfī sheikhs and shamans highlights the cross-cultural intersection between spiritual intermediaries. Both link the divine and human realms, offering their followers guidance, wisdom, and sacred knowledge. Scholarly works, as cited earlier by Trimingham, DeWeese, Bennigsen, and Sidikov, illustrate how Ṣūfī sm, through the concept of sainthood (wilayah), has influenced and even merged in specific cultural contexts, such as

¹¹ In this case, 'Mollah' refers to an expert in Islamic studies. The word is spelt differently by various writers.

Central Asian Shamanism. This syncretism underscores the universal human search for spiritual connection and the role of charismatic figures in facilitating that journey. Both ideologies recognise a central figure who serves as an intermediary or intercedes on behalf of the higher being, whether the figure is alive or dead.

6.5.2.2 Healing between the two ideologies

Both the Şūfis and Shamans share a fundamental role in healing individual adherents and society, particularly in addressing spiritual afflictions such as possession by malevolent entities. Sidikov explores this aspect by outlining that the Şūfis took over shamanic healing and its rituals, as well as some of the shamans' functions. This is well demonstrated by the role of the dervishes known as *babas* (men who are sheikhs, leaders of a group of Şūfis) in some Anatolian villages. The similarities between their rituals and shamanic performances were so striking that one could mistake them for old Central Asian Turkic shamans, who had simply assumed an Islamic appearance. They interpreted dreams, acted as rainmakers, healed illnesses, and controlled fertility. In Inner Asia, for example, Şūfis were believed to possess helping spirits that aided them in performing miracles, fortune-telling, healing, and other shamanic rituals. Şūfis accommodated shamanic practices to the extent that it is difficult to tell the difference between a mystic and a shaman. (Sidikov, 2004, p. 240) . In a book titled, *Shamanism And Islam Şūfism, Healing Rituals and Spirits in the Muslim World*, Zarcone articulates his position in the introduction section of the work, Syncretism also means here that, following the elimination of shamanism as an autonomous religion, a role played henceforth by Islam, two activities of the North Asiatic shamanism, healing and divination, were mingled with Muslim devotion and rituals. One reason for this is that healing and divination were, for the Muslim theologians, the less noxious elements composing shamanism. It is well known that healing and divination were practices that already existed in Islam, though in different forms. (Zarcone, 2013). In alluding to the similarities between Sufism and Shamanism in healing, Bohadir Sidikov writes that the similarities between Şūfī rituals and shamanic performances were so striking that one could mistake them for old Central Asian Turkic shamans, who had simply assumed an Islamic appearance. They interpreted dreams, acted as rainmakers, healed illnesses, and controlled fertility. In Inner Asia, for example, Şūfis were believed to

possess helping spirits that aided them in performing miracles, fortune-telling, healing, and other shamanic rituals.

6.5.2.3 Dhikr (remembrance)

In addition to the notable parallels between these two ideologies, another prominent feature is the Islamic concept of the remembrance of God (Dhikr). At the same time, this practice is an established part of Islam that different groups accept, and Ṣūfīs engage in it in a distinct, ritualised form. Their approach often involves rhythmic chanting, coordinated movements, and the collective recitation of various litanies, creating a spiritually immersive experience that distinguishes Ṣūfī dhikr from that of other Muslim groups. Zarcona provides an analytical perspective on this phenomenon: the Ṣūfī repetitive litany (dhikr), which, in the eyes of the shamans, is equated with the shamanic invocative song. Also, the shamanic rituals are frequently named after the Ṣūfī ceremonies: *zikir* in Kazakhstan, *jahr* (oral litany) in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Also worth mentioning here are the shaman, both circular choreographies.¹² Moreover, the Ṣūfī saints were integrated into the shaman's army of helper spirits. (Zarcone, 2013). Further, Sidikov examines this aspect through the following approach: For some Central Asian and Anatolian groups, the concepts of shamanising and conducting a Ṣūfī *dhikr* ceremony are synonymous. In both regions, the Ṣūfī *dhikr* (the central ceremony of Ṣūfī rituals, whose literal meaning is "remembrance of God") was integrated into the shamanic ritual. A shaman could recommend that a patient attend a dhikr ceremony. (Sidikov, 2004) The dynamic relationship between Ṣūfī dhikr and shamanic ritual reflects a complex pattern of religious syncretism, where ritual modalities shift across traditions to serve spiritual and therapeutic functions.

In conclusion, the relationship between Sufism and shamanic practices reveals a blending of spiritual beliefs, with indigenous practices incorporated, transformed, and reinterpreted within an Islamic framework. While this hybridisation is comparable to ritual practices, most notably Saint veneration, healing, and remembrance (dhikr), the historical and theological dimensions of the process warrant deeper scrutiny. The citations above by Zarconi and Sidikov indicate that Sufism played a role in integrating shamanistic practices, though the extent of their agency in this transformation remains debatable. The spread of Islam into Central and Inner Asia led

¹² In shamanism, the phrase refers to the significant role of circular dance and movement in shamanic rituals across many cultures

to the selective adoption of indigenous norms and customs, which might be interpreted as reinforcing religious dominance. Muslims or Şūfī scholars, as alluded to by Zarcone, tolerated healing rituals while marginalising other spheres of shamanism. Further, Muslim theologians, as Zarcone provides, tolerated healing rituals while marginalising other aspects of shamanism, raising questions about the agency of shamans within this transformation. Was this a consensual blending, or did it reflect Islamic dominance over indigenous customs? Was this merging a voluntary synthesis, or did Sufism redefine indigenous customs? Zarcone provides that shamanism was eliminated as an autonomous religion, meaning that its survival was founded upon refinements within an Islamic framework. This reflects Islam's historical tendency to assimilate local permissible indigenous traditions (such as healing and divination) while suppressing the others.

Despite their similar healing roles, both ideologies derive from distinct theological foundations. Shamanism, on one side, operates within an animistic framework where spirits possess healers. Şūfī healing is founded on Islamic cosmology, in which all powers are attributed to Allah. A detailed study of the original Şūfī healing text with Shamanic oral traditions could show whether their resemblance demonstrates ideological meeting points or outward similarities created by history. Did Şūfīs genuinely adopt shamanic beliefs, or merely repackage them under Islamic theology? Were shamanistic practices genuinely retained within Şūfī sm? Or reconfigured them under an Islamic framework?

To answer these questions, we can go back to the concept of '*urf*', which suggests the possibility of genuine accommodation of other traditions such as shamanism. It is an accommodation rooted in Islamic principles. The Şūfī-Shamanic interaction demonstrates the Islamic adaptive capacity, especially the Şufism, which has taken various forms. However, it also highlights the uneven dynamics of cultural adaptation. While structural similarities exist, historical patterns show that shamanism was not seamlessly fused with Sufism but incorporated under Islamic authority.

6.6 Similarities between Ubungoma and Central Asian Islamic Shamanism

While Ubungoma is specific to Southern Africa, there are notable similarities between Ubungoma and shamanism practices in Central Asia. These similarities shed light on the cross-cultural and universal aspects of spiritual traditions. Ubungoma and Central Asian Islamic

shamanism involve the practitioner entering altered states of consciousness to establish connections with the spirit realm. In his book "Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy," Mircea Eliade (1964) discusses the ecstatic practices of shamans in Central Asia and other places as the techniques of ecstasy. For Eliade, the defining characteristics of shamans are their ability to induce and control a trance, during which their souls are believed to leave the body and undertake a journey to the world of the unseen. He further states that this is achieved through various means such as drumming and rhythmic sounds, dance and physical exertion, vision and dreams. Highlighting the parallels between their trance-induced states and those of African sangomas. The writer further asserts that African sangomas enter a trance state, facilitated by drumming (ngoma), chanting, and dancing, to commune with ancestors (amadlozi), receive messages, and perform divination and spirit work. The *intlombe* (séance) ritual, central to Ubungoma practice, is the perfect example of an ecstatic experience in which traditional healers sing and play drums to connect with spiritual realms. (Eliade, 1972). This shared characteristic suggests a fundamental human inclination to seek direct experiences with the divine.

6.6.1 Interchange between the words' shaman and Isangoma.

While the term shaman, for this research, refers to a practice found in Central Asia and other global contexts, this term does not seamlessly extend to analogous spiritual traditions in South Africa or the broader African continent. Evidence suggests that practices known as Ubungoma or Isangoma in a South African context are frequently referred to as Shamanism. Academic discourses demonstrate that indigenous South African spiritual practices known as Ubungoma or Isangoma are categorised within the broader Shamanism taxonomy. Podecka situates that when she spoke to her sangoma informants, both 'white' and 'black', about using the term 'shaman' instead of 'sangoma', they said that sangomas and shamans mean the same for them. Using a word everyone knows is much easier than using local terms. (Podolecka, 2016). She further alludes to Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa,¹³ who argued that, in the times when Earth

¹³ V.C. Mutwa is a sangoma and a New Age shaman. His books are found controversial because his version of Zulu mythology differs significantly from myths collected by academics. Mutwa is also a propagator of UFO-related conspiracies. The belief in extraterrestrial beings visiting Earth is a popular motif in many mythologies, but Mutwa promotes the 'knowledge' that such creatures live in Africa. However, as a sangoma with over 70

was a 'global village', news travelled immediately through the Internet. New Age communities helped people understand the meaning of shamanism; it was prudent to use a vocabulary everyone understood. Based on the analysis above, it can be inferred that there is no difference between shamanism and Ubungoma, and that both terms are used interchangeably. A fundamental starting point for comparing these two traditions lies in their shared classifications as shamanism. This umbrella term encompasses diverse spiritual practices from indigenous communities worldwide, creating an initial basis for comparative analysis.

6.6.2 Calling

Ubungoma and Shamans share the fundamental principle of involuntary selection, where ancestral spirits choose practitioners. This spiritual calling manifests in somatic and psychological ways, ranging from prophetic dreams to initiatory illnesses. In shamanism, this call typically occurs during adolescence or early adulthood. The call may also come during a dream or vision quest. A vision quest is a period spent in solitude and fasting devoted to receiving a guiding vision for one's life. (Walsh, 1994). On the other hand, becoming a traditional healer or Isangoma is typically not a deliberate decision but rather a calling from one's ancestors. Genuine healers are often summoned to their vocation through various means, such as dreams or persistent illnesses that resist conventional treatment. This illness is characterised by multiple symptoms, such as diverse bodily discomfort, heightened anxiety, irritability, difficulty falling asleep, or excessive drowsiness (Jonker, 2006). A key similarity between the two traditions is the involuntary nature, the initiatory sickness, and the essential training period.

6.6.3 Sainthood and Ancestral Spirit (Amadlozi)

Ubungoma and Central Asian Islamic shamanism share a similar understanding of the role of Ancestors and Sainthood. In her article Sufism and Shamanism, Sidikov asserts that many

years of experience, Mutwa is a good source of knowledge about sangomas' traditions and rituals, especially since most of his words are confirmed by other sangomas.

shamans imagined their protector spirits as Şūfī leaders (*Ishan*) or religious practitioners (*mollah*). Shamans prescribed to their clients that they spend the night at an Islamic holy place to be healed of their illnesses, since it was assumed that the Şūfī saint would either cure the patient during sleep or advise them on how to regain health. According to the shamanic diagnosis, one cause of the illness could be the displeasure of a Şūfī saint. In Central Asian Islamic shamanism, saints hold a central place as guides and sources of wisdom. (Sidikov, 2004). Meanwhile, in Ubungoma, ancestors are central to the practice, providing guidance and wisdom to the healers. Another key similarity between the two traditions is their treatment of sacred spaces. Both honour the burial sites or shrines of ancestors on one side and those of saints on the other as holy places that can provide blessings. Sidikov explains this belief about Shamanism as follows: In Inner Asia, the Caucasus, Anatolia, and parts of India that had been conquered by Turkic-speaking nomadic groups, the cult of saints was integrated into shamanic ritual practice. Shamans prescribed to their clients that they spend the night at an Islamic holy place to be healed of their illnesses, since it was assumed that the Şūfī saint would either cure the patient during sleep or advise them on how to regain health. (Sidikov, 2004). Both traditions position these central figures as guides, whether through ancestral communication in Ubungoma or through saint intercession in Central Asian Islamic Shamanism. From the African traditional religious perspective, cemeteries are not merely burial spaces but highly revered spiritual sanctuaries where the deceased undergo a transmutation into the afterlife, becoming ancestors (Mhlongo, 2017).

6.6.4 Ritual Drumming and Trance States in Both Traditions

Ritual drumming and the induction of trance states are prominent features shared by Central Asian Islamic shamanism and Ubungoma. In Central Asian shamanic practices, the drumbeat serves as a rhythmic guide, helping shamans enter altered states of consciousness, a Şūfī repetitive litany (*dhikr*) which is equated in the eyes of the shamans with the shamanic invocative song. It is worth mentioning here that the shaman, both circular choreographies, and the Şūfī saints are integrated into the shaman's army of helper spirits. (Zarcone, 2013). Drumming forms part of many Şūfī orders when conducting the *dhikr* or remembrance. Similarly, in Ubungoma, drumming is vital in facilitating the connection with spirits and inducing trance states among sangomas. Michael Oppitz, an expert on Central Asian shamanism,

explores ritual drumming in his book "Shamans, Healers, and Medicine Men." He explains that the drumming's repetitive rhythms serve as sonic stimulation, allowing shamans to enter trance states (Oppitz, 1980). This state of altered consciousness enables them to communicate with spirits and access hidden realms of knowledge. In the context of Ubungoma, Patricia Ann Mavunda (2001), in her article "The Role of Traditional Healers in Community Life: Ubungoma as a Case Study," highlights the significance of drumming in sangoma rituals. She explains that the rhythmic beats of the drums catalyse sangomas to enter trance states, during which they can communicate with ancestral spirits and gain insights for divination and healing.

6.6.5 Belief in Spirits and Their Interaction with Human Beings

Central Asian Islamic shamanism and Ubungoma share a fundamental belief in the existence of spirits and their interaction with human beings. In both traditions, spirits are regarded as powerful entities that can influence various aspects of life, including health, fortune, and spiritual well-being. In his book "Shamanism in Siberia: Russian Records of Indigenous Spirituality," A. M. Hocart (2018) provides insights into the belief in spirits and their role in Central Asian shamanism. He discusses how spirits are seen as intermediaries between the human and divine realms, and how shamans act as mediators in communicating with and appeasing them. Further, Zarcone provides the following account of Islamic Shamanism and spirits. Islamic Shamanism is once again closely linked with Sufism because many of the luminaries of Central Asian *Şūfī* sm, as deceased saints, are regarded as mighty spirits and the first auxiliaries of the shaman. Their names are usually invoked at the very beginning of healing rituals. Hence, their tombs and mausoleums (*mazar*) became the sacred locus par excellence of Islamised shamanism. For example, the would-be shaman stays in such places and sleeps there to be elected by the spirits in his dreams. Therefore, shamans frequently visit these places and sometimes gather there. Tomb veneration, a dominant trend in Islam and Central Asia, is the focus of popular fervour (Zarcone, 2013). Zarcone's analysis of Islamic Shamanism and spirits accentuates a link between Islamic Shamanism and *Şūfī* teachings in Central Asia. He illustrates how deceased *Şūfī* saints are venerated as spirits and play a crucial role in shamanic rituals and healing. His analysis of mausoleums as places where spirits are elected, and of places where spirits are elected, shows how Islamic and indigenous traditions have been merged over time. Zarcone's analysis would be stronger if it considered how *Şūfīs* understand

mausoleums, not as places tied to spirit but as sacred sites of divine blessings. In Şufism, *tabarruk* refers to blessings obtained through saints, whether living or deceased, without attributing powers to spirits capable of possessing individuals, as in Shamanism. Another key oversight is whether Şūfis view their saints as spirits at all: Şūfī traditional doctrines and spiritual sense. Şūfī doctrine often refrains from framing them as spirits in a shamanic sense. Zarcone's exploration of Islamic shamanism and spirits lays the groundwork for future research into how Şūfis perceive their saints and whether these figures are regarded in a manner comparable to Shamanism. Likewise, in the context of Ubungoma, Vuyani Vellem, in his article "African Traditional Healing Paradigms: The Significance of Ubuntu in Modern Times," highlights the belief in spirits and their influence on human affairs. He explains that in Ubungoma, ancestral spirits are considered integral to healing and divination processes. Sangomas, as intermediaries, connect with these spirits to seek guidance, receive messages, and address individuals' spiritual needs (Vellem, 2008). As indicated in Chapter 3, the phenomenon of ancestral spirits taking a vested interest in the affairs of the living, leading to either protective or disciplinary actions, has been observed and documented by scholars such as Edward et al. The *amadlozi*/*amathongo* provide comprehensive safeguarding, optimal well-being, and enhanced prosperity to those under their care. The concept of "protection" encompasses a wide range of entities, including individuals, organisations, clans, nations, villages, and various geographical areas. In the context of uDingiswayo kaJobe, the concept of safeguarding the person through the intervention of the *amathongo* is mentioned. This concept is deeply rooted in Ubungoma, where spirits, or *imimoya*, are classified into two main categories: harmful and beneficial. Chike A. Ekeopara, in his Journal article titled "God, divinities and spirits in African traditional religious ontology", explain the two leading spirits in African Traditional religious systems as harmful spirits. A further study of the activities of such spirits shows that they may cause terrible harm to men. This they do through causing madness, epilepsy, and other terrible sicknesses. In some cases, they may possess people, causing them to prophesy. During the height of spirit possession, the individual loses their own personality and acts in the spirit's. The spirits may choose to drive the person away, making him live in the forest. In contrast, the guardian spirit is a separate entity. Africans believe that man has a guardian spirit that, if good, works to bring prosperity and good luck to its double, but if the guardian spirit is not in good standing, it will bring obstacles to its double's path (Ekeopara, 2010). Both Central Asian Islamic Shamanism and Ubungoma feature intermediaries, whether Sufi saints or ancestors.

6.6.6 Utilisation of Herbs, Amulets, and Sacred Objects in Healing Practices

Using herbs, amulets, and sacred objects in healing practices is another shared element between Central Asian shamanism and Ubungoma. Both traditions recognise the power of these items in promoting physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. In his book "The Healing Wisdom of Africa: Finding Life Purpose through Nature, Ritual, and Community," Malidoma Patrice Somé (1998) explores the role of herbs and sacred objects in African healing practices, including Ubungoma. He emphasises the belief in the inherent healing properties of specific plants, as well as the use of amulets and charms to provide protection and enhance spiritual connections. Similarly, in Central Asian shamanism, the well-documented. In her book "Shamanic Worlds: Rituals and Lore of Siberia and Central Asia," Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer discusses the importance of herbs and talismans in shamanic healing practices. She explains how shamans employ specific plants and objects imbued with spiritual power to facilitate healing (Balzer, 1997). Sidikov states that making charms protected the wearer from diseases, the evil eye, jinns, malevolent spirits, and misfortune. Shamans and Şūfīs could prepare such charms with magic formulas and *Qur'ānic* verses. In shamanic rituals, prayer rugs, rosaries, and Islamic books also played an important role (Sidikov, 2004). Further, according to El-Zein, in Islamic Shamanistic contexts, often found in regions influenced by Şūfī Islam and pre-Islamic beliefs, plants hold significant value as conduits of baraka (divine blessing) and as direct sources of healing properties. Scholars note the integration of herbal remedies, often prepared through specific rituals and incantations, into therapeutic practices that treat illnesses believed to have both natural and supernatural origins (El-Zein, 2009). Mdletshe provides a perspective on the use of different materials in healing by sangomas. Traditional healers offer healing and their worthwhile experience of herbal and animal-based medicines and therapeutic actions, such as rituals (Mdletshe, 2023). Ndimande further provides that Amakhosi (diviners/healers) possess extensive knowledge of indigenous flora, utilising various roots, leaves, barks, and fruits in their healing practices. The selection of these plants is not solely based on their pharmacological properties but is deeply intertwined with their symbolic meaning within the cultural context and their perceived spiritual potency (Ndimande, 2012). Although Central Asian Islamic Shamanism (tobacco, peyote and ayahuasca) and Ubungoma (*impepho and umhlonyane*) use herbs, amulets and sacred objects in their healing practices, these similarities should not conceal distinguishing differences from cultural and religious contexts. Islamic shamanism draws from Şūfī sm, a mystical Islamic tradition grounded in the *Qur'ān* and

Sunnah, whereas Ubungoma is driven by ancestral guidance. However, Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia and Ubungoma emphasise the use of multiple techniques in their healing practices. These practices ascribe inherent power to specific plants for their medicinal properties while utilising various objects to provide protection and foster spiritual connections. Academic sources in both traditions highlight the ritualistic use of these items, reinforcing their perceived effectiveness in promoting overall well-being by addressing physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of health. Lastly, while these healing traditions reflect a parallel tendency among people to pursue holistic health, their effectiveness and usability must be valued within their respective socio-cultural environments, rather than through universalised comparisons. Ubungoma and shamanism both embrace holistic healing. These two ideologies subscribe to the philosophy that sickness stems from a lack of balance in an individual's physical and spiritual relationship. Thus, treating a patient holistically, targeting physical and spiritual interactions, will create harmony among mind, body, and soul.

6.7 Differences between Ubungoma and Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia

One might easily conclude that these two traditions are similar because both ideologies engage the spiritual realm to address human concerns. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that they differ fundamentally in their foundational beliefs, sources of authority, and historical trajectories. To understand these differences, we must consider the unique socio-cultural context in which they operate.

6.7.1 Theological Foundations

Ubungoma is based on the veneration of ancestral spirits believed to intervene in the lives of the living (Berglund, 1976). The isangoma acts as an intermediary between the ancestors and humans. The calling to become a sangoma is believed to be initiated by the ancestors themselves. Thus, Ubungoma is guided by ancestral spirits. These ancestors determine, direct, and decide who will become a sangoma. As Edwards et al. explain, from an African perspective, ancestors are regarded as custodians of our lives. They occupy a position of dignity and awe among their descendants. Occasionally, they are celebrated and consulted for guidance through specific ritualistic procedures that differ from group to group. As they are

dead, ancestors are believed to know more than anyone alive, have extraordinary powers, and be in any place. They can bring good and bad luck if pleased or angered (Edwards, 2009). Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia blended older spiritual traditions with Islam after Islam became dominant in the region in the 8th Century. As previously noted, the key distinction is that Sufism profoundly influences Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia. As an integral discipline within Islam, Sufism derives its principles from Islamic scriptures. Consequently, every aspect of Sufism must align with the sacred text's teachings; thus, Islamic shamanism is shaped by Islamic doctrine, which places God at the centre of all spiritual matters.

6.7.2 Historical context and modern adaptations

Ubungoma persisted despite Christian and colonial suppression, retaining its indigenous character. Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia has been shaped by secularisation and post-Soviet Islamic revival, leading to hybridised practices. According to Basilov, Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia is a product of centuries of religious and cultural interaction, resulting in a unique blend of Islamic and pre-Islamic elements that has also undergone various social and political transformations (Basilov, 2009).

Although Ubungoma and Central Asian Islamic shamanism address human needs in healing, spiritual guidance, and connection to the unseen, they do so through divergent methodologies. Ubungoma is built on the belief that ancestors actively shape human life. Islamic power remains central.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter's exploration of Islamic Shamanism in Central Asia and its connection to Ubungoma has revealed a fascinating interplay between indigenous traditions and Islamic influences. Central Asian Shamanism, which is deeply rooted in ancestral reverence and practice, has adapted to the region's Islamic identity, incorporating Qur'ānic symbolism, Şūfī spiritual practices, and Islamic terminology while retaining core Shamanistic processes such as calling, initiations, and healing rituals. This integration has occurred through the principle of *'urf* (customary practices), a recognised secondary source of Islamic law that allows the integration of beneficial and established local customs that do not contradict the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Indigenous shamanistic practices such as spiritual calling, initiation, and healing rituals have been maintained through 'urf, ancestral communication was reframed to seek intercession (*tawasul/istighatha*) from the Ṣūfī saints. As a result, aspects such as Qur'ān symbolism, Ṣūfī spiritual practices, and Islamic terminology have been integrated while the foundational Shamanistic approach remained intact. Likewise, Ubungoma in South Africa has a striking resemblance, particularly in spiritual calling, ancestral communication, and healing functions, although it remains distinct in cultural and religious aspects. The historical precedent of 'urf-*approved* integration in Central Asia provides a valuable analytical lens for understanding similar patterns today.

To create a unique spiritual blend, Sufism is often considered a significant link between mystical Islam and Shamanistic traditions, particularly in Central Asia. While Central Asian Islamic Shamanism facilitates the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds, its practices, beliefs and degree of religious integration exhibit substantial variation due to distinct cultural and historical pathways. Through this lens, the comparative analysis enriches the understanding of shamanic diversity and highlights the resilience of spiritual customs to evolve while maintaining their core identities. This chapter offers a profound insight for South African Muslim *izangoma* who navigate the intersection of their Islamic faith and Ubungoma, an indigenous spiritual knowledge system. The syncretic traditions of Central Asia, where shamanistic customs coexist with Islamic belief, offer a meaningful model of how Muslim *izangoma* might reconcile their indigenous spiritual calling with their faith. Below are the key implications:

Central Asian Islamic Shamans have incorporated Islamic elements into their practice, such as Qur'ānic verses and dua (prayers), and they utilise Ṣūfī saints and intermediaries in their rituals while maintaining their core shamanistic identities. Comparatively, Muslim sangomas in South Africa could integrate their Islamic beliefs and draw from Islamic spirituality to legitimise their practices. This might include the practice of saint veneration (*awliyā*) as taught and practised within Ṣūfī sm, which has its roots in Islamic tradition, indicating a potential connection to Central Asian practices. Furthermore, Sufism offers a beneficial framework which has the potential to serve as a bridge between Islam and indigenous healing. In Central Asia, Ṣūfī Tariqas (orders) like the Naqshabandīyyah have played a pivotal role in blending Shamanism and Ṣūfism. South African Muslim sangomas might find similarities between Ṣūfī-influenced practices such as dhikr, spiritual healing and the veneration of Ṣūfī saints.

Navigating theological tensions is a significant challenge for Muslim sangomas, with profound implications for their spiritual practice. In Central Asia, the Islamic Shamans have embraced the concepts of *tabarruk* (seeking blessings) and *tawasul* (intercession), distinguishing between ancestral veneration, which in Islamic terms might be viewed as worship and thus qualifies as shirk (the worship of ancestors), and seeking blessings from righteous ones. While the former is not allowed, the latter is permitted, especially within Sufism. South African Muslim Sangomas might similarly integrate these practices, following the precedent set by their Central Asian counterparts.

CHAPTER 7

CASE STUDIES OF MUSLIM SANGOMAS

In South Africa, the coexistence of Islam and traditional healing practices is exemplified through the case studies of Muslim Sangomas. These conventional healers identify as Muslim and practice Islam, as well as traditional healing practices such as divination and herbalism. While there is limited research on Muslim Sangomas specifically, there is evidence of the coexistence of Islam and traditional healing practices in the broader black Muslim community in South Africa. The emergence and rapid spread of Islam amongst indigenous black communities have brought about new challenges within the South African black Muslim framework for how these individuals synthesise Islam with various indigenous African cultural customs, such as lobola and, especially, Ubungoma. How do Muslim sangomas navigate between the practices of Ubungoma and their beliefs as Muslims?

This chapter establishes the foundational context of an in-depth qualitative exploration of the five case studies involving Muslim sangomas. It seeks to understand the lived experiences of these individuals, examining their journey into Islam, their calling (*ubizo*), the personal struggles they face, societal responses to their calling, how they navigate both Islam and Ubungoma simultaneously, and the coping mechanisms they adopt to address their challenges. This chapter explores the intersection of ancestral spirituality and Islamic identity through their narratives, offering insights into how Muslim sangomas reconcile their dual affiliations. Further, examining five case studies provides a detailed understanding of the complexities of Muslim sangomas and offers valuable insights into the socio-cultural and religious dynamics that shape their experiences. By documenting their journeys, this study seeks to contribute to a broader discussion of identity, spirituality, and cultural hybridity in contemporary African traditional healing and religious practice. The decision to adopt a first-person narrative for the case studies in this chapter is deliberate. It has many vital roles, such as recognising participants' authority, affirming their knowledge systems, fostering empathy and connections, and avoiding misrepresentation. The primary aim of this chapter is to allow the participants to speak for themselves. It is also essential to provide the reader with initial context and analytical framing. Therefore, a concise reflection will follow each interview in the chapter.

7.1 Case Study 1

7.1.1 The Journey to Islam and Ubungoma

The interview with the first candidate started with him detailing his journey as a Muslim.

I was born in Orlando West, Soweto, in 1979, and grew up in Mzimhlophe. My mother is Swati, and my father is Zulu from Ladysmith. I embraced Islam early while attending school in Johannesburg's central business district (CBD). During my youth, I frequently listened to Hip-Hop and discovered that many artists I admired had Muslim names, such as Hakeem.

I formally embraced Islam in grade 7 at the Westbury Masjid, where I learned the basics with a friend. Later, I met an elder from Soweto, an herbalist known as Babu Mguni. He had a room in his backyard where we used to pray and attend Islamic lessons (*madrassah*) in the afternoons. I spent most of my youth as a Muslim in Soweto and converted many people to Islam. Later in life, I pursued higher Islamic education at Darul Uloom.¹⁴ New Castle. However, I was expelled in my fourth year when it was discovered that I was a sangoma. Subsequently, I went to study in Sudan after completing my matric (2023, November 18), but returned to South Africa after a short stay (Participant 1, personal communication, November 18, 2023).

7.1.2 When asked about his journey as a *sangoma*, the participant first explained his understanding of Ubungoma.

"Ubungoma is an initiation procedure that qualifies a person to practice traditional healing. Like a standard medical procedure, traditional healing has various components. One domain of the traditional healing paradigm is Ubungoma. It requires completing an initiation procedure. During the initiation journey, the individual experiences a reawakening of their possessor spirit, known as (*idlozi eliza ngobizo lobungoma*), a calling from the ancestors to become Ubungoma. While some refer to it as Isangoma,

¹⁴ *Islāmic* seminary, offering higher *Islāmic* education. Often rooted in Deobandi tradition.

others call it *Umnngoma*. The goal of the initiation, known as ukuthwasa, is to unite the spirits of the living and the dead. For this reason, upon initiation, a person is given a name corresponding to the spirit that has seized them. This results in a bodily and spiritual existence (*okomoya nokwenyama*). Which leads to one becoming a healer after completing that procedure.”

He further describes his journey to becoming an isangoma as follows.

“It started at a young age when he advised people, leading to visions to foretell things that would happen. I then began having dreams that were explicit about my calling, and the dream I often had was of a man who would take me to the river to be initiated as a Sangoma. However, as a Muslim, I ignored it to the extent that I started getting very ill, and I could not get help from conventional doctors and hospitals. Seeing my sickness getting worse, I sought help from a Muslim spiritual healer in Mayfair, who advised me that I might have had a calling from my ancestors. When I asked him how he knew about such things? He said, "I am a detective. " He said, "I am a detective. " He said he was familiar with such matters since his brother had a traditional medicine supply shop, and his clients were izangoma. While in my state of denial, I was once again admitted to the hospital, where I spent several weeks in critical condition, and I would often dream about being buried.

An unknown man who came to visit one of the patients at the hospital alerted me that I had a call from my ancestors. At first, I found it difficult to accept this as a Muslim, as I had been taught that such practices are prohibited in Islam. I started a search for someone to initiate me. This is how it all began, and I have been practising as a Sangoma for over 20 years. I have now become *Ugonondo* (the highest level of the practice, where the trainers consult me) (Participant 1, personal communication, November 18, 2023).

7.1.3 On the question of being a Muslim and a Sangoma

The participant was asked what role Islam plays in his practice as a Sangoma.

The two practices are distinct, but specific Islamic teachings have helped me practice Ubungoma. For example, the concept of understanding different spirits. He also mentioned that Islam teaches humanity honesty and righteous living. As a sangoma, I have found that Islamic teachings on morality have helped me become a better practitioner. I treat all my patients with the honour, dignity and respect that Islam has taught me. If something is beyond my abilities, especially if it involves causing harm to other human beings and committing a crime, I inform them accordingly.”

The participant reported that his *Sangoma* training did not conflict with his Islamic faith and that his practice as a *Sangoma* was consistent with his Islamic beliefs about the importance of helping others. The participant reported that his cultural and religious background influenced his involvement in traditional healing practices. He also saw traditional healing as promoting healing and well-being within her community, which formed part of Islamic teachings (Participant 1, personal communication, November 18, 2023).

7.1.4 The researcher asked what Muslims should do when they get a call/ubizo.

One of the teachings of Islam is to save a life. If one has a solution to the challenges that they are facing and ignores that solution in Islam, that is seen as having committed suicide, like Christians. Many Muslims are suffering in silence without anyone offering a solution to their challenges, so much so that they are in danger of losing their lives. All that is needed is to respond to a call from Amadlozi. Abantu abaphile, people must be alive. Ubungoma is the solution to such challenges. I was in a similar situation as well, and no one could help me; even the so-called Muslim healers failed to help heal me until I heeded a call from my ancestors. There are many people that I have helped who are living their everyday lives today. This is the aim, by the way; the misnomer that Ubungoma is a witchcraft was created by the colonialist system.

Many confuse two distinct phenomena: possession by evil spirits, which is referred to in Islam, and possession by jinns. Our culture, particularly IsiZulu,

is called *ukuduka nezwe, noma uthelelwe imimoya emibi, and amafufunyana (evil spirits)*. These spirits can deceive individuals into believing they have a calling, but it is a possession. The other phenomenon is the true calling by ancestors for one to become a healer.

When a person seeks our help as healers, we first diagnose whether they have a true calling, are merely possessed by amafufunyana, or have a genuine calling from their ancestors. If the person has a true calling, they must respond to it. If they are bewitched or possessed by evil spirits, we can cast them out without requiring them to become a *sangoma* (Participant 1, personal communication, November 18, 2023).

7.1.5 On the issue of stigmatisation

Being a sangoma is accompanied by much stigma, not only from Muslims but also from the general population. This stigma is rooted in colonisation-indoctrination, and the apartheid government labelled Ubungoma witchcraft. Regarding Islam, the stigma is severe because the practice is viewed as shirk (associating partners with Allah). I have faced numerous instances of being ostracised, including being expelled from an Islamic Institution because of my identity. These and other instances have profoundly affected me, leading me to cease practising Islam; I avoid attending mosque because once people realise that I am a sangoma, they shun me. There is a small mosque near my residence, but I do not go there for fear of being stigmatised. The unfortunate aspect of this situation is that many Muslims approach me to seek initiation as a *Sangoma* but do so secretly due to the same fear. Over the years, I have initiated many individuals who belong to the Islamic faith, many of whom prefer to remain anonymous (Participant 1, personal communication, November 18, 2023).

7.1.6 Case Study 1 Reflection

The case study illustrates the complex journey of a Black Muslim male as he navigates the interwoven paths of Islam and Ubungoma in Soweto. It shows the essential struggles and how an individual finds balance between their spiritual and professional lives. The participant's conversion to Islam at a young age in Soweto shaped his Islamic identity and later studies on Islam, even though they were not completed. When, later in life, he was expelled from the Islamic institute due to his identity as a sangoma, the conflict between the two ideological spiritual persuasions was exposed. Such a personal experience underscores the challenges individuals face when integrating different spiritual ideologies.

The participant sees Ubungoma as a practical way to become a sangoma, not just a religion. He sees it as an integral part of African healing, opening a channel for the living to connect with their ancestors. His story highlights the power of the calling. He suffered a sickness that no conventional medicine nor Islamic healers could cure to such an extent. A Muslim healer advised him to seek help from his people, who were skilled at dealing with such conditions.

The participant expressed a complex and thoughtful connection between his Islamic faith and Ubungoma practice. He asserts that although the two are distinct, he acknowledges Islam's influence in his conduct as a healer. He applies Islamic principles of morality when dealing with clients. He further asserts that Ubungoma is a vital solution for unique African challenges that other systems cannot address. He parallels saving life in Islam and responding to an ancestral calling, which, if ignored, can have fatal consequences or difficulties. Due to his background training in various Islamic seminaries locally and overseas, he can explain Ubungoma practices and locate them within the Islamic ideological framework, such as the concept of ancestral reverence as opposed to ancestral worship in Ubungoma, the idea of sanctity of life in Islam and the difference between various spirits and explain that Ubungoma has nothing to do with jinn possession. He asserts that the word for jinns in African culture is imimoya (spirits), which is why we have good and evil spirits. Similarly, in Islam, we have good and bad jinns. However, there are no such things as bad ancestors.

He attributes the negative stigma attached to Ubungoma to colonisation, which perceived it as witchcraft and has impacted how many within the society view the practices. He did this by narrating how he was expelled from an Islamic seminary and avoided attending mosques due to such fear.

7.2 Case Study 2

7.2.1 Background and Journey into Islam

The second participant is a 33-year-old Zulu male, a former *Imām* and Islamic studies teacher who originates from KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), specifically in the township of uMlazi. He moved to Johannesburg with his mother. She got married to a Muslim man of Mozambican origin at the age of 12. Coming from a family of sangomas, many relatives, including aunts and uncles, practice Ubungoma. The interviewee explains his journey to Islam in the following manner:

My journey to Islam began when my mother married a Muslim man from Mozambique, who introduced her to Islam. At that time, we were staying with my grandmother in KZN. Upon converting to Islam, the mother expressed her desire for her children to embrace Islam. Consequently, we were brought to Gauteng, where Islam was introduced, and I accepted it in 1998; after that, we were enrolled at the madrassah (Islamic school). I further studied Islam at Estcourt Islamic Institute and completed my matric. Over the years, I became an *Imām* and madrassah teacher in Johannesburg, the South and East Rand, where I reside (Participant 2, personal communication, December 7, 2023).

7.2.2 Journey into Ubungoma

As mentioned above, I came from a background where my family consisted of izangoma. From a young age, I often experienced diseases and was informed of a call to become a sangoma, which my mother ignored due to her reluctance for me to follow that path. I suffered from severe headaches from an early age, so I was admitted to different hospitals, particularly when we moved to Johannesburg. Still, the doctors were unable to diagnose the illness. I would constantly lose consciousness in the mosque, particularly in the month of Ramadhan (The holy month of the Islamic calendar). This condition persisted from 2000 to 2010. During this period, dreams and visions were produced, occasionally foretelling future events.

Despite consulting various Islamic spiritual healers called Hakims to prescribe prayers for me to be healed, the condition did not improve.

Numerous misfortunes, including car accidents, plagued my life. Reluctant to become a sangoma due to Islamic beliefs, I once again sought the help of a renowned Islamic healer, who told me that my issues could only be resolved through indigenous African methods. Despite many affirmations of the calling (*ubizo*) and the need for initiation (*ukuthwasa*), I sought an Islamic solution. The situation was further complicated because I was an *Imām*, challenging the prospect of *ukuthwasa*. However, the problem persisted and impacted my duty as an *Imām*. I decided to start in 2012. I had a dream about a man with dreadlocks that motivated me to become a sangoma. When I got home, someone directed me to a trainer with dreadlocks; upon arriving at the house, I realised this was the man I had seen in a dream. I spoke to him, and he agreed to take me as an initiate. Within three months, I completed the training.

After the training, I tried to free myself from such practice, but it became difficult. I would get sick whenever I refused to help people who wanted my help. I did not want to be a Sangoma; I did because I wished the hardships I was experiencing would go away. Later, I met a *sheikh* from the Ruqya Foundation, who helped me to get rid of this spirit; I call it a jinn. I am still battling today to fight it off. It is an arduous journey (Participant 2, personal communication, December 7, 2023).

7.2.3 Can a Muslim be a *sangoma*?

Regarding whether a Muslim can simultaneously be a Sangoma, the interviewee provided the following insights: As an individual who has undergone Ubungoma training, it is not feasible to integrate the two systems, as one cannot serve two masters concurrently.

The realms of God and amadlozi (ancestors) are distinct phenomena. Allah (God) is the creator of the ancestors (amadlozi), and we are instructed to worship Him alone. The ancestors inhabit a world that often contradicts Allah's way.

When one goes to emsamo (a unique and sacred place inside the house that is simultaneously an altar and a repository (*ithala*) of a family's precious

items in Ubungoma), one is required to burn sage, invoke the spirits of deceased family members, and supplicate to them. Whereas Islam strictly states that we are not supposed to worship anybody else except Allah. The central fundamental teaching that distinguishes Islam from other religions is the concept of one God.

I distinguish between two entities, *amathonga* and *amadlozi*. *Amathonga* refers to deceased family members, as the term suggests in isiZulu, *amathonga abantu abasebuthongweni* (asleep people). In contrast, *amadlozi* are spirits or jinns, referred to in Islam, who go around and possess human beings. They are a creation of God, akin to humans. When possessed by an ancestor (*idlozi*, *abaphansi* or *abadala*), it controls various aspects of one's life, including dietary choices and marital decisions (Participant 2, personal communication, December 7, 2023).

7.2.4 What should Muslims do when they have a Calling (*ubizo*):

When a person experiences a calling, it signifies an invitation from the jinns into their realms, aiming to divert the individual from the righteous path. As a trained sangoma, I can accurately identify when someone needs to educate people about the associated signs.

A calling (*ubizo*) is an invitation to a dark world that contradicts God's teachings. I consistently encourage Black Muslims to seek our guidance on how to combat this according to Islamic principles. Allah used me to go through such an experience so that I can guide others. Initiation into the process invites evil spirits into one's life, and these spirits will forever haunt one's descendants. Therefore, my advice to Muslims is to resist the call to initiation (*ukuthwasa*), no matter how many difficulties one might go through, as it is akin to signing a contract to be possessed by such spirits (Participant 2, personal communication, December 7, 2023).

7.2.5 Way Forward

We must start training people, especially the *Imām*, on spirits and jinns. It is insufficient to declare that Ubungoma is forbidden (*Ḥarām*) without providing

a solution. We must also create a team of Muslim healers specialising in healing and removing such possessions from people. Additionally, we should establish a centre dedicated to curing these afflictions, which will require substantial resources, including financial support (Participant 2, personal communication, December 7, 2023).

7.2.6 Case 2 Study Reflection

The second case study examined a male second interviewee in his early thirties who received education from a local Islamic institute and served as an *Imām* and Islamic community worker for many years. The participant is also trained in Ruqyah, a healing method that utilises Qur'ānic verses to treat various spiritual ailments. The interviewee maintains that Ubungoma, which involves interactions with jinn (evil spirits), has no place in Islam. He believes that Muslims should resist the temptation to undergo such initiations. He acknowledges that exorcising these spirits from possessed individuals is a challenging and prolonged process, one that he continues to confront to this day. As a trained sangoma, he is firmly convinced that it is impossible to be both a Muslim and a sangoma, equating such duality to serving two gods.

The practices and rituals of Muslim sangomas in an African culture showcase the interplay between Islamic beliefs and traditional healing practices. Through their unique blend of spiritual teachings, divination methods, healing techniques, and community engagement, Muslim sangomas contribute to the well-being and cultural vitality of the community. The practices and rituals of Muslim sangomas within the culture reflect the harmonious interplay between Islamic beliefs and traditional healing practices. While this unique blend of spiritual teachings, divination methods, healing techniques, and community engagement might contribute to the community's well-being and cultural vitality, a question arises: Does it align with Islam's teachings? Can the richness of both traditions provide a holistic approach to healing and support that resonates with the community's cultural and spiritual needs?

Thus, his training in healing *Ruqyah* (using the Qur'ān to cure) has shaped his perception of Ubungoma. He views the practice as interfering with the jinns or spiritual entities, which he considers part of the dark world that every person should avoid. He asserts that jinns are inherently opportunistic, constantly seeking out individuals who are vulnerable to spiritual possession. Despite his qualification as a Ruqya practitioner, he is also a trained sangoma and

seeks help from Islamic healers to avert ancestral calling, without success. This indicates that, despite his views on Ubungoma, the practice alleviated the illnesses associated with the calling.

7.3 Case Study 3

The third participant explained his background and journey to Islam in the following manner:

I was born in Soweto at Baragwanath Hospital, now called Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. Subsequently, I moved to Umtata in the Eastern Cape, where I lived for 18 years before returning to Soweto with my mother. I am a Xhosa by tribe. My journey to Islam began as I embarked on a quest for self-discovery, driven by numerous questions about Umdali (God) or Allah. This curiosity led me to explore various spiritualities and religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam, seeking answers that my Christian background could not provide (Participant 3, personal communication, January 4, 2024).

In 2006, I worked as a district sales manager in the United Kingdom, engaging in door-to-door sales. This experience significantly intensified my exploration of different religions, as I encountered individuals from diverse faiths, including Islam. Despite my limited knowledge of African spirituality at the time, I found that Islam resonated closely with it. My Muslim colleagues at work became a valuable source of information, and I frequently engaged them in discussions about Islam. I also visited mosques, and the recitation of the Qur'ān deeply moved me.

Birmingham, known for its high concentration of Muslims in the United Kingdom, further facilitated my exposure to Islam. In 2007, two weeks before Ramadan, I embraced Islam by taking my shahada at a mosque in Leicester. The story of Bilaal, a companion of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) of African descent, particularly inspired me, leading me to adopt the name Bilaal. Embracing Islam, I wanted to shed the shackles of my previous beliefs and discover a newfound truth (Participant 3, personal communication, January 4, 2024).

7.3.1 Journey to Ubungoma

The participant detailed his Journey to Ubungoma in the following manner:

My journey into Ubungoma, or African spirituality, began at a young age, when I had dreams that would manifest in real life. This phenomenon worried me, but I was too scared to share it with anyone at home, as I did not understand what was happening. Additionally, I frequently experienced spiritual attacks. Over the years, I survived more than seven car accidents without sustaining a single bruise.

When I was 12 years old, living at my grandmother's place in the Eastern Cape, I often walked to the nearby river. Upon waking, I would find my clothes and bedding wet. This occurred so frequently that my parents were informed. The sleepwalking ceased when I returned to Soweto with my parents, but the dreams persisted. As I grew older, I became adept at giving people spiritual advice, often sharing insights I did not know I possessed. It felt as though something within me was speaking.

Years later, after converting to Islam, I attended prayers at the Orlando Mosque. A neighbour, a *sangoma*, would often beat drums during the fasting month, which irritated me and sometimes kept me awake at night, as it triggered something within me. As a Muslim, I ignored these signs, believing that having a calling was incompatible with my faith. However, one night during prayers, the neighbour's drumming triggered a spiritual attack. Following this incident, my life began to unravel: my wife left me, I lost my job, and I had constant conflicts with my father.

On my way to the mosque one morning, I encountered a group of *izangoma*, one of whom told me, "Abadala *bayakubiza*" (the elders are calling you). During my walks to the mosque for morning prayers, I often passed two older men who would stare at me without greeting me. Strangely, I could never discern where they came from or where they were going; they seemed to

appear and disappear mysteriously. Many people told me that I had *ubizo* (a calling), prompting me to research Ubungoma. I discovered that my great-great-grandparents were izangoma. When shown a picture of my great-grandfather, I realised he was the man I often saw in my dreams, teaching me about different herbs to cure specific ailments.

I sought training from various *abogobela* (trainers) but struggled to stay with them due to conflicts and an intolerable environment. Eventually, I found a trainer who asked me, “*Ufunani wena ngoba usulivumile idlozi? Ayikho into engikakuyenzela yona?*” (What do you want because you have already accepted the ancestors; there is nothing I can do for you) (Participant 3, personal communication, January 4, 2024).

7.3.2 Navigating both worlds, Islam and Ubungoma

The participant was asked about balancing the two identities of being a *sangoma* and a Muslim. He mentioned that while unsure about the two worlds, he found himself at the crossroads of Islam and Ubungoma.

There are many instances where I help heal people using Islamic methods, such as reciting verses from the Qur’ān, but afterwards, I turn to *ukuphahla* (communicating with the ancestors). I walk with many ancestors and do not have one specific ancestor (*idlozi*). Sometimes, I dream of men dressed in Islamic attire instructing me to use certain herbs and methods to heal people. Interestingly, these *amadlozi* are of Indian and Coloured descent. For me, this is proof that my ancestors have accepted my dual identity as both a Muslim and an *isangoma*. While some might argue that these worlds cannot be mixed, they work perfectly, even though I do not have complete answers. Living in both worlds is a daily reality for me, and I cannot deny it because it is integral to my identity. I am in Islam, and at the same time, I have accepted and am growing within the world of my ancestors. However, I acknowledge that it can be confusing at times. For instance, I fast during the month of Ramadhan, but during fasting, I need to go to the river and talk to my ancestors, as they commanded. This raises the question of whether it

nullifies my fast; I would also like to be guided, Islamically. Further, when it comes to slaughtering as well, it becomes an issue for me because Islam has its way of killing animals, and the *isintu* (African way) also has its way of how we are supposed to offer sacrifice to the ancestors. These are some of the complexities of both identities I found myself in. Moreover, as I grow in my Ubungoma journey, I believe such challenges will become more prevalent. My journey through Islam and Ubungoma is peculiar; my ancestors appear in my dreams in various forms. I also dream of some of my great-grandparents wearing Islamic regalia (kurtas), guiding me on many matters. This is why I assert that I do not have just one ancestor; I have many, including those who were Muslims (Participant 3, personal communication, January 4, 2024).

7.3.3 Challenges Faced by Muslim Sangomas

The participant alluded to the following challenges faced as a Muslim who is a *sangoma*.

The world of Ubungoma alone is a challenging environment, often met with scepticism from the general community. Once people realise that *ungumtwana wedlock* (a child of the ancestors), they tend to limit their interaction with you or fear you as if you go around casting evil spells. However, as *izangoma*, we are healers possessed by ancestors and cause no harm to people. If non-Muslims have a negative attitude towards *izangoma*, the situation is even more challenging among Muslims. Black Muslims in the townships are judgmental. I have been labelled as non-Muslim or *Mushrik* (polytheist), a person who worships ancestors or idols. Many of my Muslim friends, including those I used to attend the mosque with, have turned their backs on me. This has led to a situation where I avoid praying in township mosques for fear of stigmatisation. I have Muslim friends who are Indian and Coloured who accept me as I am, knowing I am a *sangoma*. Unfortunately, we live in a time when people like to talk about things they do not understand. Consequently, I have decided to isolate myself from the Soweto Muslim community, believing that many others suffer

in silence. What is surprising to me is that all those who are stigmatising me as a sangoma are themselves using such services and doing a lot of wrong things, like drinking alcohol. As a *sangoma*, I face stigma from both the Islamic and general communities. However, the stigma from my Muslim brothers is particularly hurtful because these are the people who are supposed to be more understanding and supportive. Ubungoma is significantly misunderstood within our Muslim community, leading to widespread stigma and judgment. My only support came from a fellow Muslim sangoma through his online platforms, which made me realise that I was not alone. However, the stigma remains pervasive, and there is a lack of support within our community (Participant 3, personal communication, January 4, 2024).

7.3.5 What should Muslims do when they get a call from their ancestors?

Before anything else, people must understand who they are. Once they have this self-awareness, they should trace their family lineage. Islam teaches us the importance of maintaining family bonds. We must always honour these bonds, even when it is challenging, especially when family members do hurtful things. However, Islam has taught me that we must always show kindness no matter what happens (*noma kwenzakalani*). It is God who decides our fate.

Building relationships helps us understand our ancestors' origins. What is your history? Try to trace back several generations, as your ancestors can guide you. Once you know yourself, you can better accept or reject what is happening in your life. At this stage, pray to Allah for guidance. The more you do this, the more you will realise that your journey is not just about you but about helping others and fulfilling a more excellent plan for your life. This realisation leads to acceptance. Seek advice from those who have walked this path before you, and let your intuition guide you (Participant 3, personal communication, January 4, 2024).

7.3.6 Case Study 3 Reflection

The third case study involves a participant who is from Soweto and has been a Muslim for more than 10 years. He received the calling three years after becoming a Muslim, but he ignored it as he thought it was against Islam. As time went on, illnesses started getting stronger, and he became a sangoma. He believes there is no contradiction between Islam and Ubungoma, even though he admits that his knowledge of Islam is limited, as he has not dedicated time to studying Islam. The participant claims that he has multiple ancestors who guide him on various issues. He even says that some of those ancestors who appear in his dreams are Muslims because he sees them wearing Islamic dresses. His case demonstrates how an individual can reconcile distinct spiritual practices. Finding ways to reconcile some of the Ubungoma healing practices with Qur'ānic verses, even though he has never received any training on Qur'ānic healing methodologies.

The case study highlights a black Muslim's intricate, often challenging journey to make sense of these two worlds. His personal struggles with the practicalities of dual observances, such as reconciling fasting during Ramadhan with the command to visit the graves of ancestors. He revealed the genuine complexities of his experiences. He is seeking guidance in accordance with Islamic principles. Furthermore, he shared his unease regarding the ritual of sacrificing an animal for the ancestors, especially when he must invoke the names of the ancestors.

Like many sangomas out there, the participants indicated that when his people around him knew about him becoming a sangoma, he faced severe stigma from the family, who are staunch Christians, the community and from fellow Black Muslims in the township. This has led to a situation where they do not pray in the township anymore and prefer to pray in Indian or coloured areas. The participants feel much hypocrisy regarding Ubungoma, as many criticise the practice publicly but have seen them consulting sangomas.

7.4 Case Study 4

The third case study examines the experiences of a well-educated Muslim sangoma. Who is a 56-year-old Zulu male born in KwaThema Springs? The interviewee studied Islam locally and abroad and has been an Islamic studies teacher for over 30 years. As one of the early black Muslim scholars, he provides a unique perspective on the complex interplay between ancestral heritage and personal identity.

This subsection focuses on five key questions from a broader set posed to him:

1. His journey as a Muslim.
2. His journey through Ubungoma.
3. His understanding of the concept of ancestors.
4. How a Muslim should respond to a call.
5. The support structures within the black Muslim community in South Africa and the way forward.

7.4.1 Journey to Islam

The participant briefly explained the following when prompted about his journey to Islam.

My parents became Muslims when we were young, and they sent us to a madrassah to study Islam in Springs. Later, I went to study at the Darul Ulūm in Newcastle, where I completed my six-year Islamic studies course and graduated as a Moulāna; I further went to India to study Hadith at the Nadwatul Ulamā Institute, one of the sought-after institutes for learning Islamic studies (Participant 4, personal communication, January 18, 2024).

7.4.2 Journey to Ubungoma

My journey to Ubungoma began before I was born; our families have always had traditional healers. Looking back, growing up as a child, all the signs of Ubungoma were there, but because I was growing up within Islam and my parents were not interested in such things, no one was there to guide me through the process. I could always foretell and see things in a dream and in real life. All the women I married over the years had similar gifts, but I could not understand, since this was not allowed in Islam, which affected my relationship. The moment came when my younger brother discovered that we were using the wrong surname, which we had been told by a traditional healer in KwaZulu-Natal. We performed the ceremony for the change of surname. We discovered that my lineage is royal, on both my mother's and my father's sides.

All along, at the age of forty, when I began a journey of self-discovery to know who I am and my origin, it led me to many new things in my life, including the change of surname. Then, all those things happening to me started making sense; I was being prepped to go through this

journey, and I was the chosen one in my family to carry on the legacy of healing. Even my mother was called, but we did not know this until things were terrible. We tried to get help for her to get healed, but the doctors did not know what the problem was. Until we were told that she was calling, since we are from the same family, no *gobela* (trainer) could train me as a sangoma, but I am guided by my ancestors, who are from the royal lineage (Participant 4, personal communication, January 18, 2024).

7.4.3 What is the concept of ancestors?

To understand *amadlozi* (ancestors), one must delve into the world of the souls; Allah explains in the Qur'ān that this is the knowledge Allah has minimally given to human beings. Thus, ancestors are family members who have passed. In an African culture, one does not stop being a parent at death but continues to fulfil parental duties even in the spiritual world. So, most people, especially Muslims, confuse *amadlozi* with jinns; our ancestors have absolutely nothing to do with jinns; these are two different worlds. Yes, we find people who use jinns; this is what we call *ukthwala negsintu* (using dark spirit to gain wealth or other worldly gains), interfering with the world of jinns. Ancestors are our family members, and some within our families have the gift of connecting with their souls (Participant 4, personal communication, January 18, 2024).

7.4.4 What must Muslims do when they have a calling?

One thing we need to understand is what Ubungoma is. Ubungoma is a realignment of spirits and souls. The spirits that are present in this material world are different from the spirits that are in a different world from our family members. When one has a calling or *ukuthwasa*, the family elders have appointed him to continue the family tradition of healing people. This is what I call realignment; in this journey, one will need an experienced guide. In IsiZulu, *ukuthwasa*, loosely translated as initiation, is when the direct line of communication is created between the initiate and the ancestor (*idlozi*). If one approaches Ubungoma from this angle, one will understand that this is not an Aqīda (Islamic belief) or a permissibility issue, but rather a private cultural issue. Further, note that Ubungoma and its calling are not the norm; they are not for everyone, but are given to only a few individuals. When one has a calling, they are going through a challenging stage that can be fatal. One of the so-called *maqāsid* of *shar'iah* (the higher

objectives of Islamic law) is to save lives. Allah reminds us well in the Qur'ān that if one finds himself in a difficult situation, the Ḥarām and Ḥarām laws do not apply; if one is faced with starvation and the food available is pork or any impermissible food, then they are allowed to eat the forbidden to save their lives. This can be seen as well in the case of conventional medicine, which contains alcohol or intoxicating substances; these will be allowed not as a norm, but to save lives. Ubungoma also falls within that category. Thus, when a Muslim receives a calling, they will need to respond to it and, after that, carry on with their lives as Muslims; nothing in Islam contradicts the gifts of communicating with the ancestors (Participant 4, personal communication, January 18, 2024).

7.4.5 What must Muslims do when they have a calling?

One thing we need to understand is what Ubungoma is. Ubungoma is the realignment of spirits and souls. The spirits that are present in this material world are different from the spirits that are in a different world from our family members. Now, when one has called or *ukuthwasa*, it means that he appointed those elders of the community to continue the family tradition of healing people. This is what I call realignment; in this journey, one will need an experienced guide. If one approaches Ubungoma from this angle, one will understand that this is not an 'Aqīda (Islamic belief) or a permissibility issue, but rather a private cultural issue. Further, note that Ubungoma and the calling that comes with it are not the norm; they are not for everyone, but are given to only a few individuals. When one has a calling, they are going through a challenging stage that can be fatal. One of the so-called maqasid of shar'iah (the higher objectives of Islamic law) is to save lives. Allah reminds us well in the Qur'ān that if one finds himself in a difficult situation, the Ḥarām and Ḥarām laws do not apply; if one is faced with starvation and the food available is pork or any impermissible food, then they are allowed to eat the forbidden to save their lives. This can be seen as well in the case of conventional medicine, which contains alcohol or intoxicating substances; these will be allowed not as a norm, but to save lives. Ubungoma also falls within that category. Thus, when Muslims receive a calling, they must respond to it and live their lives as Muslims; nothing in Islam contradicts the gifts of communication with the ancestors (Participant 4, personal communication, January 18, 2024).

7.4.6 Is there enough community support for those with a calling?

Honestly, as Black Muslims in South Africa, we face many challenges. We were brought up in a sectarian-based Islam that taught us that only our own beliefs are correct. For instance, if one is Tablighi, they are taught that anything not aligned with Tablighi principles is wrong. This is true for other sects or strands of Islam, such as Bareli, Deobandi, Şūfī, and Salafi.

Given this mindset towards Islam, it is even more challenging when it comes to African cultural practices, about which most of us know very little. We come from a culture of condemnation and prejudice towards anything different from what we know. Unfortunately, as Black Muslims, we are in a spiritual wilderness. We were taught to hold on to what is ours and were not given access to what is not ours, leaving us in limbo.

The sad part is that we were taught to hate each other based on sectarian divides. If someone claims to have a spiritual calling, we, as Muslims, often have no solution to such a problem. When it comes to cultural matters, we need to separate them from general issues, as these are highly individualised phenomena. If someone has this problem, we need people who can bring an Islamic perspective to Ubungoma so that we can refer those with the capabilities for spiritual assessment.

This means we need to create support structures, which will come about by producing Muslims who are *izangoma* and can deal with Muslim initiates. They can develop their talents within Islamic lines. We have many companions of the Prophet (SAW) who were talented in poetry, and the Prophet did not stop them because their poetry was against Islam. Instead, he channelled their skills to align with Islamic teachings. We need to do the same with Ubungoma.

Currently, we have nothing but religious sanctions of *Ḥarām*, *Ḥalāl*, and Jinn, which do not solve the problems faced by those with a calling. As Muslims, once you go through a calling, you face many stigmas. I have experienced this myself, with some excommunicating you and others labelling you as *Mushrik* or *kaffir*. Again, Ubungoma is not the norm; it is a unique journey that specific individuals go through, and it cannot be judged solely from a ruling perspective, as previously mentioned (Participant 4, personal communication, January 18, 2024).

7.4.7 Case Study 4 reflections

The fourth participant is a case study of a well-educated Muslim who has been in Islam for almost his entire life. His reflections highlight his unique ability to explain and expound on some Ubungoma practices, such as ancestral calling, the concept of worship, and ancestral reverence, and to locate them within Islamic teachings. He aligns his traditional healing with Islamic principles and subscribes to the idea that ancestral calling is “a private family issue” and further utilises the concept of *Maqāsidus-Sharī'ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law) to justify engaging with Ubungoma as a necessity that preserves life.

Even though he explained his belief about Ubungoma and Islamic thoughtfulness, his experience exposes a severe lack of community support and pervasive stigma that he faces within his Muslim community. He tells of painful instances of ostracisation and being labelled a *mushrik* (polytheist).

The participants offer sophisticated explanations of ancestors, distinguishing them from jinns. For him, ancestors are departed family members who continue their parental duties from the spiritual realm, in line with Qur'ānic teaching on souls and their secrets. This religious interpretation seeks to bridge the gap between Islamic monotheism and ancestral veneration by asserting that connecting with ancestors is a special spiritual gift rather than shirk (polytheism).

When asked about responding to an ancestral calling, the participants offered practical advice, which they justified from an Islamic perspective. He defines Ubungoma as “realignment of souls and spirits”, a family tradition of healing entrusted to specific individuals.

The participant attributes the culture of lack of support for Muslim Sangomas to Islamic sectarianism, which has given rise to condemnation and prejudice which is prevalent among Black Muslims. His experience shows spiritual confusion many black Muslims face; they are taught to reject anything African, leaving them ill-equipped to address individual phenomena.

He advocates that Black Muslims need to be proactive in religion; they must create a new breed of Muslim sangomas who will be able to solve some of the unique spiritual issues that many in our communities are facing.

7.5 Case Study 5

7.5.1 Background

The interviewee is a 26-year-old South African Tswana-speaking Muslim female who has been practising as a Sangoma (traditional healer) for over a year. Born and raised in a devout Christian household in Hebron, a township in Pretoria, she initially pursued Islamic studies, completing her education at a local madrasa. She narrated her background as follows:

“I grew up as a Muslim. Even though I am from a staunch Christian home, my mother was born a born-again Christian. As a child, I attended madrassah (religious classes) after school for fun with my friends. After completing my matric, I got interested in Islamic studies. I enrolled at Markazul Islam in Soshanguve, where I studied for four years. Later, I enrolled at the Islamic Online University, where I completed my BA in Islamic studies (Participant 5, personal communication, December 20, 2023).

Initially, the interviewee's initiation into traditional healing was neither planned nor fully understood. She recounted a surreal experience where she awoke in the home of a gobela (trainer) with no memory of travelling there.

“For years, I dreamt of water and mountains, often speaking with my grandparents as they guided me towards things I needed to do. I never shared these dreams with anyone, but as I grew older, I realised that many things I dreamt of eventually happened in real life. That is when I started wondering if I had a calling. However, I dismissed the thought that I was Muslim, and surely, this was impossible for someone like me.

When I married my late husband in 2023, I confided in him about my dreams, sure of what I had seen. Without hesitation, he told me I had a calling. His words shook me. He was a respected Islamic scholar, yet he urged me to go for initiation. I could not understand how he, of all people, could say such a thing. I ignored his advice, convinced that something like this could never happen to a Muslim.

Then, one night, I woke up suddenly and began walking, unaware of where I was going. In the morning, I found myself in a strange house. However, as

soon as I looked around, I recognised the man standing before me; he was the one from my dreams. I asked how I had arrived there, and my husband told me I had walked to the house in the dead of night while he and others followed me. Thus, I spent seven months training as a sangoma, embracing the journey that had called me for so long, even though I doubt whether this is allowed in Islam. I also must emphasise that I am still new in my journey and trying to make sense of what is happening to me” (Participant 5, personal communication, December 20, 2023).

7.5.2 On the concept of Amadlozi (ancestors)

In the interview, the participant explains her complex relationship with her ancestors (amadlozi or izinyanya). While the mainstream Muslim community might reject ancestor veneration as shirk (associating partners with Allah), she reinterprets their role in a way that aligns with her Islamic faith. Below is a breakdown of her perspective:

“Ancestors play a vital role in Ubungoma, offering guidance and wisdom. However, some aspects of ancestral traditions contradict Islamic teachings, particularly practices like animal sacrifice, where ancestral names are invoked, or the preparation of herbal remedies, which also require calling upon them. To navigate this, I choose to recite verses from the Qur’ān, especially Ayatul Kursi, which I believe holds powerful healing properties. So far, this approach has worked remarkably well; for now, my relationship with my ancestors remains one of guidance. They show me which plants to use to heal different ailments, and through this, I find assurance that my work helping those sick is not wrong. Instead, it feels like a path meant for me, one where both faith and ancestral wisdom coexist”(Participant 5, personal communication, December 20, 2023).

When asked about her practice as a sangoma, she tries to avoid it as much as possible because, at times, she feels guilty that she might be doing something wrong.

I never wanted to be a sangoma, yet no matter how much I try to step away, people keep coming to my house, seeking help. Some days, I consult with

more than ten patients, even though I have never advertised my services or told anyone I practise. I assumed that wearing a niqab(veil), a veil that covers my face, would deter people and make them turn away. However, despite that, they still come. It is as if the calling refuses to let go of me, drawing people in, even when I am trying to walk away (Participant 5, personal communication, December 20, 2023).

7.5.3 Responding to the Call

When asked whether a Muslim should respond to the ancestors' call to become a Sangoma, the interviewee explained that when ancestors call someone to become a Sangoma, the person has little choice but to respond. Resistance often manifests as unexplained illnesses or vivid dreams until the person accepts the calling.

When asked whether a Muslim should respond to the ancestors' call to become a Sangoma, Noor leaned forward, her voice dropping into the weighted tone of someone who had lived the struggle.

"When the ancestors call you, there is no option 'should' or 'should not.' It is not like choosing a job or a new dress. This thing comes for you. You can fight it. You can pray and run, but the ancestors will not let you rest if it is your path. Sickness that doctors cannot explain. Dreams that shake you awake. A life that feels like you are walking against a storm. Until you listen, that is why some go for initiation but refuse to practice openly. They say to the ancestors, 'I hear you. I accept this gift. However, I will not use it.' And then they live quietly, as Muslims. It is a compromise, not perfect, but what else can you do? (Participant 5, personal communication, December 20, 2023)

"

When asked about her challenges as a Muslim sangoma, she responded that she lives in two worlds: as an Islamic studies teacher and a sangoma. She spoke of dual spiritual identity.

"I have two separate lives. During the day, I am a Qur'ān teacher respected in my community and the institute where I teach. Nevertheless, nobody

knows about my other life as a healer. Not my students, not the mosque committee, nobody. If they found out, I would be expelled immediately. This is why so many Muslim Sangomas like me stay hidden. The shame is too much. People do not understand; they think we are doing something evil. So, we end up alone, carrying this secret" (Participant 5, personal communication, December 20, 2023).

The calling to Ubungoma is one of the most challenging experiences any individual can undergo in their lifetime, especially for Muslims, as it is perceived to contradict Islamic beliefs. The participant was asked if there is enough community support for those with a calling. The participants lamented no lack of support.

"Experiencing a calling or practising as a sangoma while being a Muslim presents a unique challenge as one finds oneself caught between the two worlds, the Islamic world, where the practice of Ubungoma is seen as taboo and the ancestral realm. As a result, there is a significant lack of support for those navigating this journey. Many Muslim sangomas have either chosen to leave or continue their practice in secrecy, fearing stigma and condemnation. Instead of receiving support, individuals going through this process often face judgment and rejection within our Muslim communities. We love Islam, but unfortunately, within Islam, there is no solution to our calling. Furthermore, we did not choose to have a calling"(Participant 5, personal communication, December 20, 2023).

7.5.4 Case Study 5 Reflections

This is the only case study of a female that we have. This study is a case of a young Muslim girl who was born in a Christian home and found Islam from the tender age of 14years. She studies Islam locally and internationally and currently works as an Islamic teacher. The participants indicated she had dreamed of being trained as a sangoma when she was young. However, she never communicated her dream to anyone until she married and confided this to her husband, who told her she might have a calling. The narrative reveals how powerful the summons was in leading her to her initiation as a sangoma.

The participant views her connection with ancestors as a source of spiritual guidance. Ancestors guide her in helping patients in distress. She indicates that she is still new to the practice of Ubungoma and is still trying to make sense of this dual identity. Even though she practices as a sangoma in secret, she says certain aspects of the practice make her uncomfortable, such as invoking the ancestors' names when making herbal mixtures.

She laments the lack of assistance and community support for Muslim sangomas. I must be an Islamic studies teacher during the day and a sangoma in the evening and at weekends. She laments constantly living in fear that if the employer finds out that she is a sangoma, she will be expelled and excommunicated. Her experiences lament a critical void within the Muslim community for a structure that will help Muslim scholars.

7.6 Cross-Case Study Analysis

This section will provide a cross-case analysis of the five Muslim sangomas interviewed, focusing on their responses, how they shape their identities, their approaches to healing, and how they navigate the two worlds that seem ideologically opposed. It organises and analyses detailed qualitative data, identifies key themes and compares these insights with existing academic research on religious blending, identity and healing in South Africa.

7.6.1 Navigating the Ancestral Calling: A Spectrum of Responses

The striking observation is the spectrum of responses towards the concept of ancestors among the interviewees. While ancestral call forms an integral part of Ubungoma, or what might be referred to as African Traditional Religion, it often shows itself as an illness or bizarre behaviour that becomes fatal if ignored. The respondents' understanding and response to the call were not the same. Others initially received it as directly opposing their Islamic religion since they viewed it as being forbidden due to the monotheism of Islam. In this way, people generally view the practice of Ubungoma with scepticism. Such opposition highlights the theological conflicts inherent in charting new terrain and attempting to syncretise two divergent belief systems. Nevertheless, despite these initial reservations, all participants answered the ancestors' call

and continued to be initiated into Ubungoma. However, one of the participants (case study 2) outright rejected the practice after initiation and branded it as worshipping other gods.

The acceptance at a later stage demonstrated a remarkable capacity to negotiate and accommodate internally, replicating the broader trend of religious duality across Africa, where individuals are apt to retain elements of both Abrahamic religions and African religions and customs. Accepting the vacation is one of the processes of self-realisation and identity formation. These varied responses, from initial rejection to acceptance and incorporation in some cases to a complete rejection of the practice, underline the dynamic nature of religious identity and culture in action, challenging a monolithic understanding of Islam and African customs/religion.

7.6.2 Seeking an alternative Solution to Ubungoma from Islamic healing.

All participants reported that when they received a call or were informed, they believed it was from their ancestors. They sought an Islamic solution to eliminate it. This is because they viewed Ubongoma as incompatible with Islamic beliefs. Some were advised by Islamic healers to seek help from their people, meaning sangomas.

Examining the participants' experiences highlights the presence of accessible and effective alternative spiritual care within their community. Despite their quest to diverge from the path they felt was un-Islamic, they found no viable support, leading to distress, desperation and confusion. The process of calling Ubongoma can be deeply traumatic. One of the participants explained that he had to contend with multiple car accidents. At the same time, another recounted being on his deathbed in the hospital when he was informed that he had a calling (*ubizo*). These accounts illustrate the often traumatic and life-altering nature of the calling (*ubizo*) to Ubungoma.

Central to the issue was the lack of adequate support, which could be attributed to various underlying factors:

Those referred to as Islamic healers may lack familiarity with the specific cultural dimensions and spiritual aspects of Ubungoma practice, particularly when someone has symptoms of

calling. Their symptoms were analysed through a different lens, such as jinn possession and physical illness, rather than a distinct spiritual mandate.

Cultural and theological differences are among the reasons that no assistance was available. Practices such as Ubungoma were regarded as witchcraft and thus labelled as un-Islamic. This issue also arises within Christianity. From a cultural perspective, the participants were exposed to Islamic healers of Indian and Malay descent who may not understand how African spiritual practices function. Consequently, any attempt to provide healing could have resulted in an insurmountable cultural barrier.

7.6.3 Journey into the New World

The only commonality among the participants was their origin; they are not all from Muslim families. This led to their initiation into Sangomahood and subsequent seeking of dual Muslim and Sangoma identity, often leaving them in the “new world” where they were confronted with a dire absence of guidance and support. This absence of any prior support group structure to advise them, through this sole intersection, further exacerbated their challenges. Three of the five participants had studied Islam. The findings suggested that Islamic education provided participants with a framework for critically engaging with Ubungoma. Muslim sangomas with a deeper knowledge of Islamic education demonstrated greater theological flexibility in harmonising Ubungoma with their faith. One graduate of an Islamic seminary explained that.

“He drew parallels between the concept of the saint (*awliya*) in Sufism and ancestors, in which, in both instances, the emphasis was not on worship but respect. The other participants mentioned in her case that her ancestors guide her in as far as healing and helping others are concerned, but she does not understand how this contradicts Islamic teachings”.

They distinguished between Polytheism (*shirk*) and cultural healing, and their work as sangomas focused on healing rather than worship. At the same time, those with less Islamic training faced greater ideological conflict.

Stigmatisation was also a common theme across the case studies. It came from several sources, from the family members who are staunch Christians, the Muslim community members who viewed the practice of Ubungoma as incompatible with Islamic beliefs and even potentially from traditional healers who are not accustomed to this specific hybrid identity. Historically, syncretism has been viewed as a betrayal or an unprincipled blending of different

cultures or religions that may provoke societal disapproval. This absence of support and extreme stigmatisation underscores the social and psychological burden these actors carry as they create a unique space between two robust cultural and religious traditions. The better Islamically educated (case studies 1, 2, and 4) could justify their practices using Islamic references from the scriptures, whereas the other two struggled with internalised guilt and confusion.

7.6.4 Adaptive Healing Practices

Participants had a mixed reaction to adaptive healing practices; the most experienced of them, who is also a trainer (case study 2), indicated that he uses only African healing practices strictly linked to Ubungoma, since it is the area he knows as an African. It would thus appear that a trainer or sangoma, with a proper understanding and lineage in Ubungoma, is deeply connected to their lineage and cultural traditions. He believes deviating from this tradition weakens its impact and reduces its authenticity. Other interlocutors indicated that they used Qur'ānic verses when mixing herbs, especially when invoking the ancestors, because they wanted to worship different deities. Even those who indicated using some elements of Islamic healing were unsure whether this practice is permissible and would like to be exposed to or learn more about it. This approach suggests an internal struggle and a quest to avoid violating Islamic teachings. For them, using Qur'ānic verses is a way to legitimise the practices they deem or suspect to be against Islamic principles. This blending further helps them reconcile their dual identities as individuals who respect ancestral traditions while also acknowledging and, if they choose, adhering to their faith.

The case studies reveal a tension between the desire to uphold supposedly “traditional religious purity” and the need to adapt to unique indigenous African healing influences. The uncertainty and desire for further learning among the adaptive healers create a gap that can be filled through interfaith dialogue and the development of resources that assist traditional healers in navigating the complexities of their religious and cultural realities.

7.7 Conclusion to the Case Studies Chapter

The literature on Ubungoma, Islam, and Sangomas in South Africa highlights the 'deep cultural and spiritual significance of healing practices' while exploring the complex and sometimes tense relationship between these practices and Islamic beliefs. The case studies of Muslim Sangomas demonstrate the potential for coexistence and integration between these belief systems (Islam and Ubungoma). At the same time, they reveal the challenges and the need for greater recognition and support for those navigating this point of convergence. The adoption of Ubungoma by Muslims in South Africa shows how religion and culture can interact in complex ways. While Islam prohibits the use of divination, many Muslim sangomas have found ways to reconcile their religious beliefs with their cultural heritage. It appears as if Muslim sangomas have, on their own initiative, without any structured religious guidance, integrated their Islamic faith with traditional African healing practices by incorporating Islamic prayers and recitations alongside divination methods. This approach allows them to use their cultural knowledge and skills while remaining true to their religious beliefs.

Islamic prayers and recitations are central to the Muslim belief system and practice because they provide blessings, healing, and protection. Muslim sangomas integrate Islamic spiritual elements into traditional African healing practices. This practice enhances their perceived effectiveness and allows them to respect their culture while following Islamic teachings. The utilisation of Islamic prayers and recitations by Muslim sangomas takes various forms. Some Muslim sangomas may use them as spiritual protection before or during a divination session. Others may incorporate them into the divination process, reciting verses from the Qur'ān alongside traditional methods such as throwing bones or consulting spirits.

In some instances, the participants indicated that the use of Islamic prayers and recitations served as a way for Muslim sangomas to legitimise their practice within the broader Muslim community. Muslim sangomas may be embraced and receive acceptance and support from other Muslims by demonstrating that their training is compatible with Islamic teaching. There is debate around the incorporation of Islamic prayers and recitations into Ubungoma. Some Muslims generally view the utilisation or employment as being incompatible with Islamic beliefs, and Muslim sangomas who incorporate these practices are seen as deviating from Islamic teachings. Despite the challenges, Muslim sangomas continue to use Islamic prayers and recitations alongside traditional African divination methods to reconcile their religious beliefs

with their cultural heritage. Through this synthesis, they can draw on the richness and diversity of Islamic and traditional African cultures to heal and support their patients.

CHAPTER 8

Findings and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The study, *Islam and Ubungoma: Case Studies of Black Muslims in South Africa*, is critical because it enhances existing knowledge of Ubungoma, Islam, and *izangoma* in South Africa. Its primary objective is to explore how Muslim *sangomas* navigate the intersection of their religious beliefs and traditional healing practices. To meet this objective, the research explored the unique challenges faced by Black Muslims in South Africa who are committed to both Islam and Ubungoma. The study sought to understand their lived realities and assessed the theological and social implications of their healing practices. A central goal was to explore how they integrate ancestral respect and spiritual healing within a coherent Islamic framework.

The theoretical foundation for this examination is the principle of *'urf*. This study interprets *'urf* as a thoughtful, ongoing negotiation of tradition. This concept acknowledges that Islamic law has historically incorporated local customs, provided they do not contradict foundational Islamic tenets. Consequently, *'urf* provides an overarching theoretical framework grounded in both Islamic knowledge and indigenous epistemology. This approach fosters a thoughtful, respectful understanding of the topic by focusing on participants' real-life experiences. This theoretical lens was applied through three distinct approaches:

1. **Theology:** Engaging with potential tensions such as *Bid'ah* (innovation) and *Shirk* (associating partners with Allah), while also exploring Ubungoma through the lens of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of the law), such as the preservation of life and mental health.
2. **Black Muslim Praxis:** The lived experiences of Black Muslim *izangoma* in South Africa cannot be adequately understood through rigid, monolithic definitions of orthodox theology or fixed cultural categories. Instead, they require an analytical lens that can capture how research participants actively navigate, negotiate, and shape their own realities. To achieve this, the analysis is grounded in the conceptual framework of Black African Muslim Praxis (BAMP). This framework draws directly from scholarship on Black African Muslim self-understanding and is rooted in the intellectual and lived experiences of indigenous Muslims. Far from being an abstract concept, this praxis represents the deliberate, active synthesis through which individuals reconcile and

embody two seemingly distinct spiritual worlds: historical Islamic tradition and indigenous African spirituality (Ubungoma). By using BAMP as the primary theoretical lens, this chapter moves away from simply judging whether these dual practices are "correct" or "incorrect" under a strict legalistic gaze. Instead, it challenges dominant narratives by exploring how Black Muslims assert their cultural identity within Islam and examining how these actors construct a coherent sense of self at the intersection of a universal faith and an ancestral calling.

3. **Healing:** Discussing Ubungoma's primary function of healing, including diagnosis, divination, and the curing of spiritual or mental illness. '*Urf*' is thus an essential test of whether such healing activities are afforded space within the Islamic legal tradition.

The structure of this research follows logically from the theoretical framework to the cultural context, historical comparisons, and lived experiences, to analyse the synthesis of Islam and Ubungoma.

After providing the broad structure of the study in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 explores the concept of '*urf*' in its linguistic and technical senses, locating the principle within the primary sources of Islamic law. It analyses how different Islamic schools of thought approach the concept of '*urf*' (customs or traditions) and its legitimacy as a source of law. It illustrates how three Islamic schools of law acknowledge and utilise '*urf*' as a valid source in *sharī'ah*. The chapter suggests that the Islamic legal principle of '*urf*' offers a viable theoretical framework for analysing Ubungoma within the broader Islamic socio-cultural landscape. Under the same theme, the study examines diverse applications of '*urf*' in Islamic legal systems, including family law, medicine, and business transactions. The study presents '*urf*' as an accepted legal source for recognising people's customs and cultural traditions and integrating them into Islamic practice. However, this acceptance is subject to the condition that such customary practices do not contradict the fundamental teachings of Islam rooted in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Building on this framework, the study next explores the cultural tradition at the centre of the research: Ubungoma. Chapter 3 examines the concept of Ubungoma within its cultural and religious contexts. This examination aims to comprehensively understand Ubungoma and shed light on its relevance in African society. It maps the core tenets of Ubungoma, including the role of ancestors (*amadlozi*), the process of ancestral calling (*ukuthwasa*), the rituals and practices involved in divination and healing, and the social function of *sangomas* (traditional healers). Furthermore, it addresses the contemporary challenges and transformations facing

Ubungoma in modern South Africa, including its relationship with Western medicine, feminism, and the debate over whether it is a religion or a culture. This detailed analysis serves as a crucial counterpoint to the discussion of Islam in subsequent chapters.

It was evident from Chapter 3 that Ubungoma is centrally concerned with healing. Thus, in Chapters 4 and 5, the study engages in dialogue with Islamic healing traditions. Chapter 4 analyses how South African Muslim scholars approach the concept of traditional healing by drawing on references to healing in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Chapters 5 and 6 broaden the scope of research by examining the historical and contemporary interactions between Islam and indigenous practices in other parts of Africa, specifically East and West Africa. This is followed by a comparative look at Central Asia, where the research examines the concept of Islamic Shamanism and its implications for Ubungoma. It examines how pre-Islamic shamanistic practices, spirit possession, divination, and communication with the unseen world have been integrated into or influenced by Ṣūfī Islam, providing a comparative lens that suggests a historical precedent for the blending seen in Ubungoma.

Finally, all these preceding chapters converge in Chapter 7, which focuses on lived experiences through in-depth interviews with Muslim *sangomas*. The study originally planned to interview twelve Muslim *sangomas* to discuss their experiences. However, the researcher faced significant difficulties in recruiting the target number of participants, as several potential respondents withdrew from the study. The main issues they articulated indicate the sensitive nature of the topic, including a firm intention to keep their engagement confidential due to concerns that exposure might disturb their ancestors, as well as a fear of stigmatisation and unfair social judgment. Although these constraints limited the scope, the study successfully interviewed five key practitioners. The chapter engages with their lived experiences and beliefs, showing how they integrate and reconcile their religious and traditional practices. Furthermore, the study examines the role of Islam in Ubungoma and how these healers are perceived by their communities, offering a deeper understanding of how Muslim *sangomas* navigate the intersection of their religious beliefs and traditional healing practices and reconcile conflicts between the two. This blending, although not universally accepted, is contested by those who perceive the practices as incompatible with Islam. This final analysis captures the practical application of the theoretical potential shown in Chapter 2 (*ʿurf*) and the cultural reality described in Chapter 3 (Ubungoma), while demonstrating how the historical and comparative examples from Chapters 5 and 6 are actualised locally. The analysis demonstrates how these healers

negotiate the controversial nature of their practice, ultimately drawing on both traditions to cure their clients.

Thus, this research journey establishes *‘urf* as a framework, delineates Islam's legal context and the Ubungoma tradition through detailed discussion, and provides comparative and empirical justification. The study now moves to the conclusion, which synthesises these findings to address the central research questions.

8.2 Research Findings

This sub-section presents the key findings from the research on Islam and Ubungoma: Case Studies of Black Muslims in South Africa. It details the patterns and unique instances in the data to illustrate the findings. Drawing on literature and a qualitative research design involving in-depth interviews with Muslim *sangomas* in South Africa, this section reveals how these individuals navigate seemingly divergent systems of belief and practice. The findings are organised thematically, reflecting the key patterns that emerged across the research chapters. The study found that:

a) ‘Urf (Customs): The principle of *‘urf* serves as a crucial bridge between faith and culture, allowing Muslim communities to express their Islamic identity through indigenous traditions. This principle recognises the validity of local customs, provided they align with core Islamic teachings. Consequently, Muslim *sangomas* draw on *‘urf* to integrate elements of Ubungoma into their religious lives.

b) Ubungoma Findings: For this study, the primary findings with direct implications for Muslim *sangomas* involve:

- The discourse surrounding ancestral reverence versus ancestral worship.
- Locating the practice of Ubungoma as either a religion or a healing practice.

These two aspects significantly affect the perceived legitimacy of Ubungoma and its status as a religion. Within the communities, it remains uncertain where Ubungoma fits in this regard. Regarding ancestral reverence, the study found that ancestors are generally perceived as intermediaries rather than as objects of worship.

c) Religious Background: Except for one individual, most participants converted to Islam later in life rather than being born into the faith, having lived as non-Muslims before their conversion.

Additionally, the practice of Ubungoma has been a family tradition spanning many generations, and participants are continuing the traditions of their ancestors.

d) Free Will and Calling: The study revealed that becoming a *sangoma* is not a personal choice but a calling, referred to in isiZulu as *ubizo*. These callings often manifest in childhood, but because of inexperience, many individuals initially ignore them. Even when parents recognise the signs, they may avoid acknowledging the calling, hoping it will disappear. However, as the child grows, the symptoms of *ubizo* intensify, manifesting through misfortunes, undiagnosed illnesses, accidents, vivid dreams, foretelling, and premonitions.

e) Stigmatisation: Muslim *sangomas* face significant challenges in reconciling their Islamic and Ubungoma beliefs. Some reported experiencing criticism and rejection from their Muslim communities due to their involvement in traditional practices. This stigma was occasionally intense enough to affect their religious well-being. Others felt internally conflicted about participating in these practices, fearing they might contradict Islamic teachings.

f) Contested Identities (Views on Being a Muslim and a Sangoma): The study identified diverse perspectives among Muslim *sangomas* regarding monolithic versus plural identities, which can be categorised into three distinct models:

1. *Synthesis Model:* Some *sangomas* find deep value in both their Islamic and Ubungoma beliefs and practices. They feel connected to their ancestral heritage through traditional practices while finding spiritual fulfilment in their Islamic faith, maintaining that one can be both a Muslim and a practitioner of Ubungoma. They argue that the negativity associated with Ubungoma is primarily based on misinformation perpetuated by colonialism, which viewed African traditions as inherently evil—misconceptions that have also influenced parts of the Muslim community.
2. *Pragmatic Model:* Some individuals became *sangomas* primarily to seek healing, as no alternative Islamic interventions were available to address their specific illnesses and difficulties. Therefore, their involvement with Ubungoma stems from a necessity to survive when no other options existed.
3. *Exclusive Model:* Other individuals believe that Muslims should not engage in Ubungoma, arguing that it directly contradicts fundamental Islamic teachings. They maintain that Islam does not support such practices because Ubungoma functions as a separate religion, and Muslims cannot practice two faiths simultaneously.

Furthermore, they note that it involves interactions with spirits that may lead people away from God, and that specific practices within Ubungoma—such as invoking names other than Allah during rituals, drinking blood, and certain dress codes for Muslim women—contradict Islamic tenets.

g) Lack of Community Support: Participants highlighted a lack of community support, particularly from the broader Muslim community, for individuals suffering from an ancestral calling or for those who have undergone training as *sangomas*. This lack of support often compounded their desperation and difficulties, as conventional religious structures offered no solutions. Participants noted that before undergoing training as *izangoma*, they initially sought help from Muslim spiritual healers to rid themselves of the calling. However, effective assistance was unavailable, and some Muslim healers even encouraged them to seek resolution through traditional African methods.

h) Seeking Alternatives: While one participant indicated that Islam offers spiritual solutions to avoid becoming a *sangoma*, other participants noted that the two worlds are distinct and that Islam does not provide a remedy to remove the calling, leaving acceptance as the only path forward. They mentioned trying various alternative Islamic healing methods without success, after which even the healers recommended that they undergo *ukuthwasa* (initiation).

i) Healing: There is minimal structural integration between Islamic and traditional African healing methods. Most participants indicated that they use Ubungoma exclusively to heal people because, despite being Muslim, they are not trained in Islamic healing practices. One participant emphasised that "only an African solution can address an African problem," referring to illnesses perceived as unique to people of African descent.

j) Referencing International Experiences: Black South African Muslims can draw insights from the historical experiences of other regions that share similar dynamics. In this instance, historical models from both West Africa and Central Asia offer valuable lessons and precedents for navigating the synthesis of Islam and Ubungoma.

8.2 Conclusion

The study highlights the importance of understanding the experiences of Muslim *sangomas* and the challenges they face in navigating the intersection of their Islamic and Ubungoma beliefs. It also underscores the need for better education, tolerance, and understanding of

traditional practices within Muslim communities. The key findings illuminate theological, social, and therapeutic challenges, while simultaneously presenting an opportunity for reconciliation between indigenous customary practices and Islam. In concluding this study, it is essential to summarise the key contributions and implications of the findings outlined.

Integrating Religio-Cultural Practices: A Structured Alternative to Syncretism

The Islamic concept of *'urf* presents a robust framework for integrating cultural practices. For Ubungoma to achieve legitimacy and validity in this context, it must be evaluated under the principle of *'urf*, particularly in complex situations such as the ancestral calling (*ubizo*), where individuals often feel they have no choice but to accept it.

When two distinct cultures, religions, or practices converge, syncretism often emerges. Syncretism involves blending cultural, religious, and philosophical beliefs into a new, coherent system. This concept is crucial to the current study, as it examines individuals practising two seemingly opposed ideologies and explores how they balance these worlds.

Under ordinary circumstances, syncretism would be a standard analytical category in this type of research. However, this is not the case here, as Islam has an established internal mechanism, the *'urf*, through which the indigenous customs and practices of various communities can be integrated into the Islamic faith. The concept of *'urf* provides Islam with a more structured approach to accommodating other cultures than syncretism does. While syncretism merges two elements to create a new identity, often resulting in the erosion or "extinction" of an original belief or cultural aspect, *'urf* preserves both systems, allowing them to coexist without mutual alienation. Crucially, any practices accommodated under *'urf* must align with core Islamic teachings.

Therefore, Islam offers a valuable analytical and practical mechanism for Muslim *sangomas*, enabling them to maintain their faith while preserving their traditions. Despite not always receiving the prominence it deserves within orthodox Islamic legal discourse, the concept of *'urf* is a fundamental tool in a multicultural society. Historically, Islam has utilised *'urf* to adapt to diverse cultural practices, a legal flexibility that Black South African Muslims can employ to navigate Ubungoma.

Ancestral Intercession and the Principle of Darūra: A Muslim's Calling

Scholars and practitioners assert that *izangoma* do not worship ancestors but rather revere them as intermediaries between humans and God. How this concept emerged within Indigenous Knowledge Systems raises fundamental questions regarding the conceptualisation of the Divine, the transmission of sacred knowledge, and the historical development of ancestral mediation within African cosmologies. Examining *ukuphahla* (communicating with the ancestors) or ancestral veneration from an orthodox Islamic perspective poses severe challenges for Muslim *sangomas*, as it is frequently interpreted as *shirk* (associating partners with God).

However, such practices can be understood and analysed through the Islamic concepts of *istighātha* (supplicating through the blessings of a prophet or a saint) and *tawassul* (asking a prophet or saint to intercede during supplication). Highlighting this structural similarity encourages scholars and Muslim practitioners to critically examine the nuances and diverse perspectives available within Islamic thought. Both *ukuphahla* and *tawassul* appear to operate on a shared principle: the use of spiritual intermediaries between humanity and God. Clarifying this comparison can inspire cultural practitioners and scholars to explore common ground, deepening the understanding of both indigenous and Islamic practices.

Additionally, a prominent issue highlighted in the findings is the significant misunderstanding of Ubungoma within both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Despite numerous efforts across various platforms to explain the tradition, it remains deeply misunderstood, particularly within the Muslim community, where it is often summarily dismissed as *shirk*. This perception stems from two primary factors: a general lack of knowledge regarding what Ubungoma entails, which leads many to prohibit it hastily without thorough study and a broader tendency within the Muslim community to view African customary practices (such as indigenous names, dress codes, marital celebrations, and rites of passage) with scepticism.

While the primary objective of this research is not to issue a definitive legal ruling (*fatwā*) on Ubungoma in Islam, this conclusion offers an essential examination of the Islamic legal and theological issues that emerge when a Muslim receives an ancestral calling (*ubizo*). Awareness of these implications is necessary, particularly when addressing the spiritual and practical dilemmas of individuals at this juncture. Such awareness helps ensure adherence to Islamic legal principles while remaining sensitive to cultural contexts. To locate Ubungoma's position in

Islam, this research must be examined through two distinct dimensions: Ubungoma as a religion and Ubungoma as a healing practice.

At first glance, many daily practices of Ubungoma, such as the consumption or ritual use of blood, specific dress codes for women, and ritual dancing and singing to drums, appear impermissible in Islam. These activities are integral to the training of initiates (*amathwasa*) and the practice of qualified healers. However, closer inspection reveals that Ubungoma is not a typical voluntary lifestyle choice, but a form of therapeutic calling bestowed upon specific individuals; ignoring this calling can lead to severe psychological or physical consequences, including death.

When viewed as a lifesaving therapeutic measure, the standard legal categories of permissibility (*ḥalāl*) and prohibition (*ḥarām*) in Islam may be evaluated differently. According to Islamic jurisprudence, prohibited acts may be temporarily permitted under the principle of *ḍarūra* (necessity) if they serve a critical need, such as saving a human life. In Islamic law, *ḍarūra* is a foundational concept that enables believers to navigate extreme, unavoidable conditions. The principle makes otherwise prohibited actions acceptable in situations of immediate, serious harm, reflecting the paramount objective of Islamic law (*Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*) to preserve human life. This prompts a critical jurisprudential question: can the principle of *ḍarūra* justify an individual practising Ubungoma to alleviate severe harm and preserve their life while remaining a Muslim? Under specific, highly constrained circumstances, such an application can be argued as compatible with broader Islamic legal principles.

The other contentious issue involves classifying Ubungoma as either a healing practice or a religion. Cultural experts differ significantly in their views on this phenomenon. Anthropologists and scholars such as Ilse Truter, Idowu Obulaje, and Okot p'Bitek argue that the very concept of "religion" is a Western construct foreign to historical African realities, thereby rendering Ubungoma a cultural healing practice. Conversely, other scholars, such as the late Professor John Mbiti, view these systems as inherently religious, hence the deployment of the term "African Traditional Religion" (ATR) when referring to Ubungoma.

Classifying Ubungoma as an independent religion raises several significant theological issues regarding its compatibility with Islam:

- Religion involves a voluntary element of submission or conscious conversion, whereas in Ubungoma, an individual has no choice regarding their calling. Ubungoma is a rare,

highly specialised practice meant only for specific individuals, whereas world religions carry an element of universal calling.

- World religions actively engage in proselytisation, whereas Ubungoma does not seek converts.
- The rules and regulations of Ubungoma are highly individualistic, differing from one practitioner to another or according to specific ancestral mandates. In contrast, a religion generally possesses a standardised, universal doctrine to which all members subscribe.

Furthermore, classifying Ubungoma as a standalone religion carries restrictive implications for Islam regarding permissibility. While a Muslim may incorporate cultural practices that do not contradict the Qur'ān and Sunnah, Islam strictly prohibits syncretism or the combination of faiths, requiring exclusive theological devotion. However, if Ubungoma is conceptualised primarily as a cultural healing practice, it can more easily coexist within an Islamic framework as a customary method for treating specific illnesses, requiring the practitioner to abstain only from component practices that directly contradict Islamic theology.

Another important consideration in this debate is that Ubungoma operates as an individual-based system rather than an organised institution with standardised doctrines. Practitioners differ significantly in their personal experiences and interpretations. Consequently, its categorisation depends heavily on how each person understands and positions the practice in their own life. This individual alignment is best understood through the conceptual framework of Black African Muslim Praxis (BAMP). BAMP moves beyond rigid legalistic judgments of "correctness" to analyse how indigenous Muslims construct a coherent sense of self at the intersection of a universal faith and an ancestral calling. Because the tradition lacks a uniform, global theological framework or a centralised set of rules, BAMP provides the necessary lens to capture how practitioners actively navigate, negotiate, and shape their own spiritual realities.

Finally, while this study does not issue a formal ruling on the permissibility of Ubungoma, it demonstrates a dire need for deeper theological and jurisprudential examination, especially for Black Muslims who experience *ubizo* while maintaining their Islamic faith. Future research should foster direct engagement and dialogue between Islamic scholars and traditional healers to explore whether specific forms of Ubungoma can align with Islamic principles without compromising *'aqidah* (creed).

The Ancestral Calling and Conversion: Avenues for Future Research

The findings of this study raise important questions regarding the relationship between an individual's religious background and the manifestation of an ancestral calling. While the small sample size precludes conclusive generalisations, the findings suggest a critical area for further research: whether individuals born into multigenerational Muslim families experience *ubizo*. In this study, three participants converted to Islam as adults, while the parents of the remaining two participants converted during their teenage years.

This reflects a broader demographic pattern among Black Muslims in South Africa, where the majority of the community consists of first or second-generation converts rather than individuals born into longstanding Muslim lineages. While multigenerational Black Muslim families exist, they remain statistically uncommon. Consequently, the case studies reflect this sociological reality. Providing definitive evidence on the correlation between religious upbringing and the ancestral calling requires a much larger sample size, especially since orthodox Muslim families often attribute the symptoms of *ubizo* to alternative spiritual or medical causes due to the widespread belief that a Muslim cannot be a *sangoma*.

Contested Identities: Final Models of Reconciliation

The study demonstrates that the identity of a Muslim traditional healer is complex and nonlinear, expressing itself through three distinct models among practitioners:

- **The Synthesis Model:** These practitioners value both Islam and traditional practices simultaneously. Grounded in Black African Muslim Praxis, they embody a deliberate synthesis that reconciles two seemingly distinct spiritual worlds: historical Islamic tradition and indigenous African spirituality. They resonate deeply with their indigenous heritage while finding spiritual fulfilment in Islam, maintaining that it is entirely possible to be both a committed Muslim and a traditional healer. They argue that negative attitudes toward Ubungoma are remnants of colonial frameworks that demonised African traditions, misconceptions that have inadvertently influenced portions of the Muslim community.

- **The Pragmatic Model:** These individuals entered Ubungoma strictly out of therapeutic necessity. They sought traditional healing because no alternative Islamic interventions successfully addressed their illnesses. Consequently, they view their practice as a vital means of survival rather than a competing theological system.
- **The Exclusive Model:** These practitioners conclude that Muslims should not engage in Ubungoma under any circumstances, viewing it as fundamentally incompatible with Islamic teachings. They argue that it functions as a separate religion, that Islam prohibits dual religious affiliation, and that the practice involves spiritual realms that risk leading believers astray. They maintain that specific component practices such as the ritual use of blood, invoking names other than Allah, and certain dress codes directly violate Islamic law.

The perseverance of the first two models attests to the resilience of individual therapeutic needs. It underscores the urgent need for Muslim leadership to address these complex spiritual and existential struggles through a framework that respects the lived realities of Black African Muslim self-understanding.

Barriers to Communal Acceptance

The study concludes that one of the most significant challenges facing Muslim *sangomas* is the intense stigmatisation and ostracisation they encounter within their religious communities. All participants indicated that they experienced social alienation from Muslim friends and congregations upon their initiation into Ubungoma. One participant noted that this hostility profoundly altered his religious practice, leading him to avoid the mosque entirely to escape ridicule.

A lack of institutional support from the community consistently exacerbates these difficulties. Overcoming this barrier requires a committed, multifaceted approach: educating the broader community and Muslim scholars about the mechanics of Ubungoma to address misconceptions, reducing the stigma associated with traditional healing, and recognising the agonising dilemma these individuals face as they navigate an inescapable calling. Cultivating such recognition is essential for fostering greater empathy. This situation highlights a complex pressure point where communal disapproval directly damages individual spiritual and

psychological well-being, accentuating the urgent need for open dialogue and empathy within the broader Muslim community regarding African customary realities.

Cultivating a New Cohort of Islamic Healers

The research suggests that when participants sought alternative interventions from Islamic spiritual healers (*bana ba thapelo* or *raqi* practitioners) to avert the practice of Ubungoma, the Islamic healers frequently acknowledged their inability to resolve cases of this specific nature. They advised them to seek help from qualified Ubungoma practitioners. Notably, even an interviewee who maintained a firm conviction that Ubungoma is incompatible with Islamic ideology, believing one cannot simultaneously serve the ancestors and Allah, ultimately found physical and psychological relief only through Ubungoma initiation. This indicates a compelling, widespread perception that the ancestral calling is a distinct spiritual phenomenon that requires localised African therapeutic responses and can only be managed by experts within that tradition. Nevertheless, due to the study's small sample size, the possibility that specialised Islamic healers capable of averting an ancestral calling exist cannot be entirely ruled out.

Because Ubungoma's central role is therapeutic, its framework emphasises healing over other social roles. *Sangomas* heal physically using indigenous flora such as sage and *umhlonyane* (African wormwood) and spiritually by addressing spirit possession, misfortune, and ritual cleansing. Given that healing is the primary function of Ubungoma, established Islamic healing traditions (*tibb* or *ruqyah*) could, in theory, contribute to the therapeutic repertoire of Muslim *sangomas*. Conversely, the study found a significant lack of awareness regarding formal Islamic healing methodologies among the participants. Although two participants indicated that they frequently recite verses from the Qur'ān, particularly *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, during their sessions, a functional separation persists, rooted in the belief that African spiritual illnesses can only be resolved through African therapeutic means.

The discussion of Islamic healing raises an important question: what constitutes authentic Islamic healing? This study has demonstrated that Islamic healing is not uniform, but encompasses diverse, highly localised practices worldwide. Given this flexible, adaptive nature, the practice of Ubungoma, grounded in the principle of 'urf, could, in theory, be integrated into a broader, pluralistic Islamic healing tradition. Such an integration could directly address the unique spiritual challenges faced by Black Muslims in South Africa.

Consequently, the Black Muslim community faces a choice: either identify spiritual healers capable of successfully averting the calling of Ubungoma. This exercise has largely proven futile for these participants, or it has cultivated a new cohort of Islamic scholars and healers who can engage with the challenges of Ubungoma, either by aiding individuals to manage the calling or by guiding initiates through the practice in a manner that respects Islamic theology. Utilising the Black African Muslim Praxis framework, such an initiative would foster a distinct group of Muslim *sangomas* who are highly sensitive to their patients' holistic needs, ultimately affirming a unique Black Muslim identity in South Africa that embraces both its Islamic faith and its indigenous African heritage.

Considering the regionally diverse nature of Islamic healing globally, questioning whether Muslim *sangomas* employ a single, standardised mode of "Islamic healing" is analytically misdirected. Conceptual frameworks such as "Islamic Shamanism" demonstrate that healing paradigms within the Islamic world historically adapt to local geographical and cultural contexts rather than adhering to a monolithic, uniform approach.

Global Models: Lessons from West Africa and Islamic Shamanism

Drawing on West African, East African, and Central Asian traditions offers valuable precedents for the South African context. In West Africa, the historical interplay between Islam and indigenous spiritual practices has frequently led to recognised forms of accommodation and cultural adaptation, demonstrating a longstanding potential for coexistence rather than overt conflict. Similarly, the historical trajectory of Islamic shamanism in Central Asia, which has long coexisted alongside Abrahamic faiths, underscores the resilience and adaptability of indigenous healing systems within an Islamic framework.

These global interactions offer established pathways for deeper theoretical integration and understanding in South Africa, particularly regarding ancestral reverence and the societal acceptance of multifaceted spiritual landscapes. By applying Black African Muslim Praxis as an overarching analytical framework, the research supports the conclusion that South African Black *sangomas* and Muslim leadership can benefit from exploring these historical comparative models to understand how pre-Islamic shamanistic practices, spirit possession, and communication with the unseen world have been successfully integrated into or influenced by broader expressions of Islam.

In the final analysis, the answer to how these practitioners navigate this complex intersection lies not in an institutional blueprint, but in the deeply individualised and resilient nature of Black African Muslim Praxis. Forced to operate in a landscape marked by profound theological uncertainty, severe communal stigmatisation, and an acute deficit of orthodox Islamic guidance or institutional support, each practitioner is effectively left to make sense of their own calling and religion in isolation. However, by reframing Ubungoma through the jurisprudential lens of *ḍarūra* (necessity) for survival, and anchoring it within the protective, adaptive framework of *‘urf* (custom), they demonstrate the profound potential to sustain a precarious cultural and religious harmony. Bound by an inescapable *ubizo* (calling), these healers prove that maintaining one's devotion to Allah while honouring the mandate of the ancestors is not an existential impossibility, but an active, lived reconciliation, proving that one need not look away from their African heritage to look towards Mecca.

8.3 Recommendation and Future Planning

Further Research: Conduct additional in-depth case studies and ethnographic research to deepen understanding of the experiences and practices of Muslim *Sangomas* in South Africa, exploring how different cultures practice Ubungoma. This can include exploring their beliefs, rituals, healing methods, and interactions with Islamic teachings and traditional African spirituality.

Research on the permissibility of Ubungoma: carry out an in-depth jurisprudential study of Ubungoma. This study should focus specifically on Islam's religious and legal dimensions.

Establishment of a Fatwa Committee - We further recommend the formation of a qualified fatwa committee. This committee must include Islamic scholars who understand both Fiqh (jurisprudence) and local cultural practices. The committee's job is to investigate the permissibility of Ubungoma in Islam. The committee should issue a clear, evidence-based ruling. This ruling must consider authentic Islamic sources (Qur'an and Sunnah) as well as the actual practices observed in communities that use Ubungoma.

Comparative Studies: Compare the experiences and practices of Muslim *Sangomas* with non-Muslim *Sangomas*, including those from other faiths practising Ubungoma in South Africa.

This comparative analysis can shed light on the specific influences and adaptations of Islamic beliefs within the broader context of traditional healing practices.

Community Engagement: Engage with the Muslim community and traditional healers in South Africa to foster dialogue and understanding between different religious and cultural groups. This can help promote interfaith cooperation, cultural exchange, and mutual respect while addressing any misconceptions or tensions that may arise.

Education and Awareness: Develop educational programs and materials that raise awareness about the unique role of Muslim Sangomas in South Africa. These initiatives can focus on dispelling stereotypes, promoting cultural diversity, and highlighting the complexities of the interplay between Islam and traditional healing practices.

Ethical Considerations: Examine the moral dimensions of integrating Islamic beliefs within Ubungoma practices. Explore questions regarding the preservation of cultural authenticity, the adherence to Islamic teachings, and the ethical responsibilities of Muslim Sangomas towards their clients and communities.

Policy and Legal Framework: Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, religious authorities, and traditional healer associations, to develop policies and legal frameworks that recognise and regulate the practice of Muslim Sangomas within the broader context of traditional healing practices. This can help ensure the protection of practitioners' rights and the provision of quality healthcare services to the community.

Provide a Religious Ruling (fatwa); conduct in-depth research on the permissibility of Ubungoma in Islam to help provide religious guidance to the coming generation of black Muslims, since they are the ones who are affected by this. The current situation is that everyone relies on their intuition and analysis. Further alternatives to treatment need to be researched and implemented in case Ubungoma is not allowed in Islam.

Social Support and Healthcare Integration: Explore avenues for integrating Muslim Sangomas' services into the broader healthcare system in South Africa. This can involve collaborations with healthcare providers, training programs for Muslim Sangomas on health and hygiene practices, and the development of referral systems for cases requiring medical intervention.

Public Dialogue and Awareness: Organise public forums, conferences, and workshops that facilitate discussions on the intersection of Islam and traditional healing practices. Engage

scholars, practitioners, community leaders, and the public to foster dialogue, exchange ideas, and promote a better understanding of the diverse cultural and religious practices in South Africa.

By implementing these recommendations and engaging in future planning, researchers, policymakers, and communities can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between Ubungoma and Islam among Muslim Sangomas in South Africa, while preserving cultural heritage, promoting interfaith harmony, and addressing the community's healthcare needs.

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