

**BUKUSU MALE RITUAL CIRCUMCISION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL: A QUEST FOR THE
FUNDAMENTALS**

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Declaration

This thesis is my original work prepared by non-other than the indicated sources and support and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award.

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Certification

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Georgia Fuller without whom this work would not have come to fruition.

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Abstract

Among the many African rites of passage, male ritual circumcision remains one of the most important and outstanding because of the vital elements associated with it. Many written documents on Bukusu male ritual circumcision have looked at this rite from various viewpoints such as health, education, and religion. Most of these studies have not exhaustively looked at social capital associated with this ritual. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining Bukusu male ritual circumcision as a source of social capital and it is concerned with the common factors as to why the Bukusu ritual of circumcision has continued despite the opposition from various quarters. Based on the main objectives, the study first looks at the rite of passage of male circumcision as a process of transition; hence examine the philosophies, attitudes, and perceptions about male ritual circumcision. Secondly, the study explores the elements and meaning of social capital in reference to male ritual circumcision. Thirdly, the study investigates the role of male ritual circumcision in the generation of social capital in the context of social economy. Making sense of the data collected, the study employed social-cultural theory. The study was done in Bungoma County of Western Kenya, where the Bukusu people predominantly live. Qualitative approach was used in the collection and analysis of data from 186 respondents. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify respondents. The secondary sources of information included, library written materials like books, journals, thesis and dissertations, reports and articles. The instruments' validity was assured by submitting them to my advisors and their reliability through a pilot study with students and a few circumcision candidates. A descriptive analysis was undertaken by bringing together, comparisons, and interpreting both primary and secondary data in the light of the objectives of this study, research questions, and theoretical framework. The findings were descriptively presented as narrated themes. The findings of this study are an account of Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital. Bukusu male ritual circumcision is inherent of immense social capital hence, transforming to conform to the social change and economic situation of the society. Bukusu male circumcision is a niche for social and economic development. These are an invaluable assessment tool in the evaluation of the past, present, and future perspectives of male circumcision with focus to social capital component. Most important, the findings are a repository for reference by future generations in scholarship and social-cultural studies.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EU – European Union

FDGs – Focus Group Discussions

HIV/AIDS – “It is the virus that causes aids (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), attacking the body immune system and leaving it vulnerable to opportunistic diseases”.

(Anthony Hall, 2004).

MISA - Medical International Scientific Association

NOHARMM - The National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males

OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OI – Oral Interview

S.C – Social Capital

S.E – Social Economy

S.E – Social Enterprises

ICEFEM – International Christian Evangelistic Fellowship Missions

WHO – World Health Organization

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Community Development – “A process by which local communities collaborate with government and voluntary organizations to enhance their well-being” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Development – “It is a process of economic, social, political change that produces improvements” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Human Capital – “The productive capacity of human beings in the process of economic development supported by investments in education, health and other programmes” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Modernism – “The advocacy of modernity” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Modernity – “A period associated with industrialization that emphasizes the importance of rationality in social life” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Political Capital – “The capacity of households or communities to mobilize collectively in defence of their rights” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Poverty – “A condition of material and social deprivation in which people fall below the minimum standard of living” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Quakers – “a religious movement that arose in England and influenced the religious and cultural beliefs of the Bukusu people. They are also referred to as Friends Church” (Quaker Faith and Practice manual, 2014).

Social Capital – “Social relationships and networks that bind people together and facilitate coordinated action” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Social Change – “Changes overtime to the culture, organization and social structure of the society” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Social Development – “A process of planned social change designed to improve the welfare of the population as a whole in conjunction with economic development” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

Social Economy - Social economics is a branch of economics that focuses on the relationship between social behaviour and economics. It examines how social norms, ethics, emerging popular sentiments, and other social philosophies influence consumer behaviour and shape public buying trends. It uses history, current events, politics, and other social sciences to predict potential results from changes to society or the economy - <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-economics.asp>

Social Enterprises - Social enterprises are businesses that trade to intentionally tackle social problems, improve communities, provide people access to employment and training, or help the environment - <https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/what-is-a-social-enterprise>

Social policy – “Measures that affect people’s well-being, whether through the provision of welfare services or by means of policies that impact upon livelihoods more generally” (Anthony Hall, 2004).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background information pertinent to this study. This includes background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, the scope and limitations of the study and the underpinning conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

1.1 Background of the study

Cultural rites can be a panacea when the immense social capital embedded in them is taken stock of. Merrit (1987: 15), “cultural rites can be a perfidy when all the retrogressive aspects they constitute are not taken into consideration”. The aim and of this study is to generate a debate on the panacea of the cultural rite of male ritual circumcision with a view of understanding why this ritual has persisted among the Bukusu people of Bungoma County. The cultural rite of circumcision is a panacea for a number of factors:

It marks the beginning of entry into adulthood from childhood; it is a mark of cultural social identity in many societies of the world; it constitutes immense social capital and, currently, it serves as a platform for mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS. According to the European Union Report on Social Sciences and Humanities, Social Capital consists of resources within communities which are created through the presence of high levels of trust; reciprocity and mutuality; shared norms of behavior; shared commitment and belonging; both formal and informal social networks; and effective information channels; which may be used productively by individuals and groups to facilitate actions to benefit individuals, groups and community more generally (EU Report, 2003).

Circumcision is traditionally practiced among the Bukusu of Bungoma County and it has several implications on the community and the initiates involved. This study seeks to investigate the role of Bukusu male circumcision in the generation of social capital in the context of the social economy. Doty (1986) argues, Social Capital and norms generated by, or reinforced in connection with ritualized practices are likely to be clearer and more widely understood, more strongly held, and less susceptible to change than norms inculcated in other ways. Because of its

central role in the communicative and cognitive systems, ritualized behavior manifested through ritual circumcision forms a fundamental constitutive element in the underlying cultural, social, and linguistic background in which all evolution and transformation of normative orders occurs. Ritual helps in creating and maintaining social norms, any ritual activity like male ritual circumcision simultaneously provides the most important, and in many cases the only vehicle for the creation of our notions of higher values. As a result, the ritualization of social norms on the basis of social capital has an inevitable impact on larger issues of morality, legitimacy, and justice, extending beyond the norms themselves (Doty, 1986: 105).

Obermeyer (1999: 17) observes, “Cultural anthropologists believe that this kind of an attitude towards cultures need to change and different stakeholders to accept to examine and re-examine them holistically. Such a holistic autopsy of it could bring out all the progressive aspects to inform the immense social values embedded in them; and also single out all the retrogressive aspects and carve a way forward to address them”. Apparently, this could give cultural rites such as Bukusu male circumcision their dignity and people can practice them as they wish to enjoy their cultural rights. Like some other African tribes, most communities in Kenya practice traditional male circumcision as a rite of passage. Obermeyer (1999: 18) observes, “In African societies, initiation rites play an important role in marking a milestone in a person’s life. Presently though, the rite of male circumcision in Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia has elicited a lot of debates, discourses and researches in order to establish its rightful niche”. The debates, researches and commentaries emanating predominantly from a section of scholars, medical practitioners, human rights activists, policy makers, the civil society and the media are notably skewed and characteristic of biases as their tone reveals condemnation of the rite of male circumcision in Africa.

According to Mwamwenda (1995:14) notes this, “male ritual circumcision has been part of any African communities for many years. Long before European Nations sent their people in the capacities as traders, missionaries, philanthropists, and colonial administrators, circumcision was already being practiced”. Mwamwenda further observes, “concerted efforts were made by missionaries to bring to a halt this cultural practice especially that of girls. Similar attempts were made by some African Nations, but it is apparently clear that all these attempts have not been successful because of the extent to which the circumcision ritual is engrained in the cultures in which it is practiced. All African communities that practice circumcision view the ritual with strong passion and with pride as well as cultural meaning” (Mwamwenda, 1995:118). In Africa, “circumcision ritual, elements of the ritual such as music is used to generate spiritual formation, and thereby humanizing religious instincts” (Mwamwenda, 1995:119). Based on the emergent cultural and religious controversy, the focus of this current study is to assess the extent of the social capital associated with Bukusu male ritual circumcision and its impact on the community.

Since time immemorial, whenever, circumcision was being performed, music as a pivotal element of this ritual was performed for various reasons. More importantly also, “traditional music was performed on social occasions such as communal work and during ritual ceremonies such as wrestling championships, spiritual liturgy, child birth celebrations, marriages, circumcision, and funeral rites” (Fortes, 1938: 88). On circumcision as an essential component of culture, Fortes (1938:89) states that “music is the only ingrained matrix of culture which the general cultural development follows.” This observation attests to the fact that, “music is part of culture, and any change in culture affects it” (Fortes, 1938: 19). It is therefore apparent that changes in the Bukusu culture have caused changes in the circumcision ritual structure. For example, some of the stages and aspects of the traditional male ritual circumcision are not

practiced as they used to be initially. As such, everything done is tailored to fit into the modern circumcision practices.

According Cliford (1998: 92), “Ritual is an important vehicle through which individuals actively define themselves as members of a normative community, communicate amongst themselves normative commitments internalize prevailing norms and act to transform normative systems. In this case, traditional male circumcision ritual embodies aspects of social controls that are worth preserving by being repackaged anew for the benefit of the youth and the society at large”. Therefore, there is an urgent need of capturing and analyzing the invaluable social values and functions of the elements of this ritual due to the fact that, “cultural meaning may be lost as a result of acculturation taking place in the organization and performance” (Hutchins, 1995:86). This study aims to highlight a salient feature of socio-cultural practice integral to the generation, maintenance, and transformation of social norms, the significance of which has been unappreciated in the mass of literature: the fact that many norms and values are produced by and grounded in ritualized activity (Gibbard, 1990:198).

Koomen (1987: 85) observes that, “male ritual circumcision as backward, barbaric, and a problem of African culture”. Edouard (2013) observes, “Male ritual circumcision in some extremes has been seen as a horrid phenomenon, unsanitary, uncivilized and is a health hazardous practice that is performed using crude instruments such as rusted razor blades, broken bottles and even stones by people who are not trained and devoid of modernized knowledge befitting such kind of a bodily operation”.

Taylor (1987:14) opines, “It is a tragic health and a human rights violation issue and stringent policies must be put in a legislation to criminalize the practice”. Nnaemeka (2005:47) argues, “This sounds quite condescending and these researchers support and agree with those scholars who consider the knowledge about male circumcision in Africa to be nothing other than a form

of epistemological imperialism”. Reagan (1996:28), “cultural rite of circumcision is also a perfidy due to: its violation of human rights to health; because it undermines boys’ and girls’ access to school; and because it is usually a leeway to early sexual overtures”. For justifying this study, “there has been minimal or absolutely no regard to the importance of what the circumcision ritual can render to the society”.

In support of the continuation of male ritual circumcision, Kang’ethe, (2009:144) argues, “The stance by the anti-circumcision crusaders to champion the course of male circumcision in Africa presents a great challenge to African scholars who must identify this as a niche that requires individual and concerted action by African scholars to effectuate cultural emancipation. This is because in these researchers’ contention, the message presented about male circumcision in tandem with many other African cultures is that they are barbaric, naive, and devoid of civilization”.

According to the *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report (2009)*, “many nations today mobilize social capital from the community in order to drive development programs, for instance Israel and Japan have used social capital to drive their economies. Social capital entails community resources such as love for each other, the sense of community; trust and care for the society”. Based on this report, “rituals are major sources of social capital which nations can draw from to build social cohesion, mobilize individuals to commit to a common good or concern. While previous studies are important, they are limited in scope hence they have not taken into account socio-cultural resources that exist in the community, which if realized and mobilized can enhance social stability and social cohesion for development” (OECD Report, 2009).

The World Health Organization (WHO) Report notes that, “the perceptions of people towards circumcision are influenced by attitudes of the community that practices it” (WHO 1996). Nahid (in Boykin, 1993:18) notes that, “It is believed that group activities that encourage cohesiveness and corporate communal experiences are preferred by most Africans”. According to Warner (2009:13), circumcised men have substantially reduced risks of contracting HIV/AIDS. Thus several campaigns have been launched to circumcise men in Africa. In 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognized circumcision as a new AIDS prevention measure. Long before male circumcision became the hot weapon in the war on AIDS, it was an ancient rite of manhood practiced by many African tribes. All over half of African men are circumcised in traditional ways. Circumcision marks their readiness to take up the duties of men: to defend the village and find a wife (World Health Organization Report, 2007).

Boykin (1983:34) observes that, “boys with foreskin tend to have higher rates of various infections and inflammations than those who are circumcised”. Much research has been done on the health problems, physical complications related to circumcision, parental decisions regarding circumcision specifically concerning the medical hygiene. However, very little has been done on the social capital that is are related to circumcision. This study intends to fill that gap by showing how Bukusu male ritual circumcision can contribute to the social-economic development of the society. This will be done by analyzing the inherent valuable elements that constitute the social capital. The researcher, therefore will investigate the role of the traditional Bukusu ritual male circumcision in the formation of social capital among the Bukusu of Western Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Bukusu male ritual circumcision in Bungoma County has been in existence for a very long time. There has been attempt for a long period of time to stop this rite from continuing; but the

efforts have faced a lot of resistance. In a cosmopolitan community, “It is difficult to see the impact of ritualized activity such as male ritual circumcision on the norms, values and beliefs” (Kang’ethe, 1999). Deacon (1966:66) argues, “it is easy to dismiss ritual as vestigial remnant of an antiquity or an earlier era. Such dismissal ignores a critical feature of human life at its most basic: ritual is deeply embedded in human ontogeny, thus in our communicative practices, and in the way that our mind organizes and shaped perceived reality”. The basic insight upon which this study is anchored is that, there are a number of cultural media like male ritual circumcision through which vital social elements can be manifested in social life, and the specific medium adopted has important implications for the normative order.

Studies that attempt to address the social – economic imbalances of the society are quite limited in Kenya. In response to “The National Cohesion and Integration Commission” (Report, 2015) during the Transparency International Kenyan Chapter, Ezekiel Mutua observed, “studies on addressing challenges such as ethnicity and inequalities are very common. While these studies are important, they are limited in scope hence they dominantly focus on ethnicity, inequality, and historical injustices. As a result they have not taken into account socio-cultural resources that exist in the community, which if realized and mobilized can enhance social stability and cohesion for development”. This concurs with the *Organization of Economic Corporation and Development Report, 2017*, “Rituals for instance can be major sources of values which nations can draw from to build social cohesion, or other set of values upon which development can be anchored”. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how Bukusu male ritual circumcision can be utilized as an instrument of value inculcation by fully utilizing the embedded social capital.

We have quite a number of rituals in the African setting. It should be realized that for rituals to draw people together, it just means that people see value in them and that is the reason why they

keep practicing them every time. Anthony (2004:45) observes, “This is an emphasis on ritual-cultural practices that reflects the fact that we simply cannot talk reasonably about interpreting cultural artifacts without taking into account the impact of the specific concrete, cognitive and institutional structures within which the interpretive process takes place”. In view of the above sentiment, Bukusu male ritual circumcision has been practiced to date presumably because of the value embedded in it. This study therefore, concerns itself with the common factors as to why circumcision has continued despite opposition from various quarters; hence, the major research question: In what ways does the male circumcision ritual constitute the form and elements upon which social capital is generated and what contribution does it add to the social economy?

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study investigated the relationship between Bukusu male circumcision ritual and social capital. Among the areas that were examined included: First, ritual circumcision as source of social capital which is the indigenous knowledge passed on to the initiates through this rite. Second, the ways in which social capital embedded in the circumcision ritual constitute the adolescents’ moral, economic and intellectual development. Third, focus in this study was to investigate the relationship between institutions; that is how the ritual circumcision constitutes social capital that would be basis for the construction of social enterprises in social economy, social cohesion and values.

1.4 Research objectives

- 1.4.1 To examine the general philosophy, attitude and perception about Bukusu male ritual circumcision in Bungoma County.
- 1.4.2 To explore the elements and meaning of social capital in reference to Bukusu male ritual circumcision in Bungoma County.

- 1.4.3 To investigate the role of male ritual circumcision in the generation of social capital in the context of social economy by Bukusu people of Bungoma County.

1.5 Research questions

- 1.5.1 What are the philosophy, attitude and perception on Bukusu male ritual circumcision in Bungoma County in general?
- 1.5.2 What are the elements and meaning of social capital in reference to Bukusu male ritual circumcision in Bungoma County?
- 1.5.3 What is the role of male ritual circumcision to social capital in the context of the social economy among the Bukusu of Bungoma County?

1.6 Significance of the study

- 1.6.1 This research is significant because it sheds light on the rationale of this deep rooted cultural tradition in Africa. This will subsequently enable people to understand the reason why the practice has persisted in some societies and will certainly help them make informed decisions, come up with proper policies and better ways of dealing with such a practice.
- 1.6.2 This study seeks to preserve in scholarly manner the various aspects of circumcision among the selected Kenyan communities that practice circumcision. This is necessary because there is danger of distorting the traditional structures and the essence of the core values in the process of passing them from generation to generation. Experiences in annual national budgeting have shown that governments often lack enough financial resources to ensure that all services are delivered to the people for development and well-being.
- 1.6.3 The study also seeks to understand ways that can supplement financial resources for development. Many nations today mobilize social capital from the community in

order to drive development programs, and for instance Israel and Japan have used social capital to drive their economies. Social capital entails community resources such as love for each other, the sense of community; trust; care for the society. These resources are developed and natured through socio-cultural mechanisms applied in everyday life.

1.7 Justification of Study

- 1.7.1 Bukusu male ritual circumcision is a source of immense social capital that which contributes to social economic development.
- 1.7.2 This study will contribute to the already existing knowledge about the African male circumcision ritual by generating study materials for learning institutions in Kenya and perhaps elsewhere. This will create a reference source for scholars such as anthropologists and educationists in understanding culture as a dynamic phenomenon. This goes a long way of articulating the functionalities of male ritual circumcision as exemplified by the Bukusu people.
- 1.7.3 Bukusu male ritual circumcision articulates the philosophy and function as characterized by its value to people and the community .

1.8 Assumption of the study

The study assumed that rituals and specifically male ritual circumcision are major sources of social capital which nations can draw from to build social cohesion, mobilize individuals to commit to a common good or concern. While previous studies as observed in the introduction of this study are important, they are limited in scope hence they have not taken into account socio-cultural resources that exist in the community, which if realized and mobilized can enhance social stability and social cohesion for development. The study assumes that, the respondents

will give their views without prejudice on the role of male ritual circumcision in the formation of social capital.

1.9 Scope of the study

The researcher was aware that this study has a potentially very wide scope and can be done in other dimensions using various approaches such as looking at the social and cultural reasons why there is persistence of this ritual despite opposition. This being a social study, specific attention was given to the interaction between male ritual circumcision and social capital, and to investigate how the social capital generated from the male ritual circumcision contributes to the development and of social enterprises in the social economy. Considering the available resources and time, this study was limited to Bungoma County of Western Kenya. However, limited references were made and resources drawn from selected communities that practice male ritual circumcision.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is noteworthy that the current research deals with Bukusu ritual male circumcision with a focus on social capital which is presumably the informal pedagogical systems. Therefore, literature review in this context follows to query the authenticity and/or validity of written sources about male ritual circumcision and its significance. Focus will also be on its role in the generation of knowledge, which is the presumed social capital. Apart from reviewing literature related to the research problem and questions raised by this study, this chapter also discusses the theoretical framework on which the study is based. The three main research questions that the study endeavours to answer are: First, what are the philosophy, attitudes and perceptions to male ritual circumcision in general? Secondly, what are the elements and meaning of social capital in reference to male ritual circumcision? Third, What is the role of male ritual circumcision to social capital in the context of the social economy in the context of Bukusu people of Bungoma County?

In answering the main questions raised above, this study was conducted to ascertain the form and content of the Bukusu male ritual circumcision and investigated it within the modern context. The literature review focuses on the views of several scholars about form and content of African circumcision ritual and its functionalities. In several cases, a deliberate effort was made to consult literature that identifies the main objectives of African traditional circumcision rituals in general. These objectives are reflected and captured in the circumcision ritual as has been detailed in the review. In this section, it would be prudent to begin with the definition and origin of circumcision. The review also looked at the composite nature of male ritual circumcision and social capital. The interrelation between these two major concepts forms the basis of this current study. In the African cultural setting on male ritual circumcision, each cultural group has away

they carry out the ritual. For this reason, the study underscored age and organizational structures pertaining male ritual circumcision in African societies.

The review also looked at the theoretical perspectives on the role of ritual in the society. Pertinent issues such as attitudes and values, character formation, and significance of reintegration in the society was discussed. This does not negate the idea that male ritual circumcision has its basis in the Bible; hence, the study analyzed the biblical foundation of this fundamental ritual. Many theories in the recent past have emerged about the significance of male ritual circumcision in the society. In the discourse of literature review, there is need to analyze the theological trajectory as well about male ritual circumcision because as indicated in the later, many opinions have emerged. The theological reflections are conjoined with the biblical views. This formed the basis for abroad discussion as in the pursuit for the contemporary voices on the subject of male ritual circumcision. As had been hinted in the background of this study, many positions have been established on dual fronts; thus pro and anti-circumcision.

2.1 Male ritual circumcision: Definition and techniques

Wallerstein (1980:63) observes, “The word circumcision has had an obscure definition. It gets even more complicated in its application especially in the field of anthropology. As a surgical procedure, circumcision involves the removal of the outer and inner layers of the penile foreskin. This is referred to as complete circumcision. Some groups prefer to remove only a tip of the foreskin, as did the Jews before the Christian era, this is referred to as partial circumcision”. But others only make a superficial cut on the foreskin to draw some blood”. Bigelow (1995:65), “The word circumcision comes from the latin, *circum*, meaning, *round*, and *cedere*, meaning to cut. The foreskin, also medically referred to as prepuce, is what covers the head (glans) of an erect penis” (p.18). Wallerstein (1980) points out, “Its amount varies virtually from none to a sizeable

amount that drops down from the end of the penis in its flaccid condition. The rite of male circumcision is practiced among many human cultures of the world” .

La Fontaine (1986:111) argues, “the use of the term circumcision on females as misleading. She prefers the use of the word, ‘excision of the clitoris’ on the females, meaning, the removal of the clitoris, a special sensory part of a female’s sexual organ. Not every operation on the penis or clitoridectomies is a circumcision. There are varieties of operations on boys and girls in different parts of the world. Some are more severe than others. Operations on the genitals are the only painful initiatory ordeals the adolescents have to through”. People are born and brought up in a culture that shapes their way of thinking and doing things. Odaga (1982:14), “Circumcision is so widely ingrained in people’s minds as a feature of rituals that measure a stage of maturity for boys. While in some societies, it is performed on infants and adolescents, in others, it is done on very mature boys such as Bagishu of Uganda. With the exception of Western societies where it is performed simply as a necessary surgery for practical reasons”.

Talewa (2000:112) points out, “one crucial requirement that has conspicuously missed is the sterile environment. Most traditional operations on adolescents in the African villages are carried out without anesthesia and adherence to sterile environment. One circumciser’s knife and finger nails rotate from one initiate to the next without sterilization”. We have various schools thought concerning the prudence of circumcision operation procedures. Talewa (2000:113) again observes, “Most African traditional circumcision procedures are not complicated. Many only require a knife, smooth sand to provide friction on the fingers for the circumciser’s good grip of the initiate’s foreskin; and of course, the circumciser must have strong sharpened fingernails, which are used for the removal of the inner membrane. This is where the highest degree of sanitation is required”.

In most African traditional circumcision operations, especially among the Bukusu of Western Kenya, “the initiate is made to stand upright with his eyes towards the sky; then the circumciser emerges with a double-edged knife and with his right foot, he steps on the initiate’s left foot to provide firm balance for both the circumciser and the initiate. The circumciser pulls the foreskin forward, runs his thumb nail to mark the extent to which the cut will reach, releases it, and grabs it again, pulls it forward and with one strike, he cuts it off” (Corbitt and Wanyama, 1998: 33). Again according to Corbitt and Wanyama (1998:34), “The second stage involves the circumciser reaching for the inner membrane with his sharpened fingernails, pulls it upwards, and with great caution not to damage the glans or the sulcus, he carefully slices it off to leave exposed glans and an extended open wound behind it. The entire procedure takes between 16 and 45 seconds. Bigelow(1995:18), “Unlike the clinical procedures where certain techniques are used to control or stop too much bleeding most African procedures rely on the circumciser’s expertise and invocation of ancestral spirits for intervention by clan elders. They turn to clinical attention only as the last resort often with critical hemorrhage conditions”.

2.2 Historical Perspectives about the origins of the male ritual circumcision

From the analysis of the historicity related to circumcision ritual, Biglow (1995:13) observes, “it is not so certain of when and where it began. Some selected views and opinions links to the Egyptians as having practiced the rite as early as 3000 B.C. This speculation is based on some stones inscriptions that were found in Egypt dating from about 2300 B.C. depicting the practice. Pointing to these findings, some historians have argued that contrary to the general assumption and beliefs associated with the Jews as having been the first to practice it, it is most likely that the Jews borrowed the ritual from the Egyptians”.

Sometimes it becomes increasingly difficult to place circumcision ritual in history. Whether from the biblical point of view or secular worldviews, ritual circumcision is a historical phenomenon that has stayed with humanity for a long period of time. Biglow (1995:34), “Since the Abrahamic covenant with Yahweh predates Jacob’s journey with his people into Egypt, the above argument can be dismissed as mere speculation. One would further argue that Abraham’s wanderings in the region might have certainly taken Him to Egypt”. There is no recorded dialogue between Abraham and Yahweh regarding this ritual as to whether it was beginning with him or it was already in existence. Biglow (Biglow, 1995:45) again points out, “taking the Old Testament as literal history, it is therefore most likely that this rite of circumcision was either already in practice in Egypt or elsewhere in the region before Abraham. The Old Testament puts it that Abraham was 99 years old when his son Ismael was 13 years old when they were both circumcised on the same day (Genesis 17:24). Yahweh’s oracle enshrined in the Abrahamic covenant, the foreskin was both conceived as a curse and a fault. This concept the Jews to believe that the only way to remove the curse and restore relationship with Yahweh was by circumcision”.

2.2.1 Circumcision in the early Christian Tradition

This was supposed to be a turn over from the Old Testament tradition to the New Testament dispensation. Many of the early church writings didn’t focus so much on this ritual of circumcision because they took it to be part and parcel of the practice and as a lifestyle of the early Jewish tradition. Bruce (1978:18) points out, “the New Testament account, circumcision did not feature much in the teaching of Jesus Christ. Even though, Christ himself was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke2:21). The question of circumcision only arose within the early Christian tradition among the Jewish apostles, especially with apostle Paul when he began

to proselytize the Gentiles which were non-circumcising groups. The first disciples of Jesus Christ were Jews who were circumcised at infancy”. In the Old Testament narrative, it was mandatory for members of the worshipping community to be compliant to the mosaic code. They were to undergo circumcision and pay total allegiance to Yahweh. Bruce (1978: 19) again observes, “the question of circumcision took a compulsory requirement for the converts. On the contrary, the apostle Paul argued that putting circumcision as a prerequisite for conversion into the new faith was going to inhibit the spread of the gospel - (Acts 15:1 – 11)”.

In seeking to understand the significance of circumcision, Paul as the great protagonist of this subject strives to shed light for the early church. Oreilly (1996:19) opines, “Owing to the ordeal of the operation on the man’s genitals, in Paul’s understanding, only a few would have embraced Christianity. He therefore reinterpreted the ancient distinction between physical and spiritual circumcision. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul elevates Christ as having assumed and fulfilled the Old Testament Law. In Paul’s teachings, this fulfilment rendered physical cut null and void in the eyes of God (Galatians 5:6)”. Paul’s consistent reaction to circumcision was in the effort of dispelling the legalism that had loomed against the Gentile believers. Oreilly (1996:67) again observes, “Paul was equally adamant in his teachings among the early Christians. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not become circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s command is what counts (1 Corinthians 7:18-19). From the perspective of Paul’s theology, faith in Christ transcends physical circumcision”. Paul seems to settle the stalemate. Therefore, this eliminates the distinction between the circumcising and non-circumcising ethnic communities. In his teaching, the apostle Paul uses physical circumcision to epitomize the Old Testament law, maintaining that the ritual of circumcision is an outmoded practice that should be discarded by believers in the New Testament dispensation.

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle condemned what he viewed as Jewish legalism by arguing “circumcision has value if you observe that law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised (Romans 2:25)”. Theological discourse deepens as Paul wonders “what would hinder the uncircumcised who keep the law from being treated in the same manner as the circumcised (Roman 2:26)”. In view of this argument, “even if circumcision was practiced as God’s covenant with Abraham, Paul maintains that faith was reckoned to Abraham before he was circumcised. And through this faith, Abraham was blessed (Romans 4:9 – 12)”. Abelard (2000:45), a twelfth century French Monk and theologian maintains:

The question of circumcision among the early Christians was not a peripheral disagreement about preserving or discarding the ritual. Paul’s theology aims at redefining the faith and practice of believers in the new religion. In his dialogue of a philosopher with a Jew and a Christian, God never invented circumcision as universally binding obligation. In simple explanation, circumcision is not an essential requirement for the new Christian faith. The Old Testament patriarchs such as Enoch, Noah, and Moses entered into God’s Kingdom without having to go through circumcision. Having been explicitly rejected by the apostle Paul as not being the absolute requirement for salvation in the Old Testament, Abelard equally rejects it as an obsolete practice in the new faith.

In the commentaries on Romans and the sermon on circumcision, Abelard clarifies his argument by admitting, “It is true that at some point in the time immemorial, circumcision had served as an essential role by identifying the nation of Israel from other nations, and discouraged the Jews from outside marriages and engagements. However, Abelard continues to argue that the coming of Christ as the messiah declared the practice obsolete. Circumcision has been overtaken by the sacrament of baptism which sanctifies men and women alike” (2000:36). In Abelard’s view, “other church fathers pursued serious debates about the ontological status of the foreskin of Jesus. They logically queried as to whether Jesus recovered his foreskin after the resurrection and ascension to heaven. Later, scholastic theologians corrected the church fathers’ perception

with interjection that since Jesus was also human besides his divine nature, he naturally would cut his hair, trimmed his nails, and of course, lost his umbilical cord. Therefore, they argued that Jesus' foreskin was not any different from such ordinary detritus. As the debate continued, the sages further proposed that as means of attaining the full likeness of Christ, uncircumcised Christians would be divinely circumcised before the admittance into God's kingdom" (Abelard, 2000:45).

Apparently, the Old Testament is generally construed to be the source of circumcision. As it has been observed earlier, this circumcision is attributed to the patriarchal kin. Circumcision was a sign given to Abraham to point specifically to the need for faith in regard to the coming generations. Cranfield (2003:93) does an analysis as follows:

In the Pentateuch tradition, a couple of times, circumcision is used metaphorically (Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6), apparently, the immediate context is that of the Abrahamic covenant. In the context of Deuteronomy 10:12, the narrative begins by an encouragement to 'revere the Lord your God, to walk only in His paths' which is very close to Genesis 17:1, 'walk before me and be blameless.' Further in Deuteronomy 10:15, the love of Yahweh for "the father" becomes the basis for the warning to "cut away the thickening about your hearts." This implies, if promises made to the fathers should be realized, it will be as only as each Israelite relates to Yahweh on the basis of faith. The heart which relies on the flesh will fail. Rather, the fleshly heart must be excommunicated. Deuteronomy 30:6 is also in the context of God's unfailing love and promises. For when the chosen nation is dispersed among the nations, God will not abandon her but will restore her fortunes when she returns to him with the whole heart and soul. The most clear probing question is; what is it that brings captivity and dispersion?" Deuteronomy 29:23 asks and answers this very question: it is relying upon foreign gods, paraphernalia, and powers in the place of Yahweh.

Later on in the development of the Old Testament tradition, there has been divergent views concerning the place of circumcision. Briggs (2007:33) argues, In the way, uncircumcised ears are ears which have turned from hearing the righteous word of God. They are ears which are used to listening to the message of man and taking their cue from the flesh. They must be

circumcised if the prophet's message will be received. In each case, then, the metaphorical or theological use of circumcision parallels its physical import: the promise will be gained by faith and not by the works of flesh.

The apostle Paul exhaustively comments on circumcision. He draws a line on his understanding of physical and spiritual circumcision. His mission is to dispel the dissension against the Gentile brothers and bring to the fore that, all that all humanity are equal before God. Grimes (2009: 56) observes, A scrutiny of the apostolic writings, the theological meaning of circumcision comes into full view. Paul is fond of showing that circumcision merely of flesh profits nothing (Galatians 5:2-3; I Cor. 7:19). He even accredits true Jewishness to those who are also circumcised in heart as opposed to mere circumcision of the flesh and states that those who are circumcised in the flesh only act as the uncircumcised when they transgress the law (Romans 2: 25-29) (p. 67). In the interest of this current study, "the book of Romans chapter 4:10ff and Colossians 2:9-15 are significant examples of the way in which the New Testament Apostles viewed circumcision theologically. Romans 4:10 prompts us to delve in to the understanding that led the Apostle to interpret the meaning of circumcision as given to Abraham. Did they see circumcision as calling Abraham to faith in God's method of bringing the generations as interpreted it?

The significant point to note is, Circumcision is referred to as a sign or seal. Paul's use of sign no doubt rests on Genesis 17 where the Septuagint also employs seal. The ancient Jewish blessing over the wine of the Sabbath says ... He who pronounces the blessing over the cup of wine says - *Blessed be who hath sanctified the Beloved from the womb and set the statute in his flesh and sealed his offspring with the sign of the holy covenant* (Cranfield, 2011:23). According to Cranfield, "Abraham's circumcision is characterized as the seal, that is, the outward and visible

authentication, ratification and guarantee of the righteousness by faith which was already his while he was still uncircumcised. The words imply that Abraham's circumcision, while it did not confer a status of righteousness on Him, was nevertheless valuable as the outward and visible attestation of the status of righteousness which he already possessed" (Cranfield, 2011:25).

The promise of the covenant is the central aim why Paul uses Abraham in his exposition. Walter Wink (1980:78) puts it in perspective:

That, in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. The Apostle's argument is that this promise was given to Abraham before circumcision and therefore Abraham may rightly be considered the father of all who participated in the faith, whether circumcised or not. In fact, the promise that Abraham would be the father of all nations is applied more precisely by the Apostle in the phrase father of all who believe. The Apostle's argument is given prove while another point confirms what I have previously maintained about circumcision. The ritual did not bring anything uniquely new to the covenant, but rather reinforced righteousness on the basis of faith, the very purpose of the covenant from the beginning. Circumcision in its entirety required Abraham to continue in the faith that had brought him from Ur and to direct this faith to God who had promised to bring a son by divine intervention. It is on this basis that the apostle Paul in Galatians 4:23 refers to Ishmael as according to flesh and Isaac as through promise.

In the above excerpt, Paul has shown that the primary purpose of the law was to point to Jesus Christ and it therefore makes sense that circumcision has fulfilled its function, for Christ, the promised seed, has come. From the above perspective, the symbolism used for as in God was to have circumcision a sign to seal the promises that God had given to Abraham. Levenson (1985:43) argues, "Israel, worshipping the sign rather than the seed to which it pointed, had attributed to circumcision what only God's son could accomplish. This, the apostle plainly asserts in his statement that in Christ Jesus neither uncircumcision nor circumcision means anything, but faith working through love (Galatians 3:10-13). In the Romans chapter 4: 12-22 account, the apostle Paul goes on to develop the point that righteousness is on the basis of faith alone, and circumcision symbolizes this". Paul's argument is summarized as follows:

Abraham is the father of those who follow in the steps of faith 4:12. The promise to Abraham that he would be *heir of the world* (Genesis 17:4-6) was given before the command to be circumcised. If the promise on the basis of Law (doing good works) then faith is nullified. Since God intended the promise to be certain to all descendants, it was necessary to base it upon faith than works. The object of Abraham's faith was the promised seed, which the apostle Paul brings to his text by quoting Genesis 17:5. The inabilities of his body and that of Sarah's to produce offspring shut him up to hope in God, and so he grew strong with regard to the promise and in this faith gave glory to God. This faith is vitally connected to imputed righteousness. Circumcision signified a faith Abraham already had, a faith to trust God for the impossible.

Apparently, "circumcision did not precede faith, but was a sign and seal of faith already possessed. The researcher thinks that this fits with what has been maintained above, that the very ritual of circumcision reinforced the need to apply faith in the specific area of the promised seed. In another separate New Testament account, Colossians 2:11-12, the Old Testament circumcision is joined together with the New Testament baptism". The verses read:

And in whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with him through faith in the working of God, who raised from the dead.

In Howard (2011:12) interpretation, "these verses answer the question of how the fullness of Christ asserted in verse 9 can be appropriated to the believer, so he or she might also be called complete (v.10). This union with Christ is demonstrated via baptism (v. 12), for Paul asserts that the believer, in baptism was buried with Christ as well as raised with him. The baptism, then, signifies a casting away of the flesh, a death to self and resurrection to newness of life in Christ" (p. 116). In this context, Paul's teaching is directed to those who are being taught that ceremonial rituals could bring them righteousness.

2.2.2 Circumcision in the early Islam Tradition

Gollaher (2000:117) observes, "There is no clear evidence in Islamic literature that Muhammad himself considered circumcision a vital requirement of faith. It is only centuries after his death

that his followers began to engage into elaborate debates and commentary on the subject. Both the Qur'an and the reflections of Muhamad commonly known as the *hadithi* do venerate Abraham as a guide and model of the Islamic faith (Qur'an 2:124; 16:123)" (p. 84). Like Moses in the Pentateuch narrative, "Muhammad is featured in the Qur'an as a true messenger of the religious truth that was first revealed to Abraham. The Muslims view circumcision as legitimate religious practice to be maintained. Tradition however does point a variety of sayings that were attributed to Prophet Muhammad that confirm the significance of the ritual circumcision. Prophet Muhammad is reported to have prescribed the cutting of the foreskin as a *fitrah* which is a measure of personal physical cleanliness that reflects a man's moral and psycho-mental health" (Tony, 1984: 40). Asimi (1977:73), "*fitrah* is defined by five norms, namely: shaving of the pubic area, trimming of the moustache, clipping of the nails, cutting of the hair under the armpits; and above all, cutting of the foreskin. It was reportedly argued among the clerics that these norms were supposed to have originated and assigned by God Himself to the faithful as a means of purification towards spiritual perfection".

According to the above argument, Gollaher's (2000:46) observation, "Muslim leaders have staunchly reaffirmed the religious significance of male circumcision to an extent that those who happen to have died in the battle field and were not circumcised would not be prayed for and rendered a proper burial in accordance with the Muslim tradition. In the Muslim world, the consensus is overwhelming that an uncut man is a second-class citizen in one's own community". Wah Ibn Munabbi (2000:90), argued, "it was easy and safe for the child to be circumcised on the seventh day after birth than it was for an adult. Even though it is obvious for most Muslims to observe the ritual circumcision, unlike the Jewish law, which places emphasis on the circumcision of infants on the eighth day, there is no clear consensus among the Muslim clerics with regard to the appropriate time for circumcision". Robert Smith (2011) observes,

Some do emphasize the seventh day as the ideal time supposing that Prophet Muhammad himself was circumcised on the seventh day, while others altogether reject the idea of following after the Jewish tradition. Circumcision, which is originally preliminary to marriage, and so a ceremony of introduction to the full identity of manhood, is now generally undergone by the Muhammadan boys before they reach maturity (p. 322)". In Gollaher (2000:47) observation,

It is apparently clear that the British and American infant circumcision bore some influence upon some Muslim faithful, especially among the educated class and the urban dwellers. In the recent past, efforts have been made to approve circumcision within the Muslim religion. In 1987, in an international conference on Scientific Aspects of the *Qur'an and Sunnah* held in Islamabad, Pakistan, various issues were discussed which included the review of the purpose of circumcision. In their review, the Islamic medics endeavoured to prove their argument that circumcision served no major purpose other than to guard against diseases such as penile cancer and urinary tract infections. They concluded, "The performance of circumcision and the practice of *Sunan Al-Fitra* as recommended in Islam is medically beneficial, and reflects the wisdom and knowledge of the Muslim statements .

2.3 Settings and origins of circumcision in Africa

Both Benjochannan (1988: 16) and Shillington (1995: 107) observe, "The ancient historicity provides that the land of Egypt is portrayed as the cradle of African civilization. Ritual circumcision is one of the many traditions and practices that were carried out during the migratory movements of the sub-Saharan groups from the North". Martin and O'Meara (1995:65) comments, "The manifestations of the circumcision techniques applied in most ethnic groups of Africa are similar to those of the Jewish people" . On the techniques and skills applied during the circumcision operation, they are almost similar. Mugambi and Kirimi (1976:32) opine as follows, "They involve the cutting of the foreskin and the inner layer of the penile shaft. The inner layer is removed by the circumciser's fingernails that are sharpened with the help of the double-edged knife".

Makila (1978:138) suggests, different ethnic groups in Africa have different names by which they call a circumciser. The Bukusu people of western Kenya call him '*Omukhebi*', a term whose roots originated from the Jewish, *Mohel* (p. 138). In South African context, "The Xhosa people of Southern Africa call him, *ingcibi* (Mandela, 1994:86)". We have various terminologies that refer to the circumcision knife. Makila (1978: 114), the knife has different names depending on the ethnic groups. The Bukusu people call it *embalu*, the Gikuyu of Central Kenya call it, *Irua* (Osotsi, 2002:67), while among the Xhosa of Southern Africa, it referred to as *assegai* (Mandela, 1994:62).

2.4 The Composite nature of male ritual circumcision

Akivaga and Odaga (1982:14) observes, "circumcision is a very important ceremony in communities that participate in it. It is considered as one way of graduating from childhood to adulthood. In communities that participate in circumcision, anybody who avoids it or who is circumcised in hospital is looked down upon and rejected by the society because of going against the cultural norms that direct and correct the behavior and the life of the community members". Even though Akivaga and Odaga do not directly refer to the form and content of the circumcision ritual, their views agree with the objectives of this study that examines the social capital embedded in the ritual. In this case, it is argued that virtues responsible for maintaining/instilling the community's social controls and guidelines for the future life of the initiates are embedded in the content of the circumcision ritual. About circumcision Nang'oli says:

In African communities, one has to undergo the ritual of initiation at a certain age, in order to achieve manhood or womanhood. Until then, one is still considered a child however old he or she may be. One is also considered unclean, and may not fully partake in the daily activities of life within the clan. May not for instance serve food or drinks to the initiated, or may not give advice on any matter or may not even get married because he or she is still *a child in the head* (2000:57).

Nang'oli's views stress the importance of circumcision in the respective communities that has social cultural elements. Makila (1986:56) argues, "In most Africa communities, circumcision ceremony marks the end of childhood and gives the initiates the advice on adulthood, giving them new responsibilities together with an opportunity to benefit from the knowledge and wisdom within their culture". Because many of these teachings are passed on through the indigenous knowledge and the various songs performed, the current research agree with Makila especially when he says, "the ceremony gives an opportunity to the initiates to learn various lessons that will guide them in adulthood" (Makila, 1986:57). This study is concerned with such lessons and especially in the way they are passed on proverbially in the circumcision songs.

Arnold Van Gennep (2003:89), observes, "The circumcision rituals have the vigor with which whole communities become involved in them as they reflect the importance of their symbols. They are not archaic reminders of past glory but tools for acculturating a new generation and manipulating the spirit milieu. Traditionalists in the area under study put the uncircumcised in the same category as newborn child or a recently dead person for whom no sacrifice has been performed". It is believed that, when boys go through this rite, they gain a place in the society; a status that is very revered by community members.

Arnold Van Kemp (2003:56), "rituals have a functional value. They exert mind-control over participants, especially the initiates. The neophyte, in liminal stage must be a tabula rasa, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status. The ordeals and humiliations, often of a grossly physiological character, to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous status and partly a tempering of their essence in order to prepare them to cope with the new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges". The bottom-line in this discourse is to have a people who will accept themselves as changed personalities ready to

be given to the society. Scott (2000:99) analyzes two writers here; “Even though Van Kemp does not refer directly to social capital; but he conceptualizes the idea. John Merritt agrees with Van Kemp on the significance of Male ritual circumcision. They both seem to agree on the point that circumcision is not just a physical mark made on an individual but it is an instrument of value inculcation”. However:

Values are not always articulated, but their meaning is behind the circumcision activities. Symbols, as has been suggested, often reflect the moral qualities of a people. So these traditional ceremonies are teaching instruments. But they are not cast in the lecture mode. There is little drilling on the rationale for proceeding. Rather the rituals are drama involving dance and song. They are an arm extending back to feet. The chief message of circumcision is that the key to the future lies in the past. Informants find it difficult to recall specific proverbs it earned in seclusion. Exegetes of archaic words sung in the dances are difficult to find. But the songs and dances themselves are remembered because they assault the present with the living past (Merritt, 1987:113).

Victor W. Turner (2004:12) alludes to the significance of the cautious attachment to culture. He observes, “Preoccupation with the past involves more than respect for what is antiquated. Both power and order from the living past are imposed on the present dilemma by reverting to tradition. The emotional tenor of ritual is affective, that is aggressive approaches are required to bring off the successful ceremonies. The frenzy of dance and song attract the living dead who are irresistibly drawn into the drama when they see the mimicry of traditions”. Circumcision ritual is a package that manifests fully to the candidate with aim of transforming the status quo. Ciekawy (1997:24) argues, “Circumcision is not a gradualist graduation that can be conducted aesthetically; it has the power structure of a rite of passage. Separation, transition (liminal stage) and reincorporation are seen in the three descriptions of this powerful ritual. Candidates are taken to their families a few days before the ceremonies and introduced to a monster or forced to confess their shortcomings so they can make the difficult transition” . It is believed that in the process of the circumcision ritual, the initiates are vulnerable, hence, the ancestors are invoked in order to protect them from any impending dangers. Turner (2004:14) observes, “In the liminal

stage, they are considered vulnerable since they are in close proximity with ancestral spirits who energize the rites. While in seclusion the initiate has no status in relation to those in normal society. They enter houses by the back door or backward, bathe in new areas—at night, wear masks or hoods or white clay and cannot be greeted by name”.

Victor Turner (2004:103) comes close to striking the point, “the neophytes are welcomed back into the clan where the status of warrior and man is granted. The rites clearly dramatize the transformation of boys from the side of their mothers to the society of men. While they are uncircumcised or status less before the rites, they become useful men after the ceremonies which have an approximate duration of six months”. Based on the assumption that circumcision is valuable to people who practice. Ferraro (1998:15) alludes to the fact that, “people accept the proposition that values ingrained in tradition must be imposed on new generations — especially on circumcision initiates whose ebullience in grasping the rights of manhood appear threatening to the adjacent generation”. From this viewpoint, the “Ultimate message of traditional African male ritual circumcision is that, enculturation is accomplished by juxtaposition of the initiates and community, including ancestors, so institutional and political structures can be perpetuated” (Ferraro, 1998: 16).

In view of Turner’s observations, the Bukusu have a similar experience. They hold ritual circumcision with great regard because of the perceived significance. The values which are inculcated into the lives of the initiates are intended to shape the character of the individual with intent that he becomes productive in the society. The carrying of this vital ritual and its underlying significance to posterity is an indicator that it is a tradition that is hard to avoid. If it did not have any value and significance, people would not be hanging on it passionately.

2.5. Age-groups organization in African Communities

According to Ferraro (1998:25), “In most African societies, age organization served as effective means of social stratification and control. Certain societies have distinct groups of people that periodically go through distinct age categories known in anthropology as *age-sets* and *age-grades*. An age set is a group people (usually men) initiated during a periodic ceremony and having strong sense of group identity with one another”. The Bukusu people of Western Kenya identify these classifications as *Bakoki*. Maino, (2005:56), “Age-sets, known among the Bukusu community as *bibingilo or bikhebo*” point to this classification. Makila, (1978:252) suggests that age sets pass through successive categories which Ferraro also defines as age-grades. Makila (1978:252) opine that, “Ages sets are associated with a well understood set of social roles (that is they perform exclusive functions) and statuses (that is, higher prestige, is associated with increasing age). In most African countries, male individuals enter the age-set system through the process of initiation known in anthropology as rites of passage. The rites of passage are preceded and for/accompanied by rigorous periods of training in the society’s norms and values”. This is one major means by which structured indigenous knowledge can be manifested and passed on to adolescents and to posterity. Details regarding the dissemination of this structured knowledge to the neophytes is discussed later in this study.

The Bukusu male ritual circumcision is a life passage rite “that marked the transition from childhood to adulthood” (Maino, 2005:78). The ritual circumcision is uniquely characterized by structures that were founded on age-grade system. These age-grades marked key transitional periods among the Bukusu people. They are outlined as follows:

1. *Bakolongolo*
2. *Bakikwameti*
3. *Bakikwameti*
4. *Bakikwameti*
5. *Banyange*
6. *Bamaina*

3. *Bakanananachi* 7. *Bachuma*
4. *Bakinyikeu* 8. *Basawa* (Makila, 1978:177).

Ciekawy (1997:18) argues that, “progressive advancement in age-set systems entails induction into the secret society. This automatically endows members with status and voice in the community. Ritual circumcision is a means of induction into the adult male society. The customs of African communities are best appreciated when seen or studied thorough the patterns of their social institutional settings”. Arguably, “the values embedded in the circumcision ritual manifested and passed on to the members of the society emerged from strong foundational formal structures” (Sifuna and Otiende, 1992: 59). Mugambi (1976:50) observes that, “Even though many of these structures were either destroyed or marginalized by Western colonialism, there is a lot from the old order that is still flourishing. In social anthropology, basing on Mugalu’s argument (in Mugambi), there are certain core elements in cultures that are immune to change and innovation. Mugalu refers to these as cultural inertia”. The male circumcision ritual of selected communities that is the principle objective of this study is being witnessed today as one of those elements that have survived modernity throughout the ages. The aim of this current study was not an attempt to recapture the past, but rather, an endeavor to try to understand the present, which is essentially founded on the past.

2.6 General perspectives about the origins of male ritual circumcision and social capital

Most of the African cultures have different ways by which adults are transformed from childhood for the society. Bowie (2000:15), “the term, rite of passage applies to a ‘life cycle’ or life crisis”, but for Van Gennep (in Bowie, 2000:16), “rite of passage is a device that provides structure to human societies, meaning that people are classified and categorized on the basis of sex, marital status, and age”. As Mandela (1994:99) asserts, “For most African societies, the

status of adulthood or manhood is only achieved through ritual circumcision. In most African traditions, an uncircumcised male has no access to his father's inheritance, and cannot marry from within his community or preside over any communal function". In Mandela's point of view, such an individual lives in contradiction, while for Barbara Myerhoff (in Turner, 1982:108), "one is simply in an 'edge of paradox'. This means that, while an uncircumcised man has all that makes up a male person biologically, culturally, he is often referred to as a boy". In this respect therefore, Mandela (1994:22), observes, "male circumcision is not just a surgical procedure, but a lengthy and elaborate ritual in preparation for manhood". In his opinion, the real age of an African man begins not from the day he was born, but rather on the day he was circumcised.

Hodges (1994:78) views male circumcision as, "a phenomenon whose origin and purpose in antiquity are obscure. As a ritual, circumcision has been in practice for thousands of years. Theories suggest that male circumcision was practiced originally for religious reasons, and later for purity of the male body. Eventually, it came to be observed as a puberty or premarital rite, and as a measure to guard against the feared venereal disease infections. The values and attitudes extended to the initiates will be given prominence in this review. In African cultures, cultural rites play an important role in influencing a person's life". In his "*Our rich heritage: Bukusu proverbs*," Sifuna (2003:5) notes that "Bukusu people are very proud people, extremely assertive and very daring. Their initiation rites, particularly those of circumcision, are designed to bring out toughness and strength in the initiates". Makokha (1999:97) states,

The Bukusu cultural practices were probably borrowed from Cushitic and Nilotic-speaking people with whom they interacted during migration. A lot of cultural exchange may have occurred. The Bukusu people practiced male ritual circumcision, which marked transition into adulthood. Many societies view circumcision as a predominantly male ritual which involves the cutting of the

foreskin of the penile. It is an initiation rite that is deeply embedded in psycho-social, cultural symbolism, values, and norms of the society in question.

In most African cultures, the act of circumcision symbolizes a male's assumption of new socially constructed roles and responsibilities which have a huge impetus on status and gender relations. Several communities in Kenya have practiced male circumcision for a long time. Bosch (2001:63) observes that, "The values and roles of circumcision among these communities have changed over time due to influence from different avenues. My assumption is that, the establishment of the colonial regime in Africa for example, led to different understanding of the values, roles and power dynamics involved in male circumcision". On the other hand, Toubia (1994:90) says, "With the infiltration of westernization into Africa, the practice was subjected to heated debate and opposition that mainly came from the Euro-missionaries, health practitioners. In post-independent Kenya, opposition has come from the governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Human Rights movements and health practitioners".

Gachiri (2000:113) observes that, "male circumcision among Africans among cultures persisted during colonial period and even after independence, while today it has increasingly reduced but not diminished. She estimates that by the year 2000, 56% of males were circumcised traditionally. It is therefore apparent that in spite of the passionate opposition from religious bodies, health practitioners, and international agencies to eradicate it in post-colonial Kenya, the practice is still persistent". Definitely, there are underlying reasons why this ritual has continued despite the opposition. The ritual exhibits a rare tenacity that is subject to scholarly scrutiny. Again Gachiri (2000:118) observes, "This tenacity can be associated with the fact that certain communities are convinced that male ritual circumcision plays a significant role in the construction of gender roles and relations. As an individual transits from one stage to another, these stages are observed with particular rituals". Van Gennep (in Bowie, 2000: 58), calls these

rituals, rites of passage! “Male ritual circumcision is one of the rites that serve as a means of training the boys in the skills of how to live a useful and productive life in the society”. In Boston Soko’s understanding, as quoted by M’Passou (Cox, 1998:15), these rites are “a high school of learning” for young people taking the rite. And on a further scrutiny of this issue, Reagan (1996:30) argues, “Male ritual circumcision is a reminiscent of the cutting of the umbilical cord, which is viewed as a positive act for the good of the baby and the mother. This current study investigates the powers behind this ritual that seem to absolve the pain embedded in its acts and overlook all the external negative implications. African traditional initiation as a tremendous pedagogic effort, meaning that it is a complex of the complimentary elements that require inquiry of understanding from within”. Corbit and Wanyama (1998:45) describe male ritual circumcision as “a special stage for the African boys-males., implying that it represents a powerful image that redefines their identity in the society”.

Mugambi, and Kirima (1976:35) views that, “male ritual circumcision consists of various stages: pre-ritual preparation, the operation itself, seclusion”. Thus, “the entire process concludes with reintegration into the society” (Bowie, 2000:15). Critical decisions are made before, during, and after the material day of the circumcision. Osotsi, (2002:117) says, “Most decisions with regard to the day of initiation and the expert to be involved lie in the hands of the fathers. Traditionally, the normal age for the African boys was previously put at 15 and 18 years”. Among the Bukusu community, “a circumcised male is perceived or at least is expected to be trustworthy, desirable, and respected in public domain as opposed to the uncircumcised. While ritual circumcision is viewed as a transition to manhood in the traditional Bukusu community as opposed to the uncircumcised. However, modern elements are becoming increasingly an opposing factor to these traditional beliefs” (Pauw, 2009: 119). Van Vuuren (1999:89) argues, “while the operation

in the circumcision act puts a permanent mark on one's physical body, its meaning is a reminder that a ritually circumcised male is a well-balanced personality".

Fafunwa (1982:28), "In every community, whether small or big, has its own system of training and educating its young people. And education for good life, has been one of the most persistent concerns of humanity. The method and the approach for this education differs, everywhere and every dimension of life. While the Greek idea hails an educated man as one with sound physical and mental balance. Obviously male ritual circumcision is meant to be transformative. A transformation that is meant to influence the initiates to be responsible people in the society. Fafunwa again observes, "in the ancient African society, a hunter, a warrior, a nobleman, and good reputable skilled men were all evaluated as the most educated and well-integrated citizens of the community. Circumcision is one of the central phenomena of African culture by which elements of traditional education is passed on to the young generation" Fafunwa, 1982:9).

Ottenberg (1989:34) observes:

This kind of education is manifested at every stage of the ritual administration, beginning with the initiate's formal entry into the house of seclusion. Traditional education continues throughout the time the initiate spends in seclusion. This includes how he should conduct himself while in a group of his peers, never to quarrel, or seem to provoke a quarrel among his peers. This is an art of peace practice, which the initiate will have to carry to the outside world at time of his reintegration into the wider society. Unlike other cultures where circumcision has become a matters of choice for male individuals, it is still an imperative adaptation in some other African societies. The practice identifies Africans as a distinct community. Ritual circumcision does not automatically mark the beginning of an independent life of a young adult male, but rather, it empowers him to assist his parents in various home activities.

In the case of Bukusu male ritual circumcision, young boys are not empowered to stay independently away from their parents. They continue being under the tutelage of their parents and other elders of the community. This is with intent that this young people fully transforms to responsible people of the community. Mugambi and Kirima (1976:115) argues that, "again, it is

important to note that the virtue of a son getting himself a wife or receiving a share of a piece of land from his father does not completely cut links between him and his parents. But rather, it is one of the stages that mark the beginning of high responsibility for him to take care of his parents. Despite his independence and close association to his parents, an initiate is relatively more attached to his father than his mother ”. The African circumcision practice is characteristic of the patriarchal syndrome. This where fathers or male figures dominate the scene. Bediako (1992:89) reiterates as follows, “This mother-son exclusive association can only be defined in terms of what can be interpreted as a manifestation of the African patriarchal syndrome. That syndrome eventually elevates the young man into being the head of the household.

2.7 Theoretical perspectives and role of ritual in the society

In the context of social change in the any given society, rituals hold a very phenomenal position.

La Fontaine (1972:23) says:

Ritual is one of the most difficult concepts that cannot be precisely missed in social science. Most theorists would accept a general definition that ritual is a formalized, collective, and institutionalized somewhat repetitive action. Because of the complexities it seems to represent, it is much easier to explain what ritual does than what it means. It is equally difficult to distinguish between that which is regarded as technical and that which is viewed as non-technical. However, circumcision ritual has various values (social capital) embedded therein that are manifested and vital for the society.

Goody (1961:159) defines ritual as, “categories of standardized behavior (custom) in which the relationship between the means and the end is not intrinsic”. By intrinsic, Goody seems to imply either rational or irrational. La Fontaine (1972: xvi) observes, “Another dilemma similar to the definition is that ritual has largely been associated with religion. Although La Fontaine refers to this as an important assumption”, this could be perceived as a narrow definition that attempts to restrict ritual to the confines of supernatural practice. In many scholars’ view point, not all rituals are religious and not all religious acts are rituals. This is what Durkheim’s (1995:13) views as,

“distinction between the sacred and the profane”. As Grimes (1994:99) observes, “ritual itself has no single origin, and thus, no one explanation”.

2.7.1 Values and attitudes

In traditional African cosmology, male ritual circumcision is not seen as a torture or punishment to those who partake of it. The drive to have this ritual taking place quite often is because of the embedded values. Reagan (1996:30) observes “it is a test of fortitude, that helps to jumpstart new life into the initiates”. On the other hand, “Values are conceptions of what is desired and viewed as important to the African communities. They influence prestige, status, pride, and loyalty. Values also enhance patriotism, belief, and honor among equals (Fafunwa and Aisiku, 1982: 15)”. Understanding of ritual seeks to understand the legacy of the Africa past but, at the same time be cautious to the amiable needs of the future, and cognizant of its global standpoint. The researcher concurs with Mazrui’s presupposition that indigenization is one strategy that Africans can employ to move away from dependency on Western forms of pedagogy. This can only succeed with proper utilization of the African learning techniques, African trained personnel, and indigenous approaches to purposeful change (in Larmont &Seghalislami, 2002: 201).

Sense of respect for elders and authorities is one major value that is inculcated in the minds of the youth. Reagan (1996:28) argues, “age is an important element in the life of the African. Reverence for the elders is a strong phenomenon among the Yoruba. In the African societies, seniority confers social and economic privilege”. For this reason therefore, the youth that undergo this very important ritual are taught to be respectful to the elders and any attempt to look the elder straight in the eyes was construed to be disrespect. In this respect, one would therefore say that ritual is a very important tool in shaping the character of the individual in the society. According Reagan (1996:33) opines that, “respect entails obedience, which is accompanied by

appropriate forms of address, ritual greeting (in some cases with distinct form of language). Other important values include: Endurance, Patience, unity, hard work, respect for authority & peers, loyalty/faithfulness, Value for family/community, honesty, reconciliation and restoration”. All these will be discussed in chapter four to show how they influence the society positively in the full utilization of the social capital.

In essence, while African people strive towards embracing modernity, their feet should rest on the firm foundations of their cultural identity and tradition. Educational institutions should begin to move away from the maintenance of the Western style curriculum with more emphasis in indigenous courses. Mazrui (in Larmont & Seghatolislami, 2002: 203) refer to this process as academic domestication. This process involves strategies of turning the curriculum to be more relevant to African needs. Undoubtedly, this process can be a jump starter to the already stagnate. Indigenization of the African languages, cultural practices and domestication of the African academic literature has to begin with legislation. For example, African languages enshrined in legal institution such as the judiciary and parliament must be both, indigenized and domesticated.

2.7.2 Formation of Character

Formation of character is one cardinal feature of African circumcision. Young people are expected to submit to the ethos of the community in order to be reliable citizens. Fafunwa (in Reagan (1996:28) describes this formation as “the cornerstone of the African Traditional Education”. Abdou Moumouni (1994:37) concurs with Fafunwa when he maintains “molding character and providing moral qualities to adolescents are primary objectives in the traditional African education”. In a similar view, Ayisi (1972:13) argues, “during the pre-circumcision age, parents concern themselves with the bearing, behavior, honesty, and integrity of the child. While

during the circumcision and post circumcision age, the society takes over to reinforce the character formation of the youth” . Sifuna and Otiende (1992:109) observe, “with regard to the Ibo of Nigeria, everyone in the home, in the village and the community wanted the Igbo child to be sociable, truthful, brave, humble, have stamina, and be of irreproachable conduct at all times”. Here, the foregoing thoughts simply resonate the notion that the education for African children is a collective responsibility.

According to Moumouni (1967:56) observes that, “it is collective in nature and as one that is embedded in social life (both in material and in spiritual sense); its goals are multiple in character and application, and that its achievement is gradual and progressive in the emotional and mental development of the youth”. In this respect, male ritual circumcision serves as the basic institution through which values and knowledge are passed on to what shapes and forms the society. In a community, there are various unifying factors. It is a social setting where people socialize and connect to one another. One of the unifying factor is language. Sifuna (1992:21) argues, “Use of language is one of the most important aspects in the development of the character formation for the youth in the circumcision school. Before they are reintegrated into their community, the initiates are intensively instructed on how to use language appropriately, creatively, and effectively”. Reagan (1996:29) opines, “this is as a central feature of intellectual training of the African youth. Mastery of this, he argues, is the promotion of intergenerational communication”.

African pedagogy should be the one that seeks compatibility with the present stages of human knowledge with a quest towards character formation. Success in indigenous knowledge system also included use of the African anthology and lingua languages as tools of instruction in elementary, secondary, and all institutions of higher learning. If for example, in Mazrui’s point

of view, Japan, Israel, Korea, and many other Asian countries have scientified their languages and made them medium of their technological advancement (in Laremont & Seghatoslami, 2002: 202), what would hinder the African countries from taking the same discourse. African societies can never look to the future with optimism if they overwhelmingly keep playing down on their sensitivity to the cultural identity.

Indoctrination and brainwashing is a vice that has taken toll especially in the fabric of the African educated elites to a point of increasingly publishing literature in European languages and less African languages. Those who have attempted to do the latter have received a share of criticism even from their fellow African writers. For example, while in a writer's seminar in Nairobi, Ngugi Wa Tiong'o, a renowned African writer came under criticism from a section of the scholars in attendance for his insistence on the use of indigenous languages and for publishing some of his works in his native language. In his response, Ngugi countered this analogy with another analogy, "it is better to have a boat on the shore than to have a ship loaded with food for the hungry stranded in the middle of the sea" (Daily Nation reporter, August 20, 2004). In these two examples, the boat represents the African people with exclusive literature about their own culture, while the ship represents their very African culture presented to them by themselves in languages they struggle to comprehend.

2.7.3 Variation in circumcision ritual

As a ritual, circumcision is an integral aspect of coming of age. It is used to measure the virility of individuals who would take their roles as responsible members of the community. Brown (2007:67) argues, "even though male circumcision is an integral part of the ritual of coming of age in some communities, separation in place or time may occur between the performance of circumcision and the initiation period. A range of possible combinations can be recorded. Male

circumcision may be carried out in a clinical setting, with initiation being performed traditionally, either before or after circumcision ”. From the South and West African perspective Vincent (2007:68) observes, “Anecdotal reports of this pattern are available for a group in Botswana, who go through the initiation ceremony at a traditional initiation school and are then brought to hospital in town for circumcision to be performed. South Africa is said to be another country where arrangements are made for circumcision in hospital by a male nurse, with subsequent immediate return of the circumcised boys to the bush for the traditional initiation activities”. According to World Health Organization Report, 2006,

Tanzania is one of the few countries where male circumcision is carried out by traditional circumcisers on adolescent boys but is not followed by a period of seclusion. It is worth noting that initiation of boys is practiced by East and Southern Africa groups who do not practice male circumcision. The Luo in Kenya, for example, remove the lower six teeth of their children as a rite of passage. In Swaziland, initiation ceremonies were revived by King Sobhuza in Twentieth century, with related groups playing an increasingly important role in Swazi society. In such societies it may be possible to use established societal structures as an entry point for improving adolescent male sexual and reproductive health, as well as introducing male circumcision, through liaising with these regiments.

In line with the above Bailey (2007:35) observes, “Traditional male circumcision may also be adapted to modern life, as described by Bailey for Bukusu families in Kenya, who try to schedule circumcision around the school calendar. Boys undergo the procedure during July/August period and have their initiation ceremony during the Christmas holidays”.

2.8 Reintegration into the society and its importance

Mandela (1994:78) observes, “The end of seclusion (graduation) for the initiates from the bush school is marked with the burning down of the lodges and the destruction of any items that would link them to childhood. This signified the destruction of their nature. A big ceremony is held to welcome the initiates in their new status as men to the society. The initiates are strictly

instructed not to look back when their structures of seclusion homes are being consumed by fire. This is to demonstrate a complete disconnect between the two worlds”. Circumcision ceremonies are held in peoples’ homes where families and members of the community are highly involved. Osotsi (2002:69) points out, “Initiation graduation ceremonies are usually held in the initiates’ homes with relatives, friends, and community members in attendance. The high involvement of the family and the community members implies a sense of solidarity with the family which the initiate comes from. To make this successfully, enough food is made available to entertain the guests. Cox (1998:14) concurs by saying, “Different kinds of food and drinks, which include local brew, are served. The ceremony is normally crowned with the slaughter of an animal as a symbol of purification for the initiate and communion for the entire community”. The spilling of blood into the ground is an atonement to reconcile the living with the ancestors whom Mbiti (1989) refers to as the ‘living dead’, and the living among the living, thus, members of the community”.

In Africa, singing is a lifestyle of the people. For example in the case of the Bukusu people of Bungoma County where the research took place always involve singing in their ritual undertakings. Raum (1976:71) observes, “The initiation festivities are highly accompanied by singing and dance, partly as a morale boosting technique for the initiated, and partly for the groups to keep themselves awake for the overnight activities. The hymns and songs come in various forms, tunes, and chants” . Most of the songs that the researcher has had to listened to are typical of repetition and the messages conveyed have far-reaching implication. Bloch (1986:90) reiterates, “the songs which are rarely more than two lines and in question-and answer style, form the characteristic of typical African music. Some of the songs carry meaning; others are simply vague repeated words, while others are sung in honor of the departed ethnic ancestors”.

The songs sung during the process of the circumcision ritual are meant to instill courage, boldness and hope to the initiates. The Bukusu people of Bungoma County have a myriad of songs that are sung to grace the occasion. Lambek (2002:337-338) points out, “the singing and ordeal that surround the initiates during the initiation ceremonies are meant to evoke notions of individual and communal strength. The initiates’ new statuses are inaugurated with new clothing, new bedding, and a different sleeping location. They are also showered with numerous presents from their parents, relatives, friends, and members of the community”. After successfully going through these stages, “the initiates are then declared total men of the society and thus ready to assume any responsibilities beginning with marriage (Osotsi, 2002: 49). In most cases, in African setting, men who have not gone through this ritual of circumcision are looked upon as cowards and they are subjected to stigma, rejection ridicule. Corbitt (1998:18), says, “over time, men who have not gone through ritual initiation are ostracized, ridiculed, and stigmatized within their communities. The same applies to those who have received clinical circumcision. They are similarly viewed as good for nothing village cowards”. But in the current dispensation, such views have been relaxed and watered down with influence of modernization. Coming out of the bush or seclusion marks the end of the road of childhood and ushers initiates to a new phase of life of responsibility and accountability. Raum (1996:26) argues, graduation from the circumcision school does not the end of adolescent’s development. Rather, it only entitles him to accept and carry the roles of maturity into the society. Despite the impact of Western civilization, the core elements of the institution of male circumcision remain intact in most African cultures. In totality, the process by which adolescents are initiated into manhood serves a major function in the African societies. This includes socio-economic, political, psychological, religious, and educational.

The radical transition or change from childhood to adulthood is perceived as a demonstration of a higher status. Emanuel Marx (1973:112) notes, “circumcision ceremony was a demonstration of a higher status for feast provider in ancient nations. Circumcision of boys among the Negev people provided an occasion for the staging of an elaborate feast that lasted more than ten days before the operation took place. The amount of resources spent on these feasts equalled an average family’s annual income”. This resonates well with the Bukusu circumcision structure in the sense there is high involvement of the community. Resources are mobilized to ensure that the ceremony is a success. At times there is merry making because the initiate successfully transits to another status. Marx (1973:86), “The host family set up a feast camp that attracted far and short distant friends and relatives. In many cases, depending on the ethnic custom of the feast host, other lively activities were featured in the ceremony, these included sports such as horse and camel racing. Poor families who could not afford feasts on their own took advantage of the rich feast-givers to have their own boys circumcised. However, in return, these poorer families served in subordinate roles as helpers throughout the ceremony”.

What appears to be a reminiscent of the Palestine circumcision, “Other than feasting, gift-giving, social, and business conversations, circumcision ceremonies in Palestine also provided a stage for people who had not seen each other for a long time to renew their relationships. At the material day of the operation. Women emerged from their guest tents to the circumcision site with singing and ululations” (Marx, 1973:432). According to the Bukusu worldview, circumcision is a preserve of the men folk who entirely dominate. Mouw (1992:24) observes,

The initiates entered the circumcision tent in the company of their fathers, as their mothers remained on the periphery. The operation was done while the candidates sat on the knees of the adult men who held them. The boys were then handed over to their parents after the operation. Besides the goodies they were given to eat, the initiates were rendered no special treatment after the exercise of operation. As much as circumcision was the basic objective for such ceremonies, in reality, the

ceremonies were chiefly arranged in order to demonstrate the wealth of the feaster and to renew gift-links.

The Bukusu circumcision and the ancient Palestinian almost match on some aspects. However, in the same manner, Mouw is quick to also point out that “the Negev case is an exceptional one. Apparently, not all circumcision ceremonies in the Palestinian region take this similar model” (p. 83). In the African world view, it is prudent for the initiates to be taken to the seclusion homes, and then in the fullness of time, they are reintegrated back to the society where they came from.

Niang (2007:56) opines, “Going back to the community is blended with festivities that welcome back the initiates. For example among the Balante in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, the process of reintegration takes six days and consists of activities such as ritual baths and being given a new name. However, in order to demonstrate their newly leant resistance to sexual attraction, they are not allowed to have sex during the first six days”. On the eve of reintegration back to the society, the initiates engage in several activities that make the day eventful. Marck (2007:14) observes, “Among the Bukusu of Western Kenya, the end of seclusion is characterized by burning the sleeping mats and spending a night a round a large fire, where young women join the initiates” (p. 7). According to Mandela (1994), “The end of seclusion for the initiates from the bush is marked with the burning down of the lodges and the destruction of any items that would link them to childhood. This signified the destruction of their former nature”. Osotsi (2002:89) points out, “On their sojourn back home, a big ceremony is held to welcome the initiates in their new status as men to the society. The initiates are strictly instructed not to look back when their structures are being consumed by fire. This is to demonstrate a complete disconnect between the two worlds”.

The parents of the initiates are automatic custodians of the circumcision ceremony. The ceremony takes place in the initiates' homes. Cox (1998:23) observes, “Initiation ceremonies are

usually held in the initiates' homes with friends, relatives, and community in attendance. Different kinds of food and drinks are served. The ceremony is usually crowned with the slaughter of an animal as a symbol of purification for the initiate and communion for the entire community". Blood in the African context is very important. Mbiti (1989) observes, "The spilling of the animal blood into the ground is an atonement to reconcile the living with the ancestors - the *Living dead*, and the living among the living, for example, members of the community". Turner (1982) comments on the significance of the ritualized aspects of initiation, "The initiation festivities are highly accompanied by singing and, partly as a morale boosting technique for the initiates, and partly for the groups to keep themselves awake for the overnight activities (p. 67)". The performance of the circumcision ritual brings about a myriad of benefits, for the form and content of music. Makila (1978:202) argues, "The songs come in varied forms and chants. These consist of never ending repetition of not more than two phrases. Some of the songs carry meaning; others are simply vague repeated words, while others are sung in honor of departed ethnic ancestors".

Osotsi (2002) opines, "The initiates' new status are symbolized by new clothes, new beddings, and different sleeping location. They are also showered with numerous presents from their parents, relatives, friends, and members of the community. After successfully going through the stages, the initiates are then declared total men of the society and thus ready to assume any responsibilities beginning with marriage (p. 19)". On the contrary as Van Vuuren (1999) observes, "Over time, men who have not gone through ritual circumcision are ostracized within their communities. The same applies to those who have received clinical circumcision. However, these sentiments have been watered down by the whims of modernization and western civilization (p. 86)". The transition to new dispensation is a phenomenal stage. Reagan (1996) observes, "Sojourn from the bush is not the end of the road towards moral and intellectual

development. Graduation from the circumcision schools does not mark the final stage of the adolescent's development. Rather, it only entitles him to accept and carry the roles of maturity into society. Despite the impact of westernization, the core elements of the institution of male ritual circumcision remain intact in most African cultures. In totality, the process by which adolescents are initiated into manhood serves as major function in the African traditional cultures. Most obviously, this include socio-political, psychological, religious, and educational. It is vital to note however, that the initiation schools are never intended to provide the initiates with might be called, *Vocational training* that would enable them earn a living out of the camp” (p. 66).

2.9 Theoretical Framework

This current study will be guided by Social – Cultural Theoretical Framework. Social cultural theory is a product from the works of renowned Russian psychologist, Lev. S Vygotsky who used the Russian Revolution of 1917 in 1931 to propound socio-cultural perspective (Cole & Engestrom, 1994; Cole, 1996). He believed that, “individual mental functioning originated from social sources and function of the child's cultural development which appears on two planes, social and psychological (Jang, 2011: 118)”. Therefore, social-cultural theory is applied by various disciplines such as psychology as it describes “awareness of the circumstances surrounding individuals and how their behaviours are affected specifically by social and cultural factors” (Swartz & Townsend, 2011:56). This means that culture has a greater impetus or effect on the life of the individual as he or she grows up. Children are socialized into the cultural domains that shapes the way they think and behave.

However, the emphasis and significance of the social cultural perspective encourage stakeholders such as the researchers to expand their scientific study of human behaviour and root them in

socio-cultural context; understanding how different underpinnings of culture affect people's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, behaviour and the belief systems (Kheswa, 2014: 87). Socio-cultural theory would contribute immensely in understanding Bukusu male ritual circumcision and the cultural contexts surrounding the phenomena. For example, it can shed meaningful light on the societal values that are deeply embedded, ingrained, and interwoven within strongly cultural roots (Kang'ethe, 2013: 66). It would provide an insight and in-depth knowledge of social capital that is embedded in traditional Bukusu male ritual circumcision. This would be possible by determining, informing, and directing people's well-being as portrayed by songs, dances, drumbeats, and enjoying of the festivity together.

In support of the socio-cultural theory, Peplau (1997:113), indicate that, "cultural sensitive approach strongly support the idea of embracing what it termed the wealth of the poor, in that, economically impoverished communities may lack income and insufficient resources, but they could pride themselves with social-cultural assets that include rituals, reciprocal; relationships, indigenous knowledge and skills, as well as informal support systems that play a pivotal role in tumultuous times". Taylor (1997:78) opines, "During the enculturation especially through the initiation rites, the individual initiate internalizes this asymmetrical division of power relations that is created to them by the society as natural and inevitable. As a result, a cultural connection is thereby forged between the biological nature (sex), and virtually every aspect of their social experience including social roles, emotional expression, sexual relations and desires". This study considers male ritual circumcision a symbolic practice that functions as a rite of passage for boys from childhood to adulthood. Anfrend (2004:104) agrees to the fact that, "The custom places men in new roles, new social relations and expectations that they are expected to internalize as part of their biological self. During the process, a gender hierarchy is created by the society in accordance to their biological differences from women. Male circumcision should therefore be

understood and conceptualized as a symbolic rite of passage that culturally constructs men's roles, values and gender relations, which goes beyond the physical cutting of the foreskin of the penile. This research argues, "the traditional meaning and purpose of male ritual circumcision among the Bukusu people has been influenced; hence moderated and redefined as the community interacted with modernity. Although these transformations have reduced the magnitude and frequency of male ritual circumcision to a great extent, the practice has persisted" (Makila, 1978: 221). In view of the social cultural theory therefore, Bukusu young boys who undergo circumcision are influenced by the inherent values embedded in the ritual circumcision that ultimately shapes their lives. Haralambos and Holborn observes, "To understand any part of society, that part must be seen in relation to society as a whole. In this way, people examine part of a society in terms of its contribution to the maintenance of the whole system.

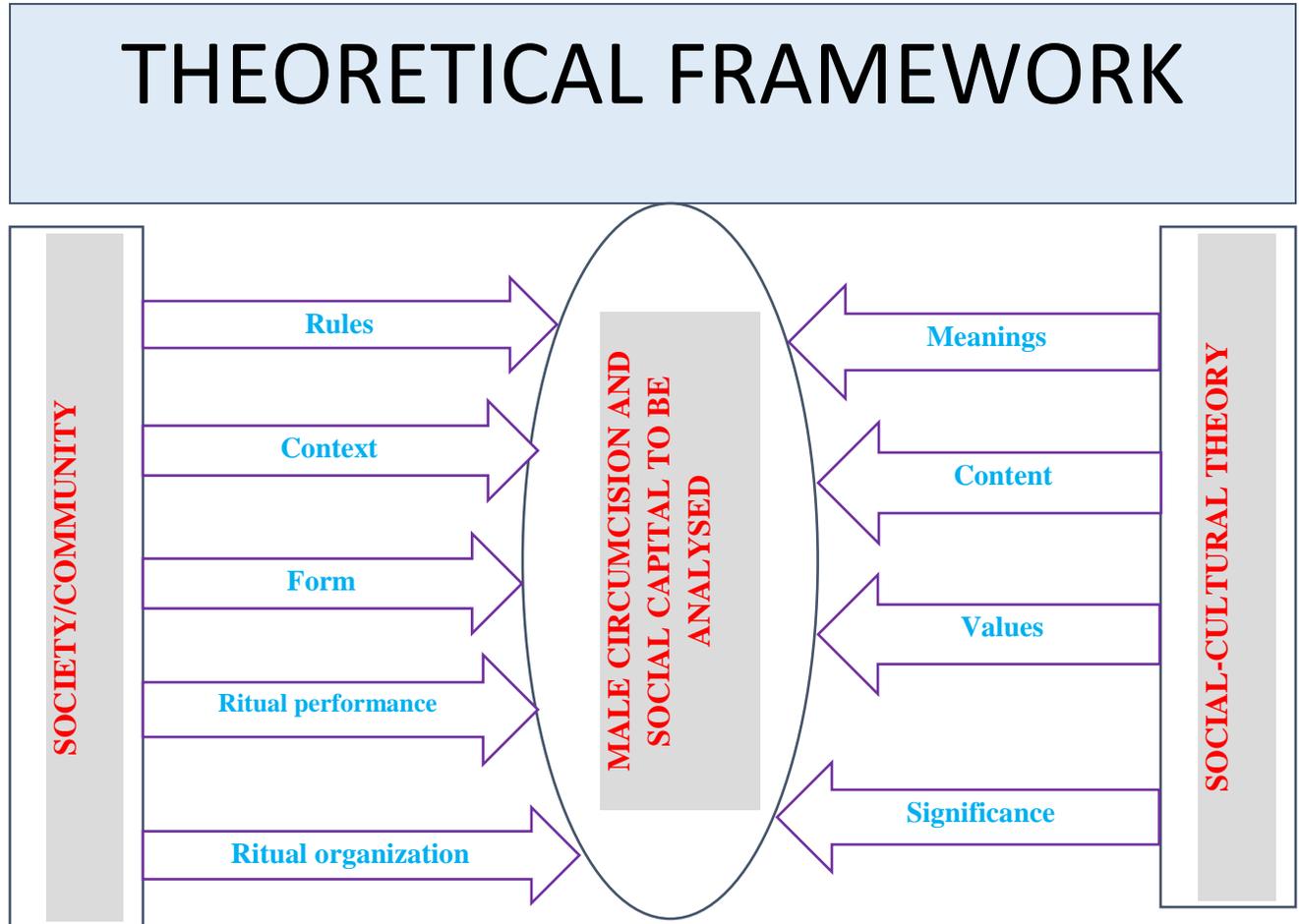
Folklore and tradition operating within a social structure and cultural activity must of necessity have a utilitarian value for its people. Malinowski (in Brown, 1935:17) defines function, as "the part which plays within the integral system of culture and the manner in which they are related to each other within the culture. It is the function of any recurrent activity - the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of structural continuity".

In as far as Social - Cultural theory and social structure are concerned, Merton (1968:856), "Emile Durkheim saw the collective consciousness of a society as the sum total of all the individual interests and sensitivities held in some delicate balance. The basic unit of analysis is society and its various parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship as a whole". Society does not wholly stand out alone. Each aspect of society requires the other to realize wholeness. Merton (1968:73) argues, "This essentially means that the understanding of any part of society requires an analysis of its relationship to other parts and most importantly its

contribution to its sustenance. African initiation cannot be looked at in isolation. It plays a big role in dictating the life of the African society. Initiation must be understood with reference to the contribution it makes to the society and system as a whole”.

In view of the above discussion as Merton (1968:87) suggests, “behaviour in the society is structured. This means that the relationships between members of society are organised in terms of rules or norms which stipulate how people are expected to behave”. Being cognizant to the fact that human beings in the society are social beings, they are affected by the way society operates. Culture meets the needs of the individual and the society. Hence, Bukusu male ritual circumcision being a cultural phenomenon has a great impetus on the lives of people involved and the society. This entails an example of the relationship between male circumcision ritual as part of the structure and its relationship to society as a whole on the basis of generation of social capital. In other words, what functions would it play or what effects would it have to other parts of the African social structure.

FIGURE NO. 2.1: The researcher’s illustration and interpretation of the interface relationship between variables: Male ritual circumcision and social capital using social-cultural theory as derived from Nizio Fiagpedzi’s “Philosophy of theory in Socio-Cultural research.” In Portes McDonald and Cater, Roger eds. (1990: 55).



Source: Researcher 2018

Figure 2.1: Shows a comprehensive interpretation of the interface relationship between two variables: Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital through the lenses of Social-Cultural theory in the context of Bukusu community. The interface highly influences the relationship of the independent variable – Bukusu male ritual circumcision and the dependant variable – Social Capital. The interface contributes to the formation of social capital through the Bukusu male ritual circumcision which is the main variable.

Summary

The reviewed literature works have demonstrated that male ritual circumcision is a vital rite of passage a few gaps are notable. For example, other works have a dissenting position that looks at male ritual circumcision as obsolete and a norm that should be abolished completely. Issues concerning this rite have over time become of great interest to researchers, social scientists, civil rights activists and policy makers. The study has established that Bukusu male ritual circumcision occupy an intersection that is characterized with multiple marginalization. This position therefore puts this rite at the crossroads that calls for a specific research discourse. This current study sought to fill that gap by looking at the motivation for its persistence despite the opposition from time immemorial; hence a discourse on social capital. In this current research therefore, the identified gaps were filled by exploring factors for its persistence. The study was also analyzed various themes which includes historical perspectives about the origins of male ritual circumcision. By looking at circumcision in early Christian and Islamic tradition enabled the researcher to ascertain the significance and drive why this important rite was practiced. The literary works also revealed that circumcision was also a phenomenon in the African setting, hence need to explore its origin in the African context.

Literature review established another gap that other literary works centered on the context of circumcision in African communities as a ritual without making an in-depth analysis of the elements that constitute social capital. The vital part of the rituals and the interpretations of the meanings therein is not exhaustively handled. Furthermore, most of the issues of ritual circumcision are dealt with on a general basis and are not specific. The composite nature of male ritual circumcision is an attestation that Bukusu male ritual circumcision is embedded with immense social capital which if properly utilized can be of great value to individuals and the

society as a whole. Just as is the case for Bukusu community, most African communities perform this rite as guided by age-groups organization; thus, the need for general perspectives about the origins of male ritual circumcision and social capital. The literary works revealed that various perspectives emerged about male ritual circumcision with a view to understand the values and attitudes that may contribute to character formation. Theoretical perspectives on the role of ritual in the society becomes the central focus for purposes of understanding the social capital component. Reintegration back into the society is one critical aspect of the process of male ritual circumcision. Coming to society with immense knowledge that has been inculcated into the initiates adds value to the society. In the course of this study, it was discovered that various justifications have been advanced concerning male ritual circumcision. The study explored the Biblical justifications both in the Old Testament and New Testament. Theological reflections on this discourse has generated various arguments which include: The origin argument, moral argument and missiological argument.

In a nutshell, the theoretical framework used in this study is pertinent to psychological, social, and physical challenges associated with traditional male circumcision ritual through the lenses of newly initiated men, their families, communities, and the government. Chapter two which is typically for literature review, established that in addition to the existing scholarly content pertaining the analysis of form and structure, there is dire need for further study with regard to the functional and foundational thought of male ritual circumcision in relation to social capital – thus the inherent social values. As pointed out in the theoretical framework, little has been articulated concerning the fundamental and tangible value of Bukusu male ritual circumcision as in what it can add to the individual and the society. The current research discourse endeavors to fill that gap.

The following is chapter three which provided the methodologies that informed the study's research design, methods of data collection as well as data analysis. In pursuing this discourse, the researcher consulted both the primary and secondary sources of information. This component of research is very key to the acquisition of information which will be crucial in answering the question and achieving the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology that was employed in conducting this study. It details a selected research design, what exactly was done and how it was done or carried out. The following elements in the undertaking of this research are outlined as follows: research design adopted; definition of research site; exploration of the target population and sampling strategy; description of the research instruments used selected study population; data collection, analysis and presentation techniques; explanation of steps taken to ensure validity and reliability; and highlights on ethical considerations made in the process of this current study. The current study relied on primary and secondary sources for data collection. The researcher worked with the theoretical frameworks that explains the functionality of ritual in the society in relation to humanity.

3.1 Research Design

Research design deals with methods and procedures employed in collecting and analysing the required information in a given study. It is the description of a research approach, study setting, sampling size, sampling technique, tools or instruments and methods of data collection and analysis. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:155), observe that, “Research design and methodology are described in terms of population, sampling, and administration of research instruments, data collection procedures, and the description of techniques used in data analysis all of which were utilized in order to answer the research questions and achieve the set objectives. The conceptual perspective of a given study is based on the qualitative research that includes designs, techniques and measures that do not produce discrete numerical data”. Kerlinger (1973:45) observes, “more often the data in qualitative research are grouped into categories. They further observe that

human behaviour is explained best by using qualitative research. Human phenomena that cannot be investigated by the direct observation such as attitudes and other emotions are best studied using qualitative method”. In order to achieve the research objectives, the research design was based on descriptive research approach. About the role of qualitative research in information transfer, Mugenda and Mugenda again observes, “Finally, emerging issues relating to social, political and economic development in poor countries have enhanced the use of qualitative approaches in search of sustainable solutions to the myriad problems facing these countries. Some research and evaluation experts have argued for qualitative approach especially in Africa because communities in Africa have traditionally communicated by word of mouth rather than in written form. The older members of the community are considered to have wisdom and it is their obligation to pass on this wisdom to younger generation. Folklore, for example, has been an effort effective framework communicating information, especially on issues related to sex and family life, religious beliefs, taboos, sickness, social mythology and so on. Because of the tendency of African communities to pass information orally, there is a strong argument that the most appropriate research and evaluation approach in Africa is the qualitative approach because it emphasizes oral communication and gives respondents a chance to state their problems the way they perceive them and participate in seeking solutions to these problems as well as effecting such solutions (1999:202)”.

This study aimed at examining the fundamentals wrought between Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital. The nature of the problem and the solution sought called for qualitative approach in the collection and analysis of information. This is because there was no much reporting on statistics which require a quantitative approach. Ethical dilemma experienced while collecting data on the subject was noted. They were premised on the delicate issues pertaining Bukusu male ritual circumcision. The study adopted a descriptive research design to

collect, measure and analyse data. Descriptive research design is best for investigating behaviour (Bryaman, 2001 and Creswell, 2003). It is a fact-finding research design that gives an opportunity to reach information in its natural setting (Frankel and Wallen, 2000). In such a design data is collected from members of a population in order to determine the status of that community with respect to one or more variables (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The design was employed because it is simple and easy to use in collecting relatively large amount of information from a small sample within a short time (Robson, 2002).

In addition, this current research employs a cultural research practice because of the questions asked, the relationship between the researcher and the key informants and its purpose (Maseno, 2014 and Onsongo, 2007). The practice is handy in studies that seek understanding of the gendered power relations, consciousness raising, ritual rights (Onsongo, 2007). Most researchers that engage in cultural research practice prefer to employ qualitative research design because of the pre-eminence it gives to the “listening to, recording and understanding people’s own descriptions and accounts” (Onsongo, 2007). This study is based on social cultural theory. Social cultural theory is a theory of social sciences that is employed to explain the influence a given social group on the individual’s behaviour. The theory assumes that when one becomes a part of a particular group for instance a community and conforms to the values of that community. Therefore, being a stakeholder in the community social network reduces the chances of that person to commit offenses (Bachman& Schutt, 2012). This study does not test theory but rather uses it as the lens through which data is gathered and interpreted. The study focuses on analysing and exposing all aspects of the circumcision ritual and how these concepts are lived out by members of the age set later in life.

3.2 The study area

According to study done by professor Eshiwani (1980), “Kenya can be divided into five geographical regions, the Lake basin, Central and Associated Highlands, Eastern Plateau Foreland, Coast, and North East Basin ,Central and Associated Highlands, Eastern Plateau Foreland, Coast, and North-East Plateau. These regions display varied climatic conditions and weather patterns ranging from extremely wetlands to extremely dry lands, from extremely cold to extremely hot temperatures. These weather condition influences the country’s population distribution and the social life of the people”. However, the promulgation of the 2010 constitution saw Kenya portioned into forty-seven administrative units referred to as counties.

Bungoma is located in the Western Region of Kenya. The people of Bungoma are *Bukusu*, a sub-tribe of the Luhya tribe who are Bantus. The land (*Ebungoma*) is also referred to as *Bungoma*, therefore the terms *Ebungoma*, Bungoma and Bukusu in most works, as in this study, are used interchangeably to mean the region, territory, location or land inhabited by the *Bukusu* people. The study area has grown as an administrative unit as a District (Appendix 8). Currently, Bungoma is comprised of six sub-counties namely Kimilili, Kanduyi, Tongaren, Chwele, Mount Elgon and Webuye (Appendix 8).

According to Makokha (1977: 13) *The Bukusu*, the focus of this study cover a land mass of about 180 square kilometres. However, Alela (2007) cites other source that puts it at 160 square kilometres. The Equator runs through the southern part of Bungoma .Politically, the *Bukusu* people boarder the Sabaot on the North-East. Prominent physical features in Bungoma include granite boulders, unbroken series of hill and valleys, winding and hitherto drying medium-sized streams and springs.

Culture is a very revealing aspect of peoples philosophy and persuasion. Simply put, culture is peoples way of life. The *Bukusu* people, as other people of Africa, have a way of life that revolves around birth, initiation, marriage and death. Though the Bukusu have embraced various shades of Christianity and in varied degree, their way of life is clearly depicted in the way they carry themselves out, especially in times of new birth, initiation, marriage and death. At such time the cultural way of doing things is invoked and sometimes Christianized to fit the times (Alati, 2016:45).

The main economic activity in Bungoma County is mixed farming. The economic returns are from salaries and wages earned from employment in educational ,religious, and government institutions in this area and remittances from the *Bukusu* who are working and living in other places. Other widespread economic activities in Bungoma are both small and large scale trading and motor bike taxi services (Alela, 2007; Bungoma District Development plan, 2009).

Farming as the occupation among the Bukusu is bedevilled by the diminished land holding due to high population density and climate change. The population explosion and erratic climate conditions of the study area cannot, as will be later demonstrated, allow for much profitable farming. Thus, the majority of those engaged in farming, practice mixed farming with agro-business bias though with meagre results. This explains the limping state of diary, goat, fish, pig, poultry and horticultural farming despite the government and NGOs efforts in the study area (Bungoma District Development Plan 2009).

Formal employment and casual labour forms the chief source of income. Others simply live on remittances from those employed. The education sector is the main employer and revenue earner among the *Bukusu*, with others serving as health workers, clerks, administrators, clergy, matatu operators and shop attendants among others (Bungoma District Development Plan, 2009).

Transport sector also contributes substantially to the livelihood of the residents of Bungoma. Many young men and a few women are gainfully engaged in transport provision. The main contributor in this section is *Boda-boda*. Young men ferry people and goods within the area and its environs using motorbikes. Others are hired as drivers or touts by trucks and pickups owners that offer transport. This is the economic hub for many young men in the study area, earning barely enough for their daily meal (Bungoma District Development Plan, 2009).

Bukusu men, women and youth are engaged in small scale businesses as their trading centres, homes and sometimes through hawking goods. Three main market centres include Chwele, Misikhu and Kiminini. Chwele market prides itself for recording the highest turn-over of agricultural produce in the County and Region, although the products exchanged originate outside of the area sometimes leaving the residents with little margins of returns accrued as wages, commissions, rent or profit (Bungoma District Development Plan, 2009).

Notably, there is high rate of youth unemployment in the study area just as in other parts of the country. As such, most of the schooled young people, especially men, are disillusioned due to seemingly shuttered hopes and have become social misfits given to substance abuse and orgies. These youth have become a problem to the society as echoed in the words of Ngunjiri (2016:34) in his article: State ought to double efforts in creating jobs for Youth:

The problem of youth unemployment extends far beyond the immediate crisis of individual lacking a wage: longer-term national threats include political instability, the viability of the county's fiscal and social security systems and the social integration of non-productive generation.

Government initiatives for economic empowerment through women and youth fund and value addition on produce have borne little results among the *Bukusu* compared to the set targets and relative to other parts of the country like central .The ferocious cycle of poverty and deplorable living conditions for many among the *Abanyole* remain unbroken from generation to generation

(cf. Alela, 2007). Many have blamed it on the negative response of the people (Makokha,1977). Some feel that this is as a result of other stakeholders neglecting their rightful duty (Obwono, 2011). Others laud it on the community which leads to abusive and ineffective approach. Still others credit it to the solitary nature of some Bukusu people that does not support socialistic dictates that come with government and NGO interventions. Whatever the explanation, some parts of Bungoma remains in a state of wanton livelihood characterized by insecurity, HIV/AIDS prevalence, drug and substance abuse and sadistic poverty. Thus ,the high population that is supposed to be currency has become a liability.

This makes Bungoma, as Makokha (1977:9) observes, a “peasant proletarian locality”. Generally, the study area has a very high population density given its rural setting. According to the Bungoma District Statics Office, the population estimation by 2012 was expected to stand as in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Bungoma County Population by Size and Density

Sub-County	Area/Size in Km	Male	Female	Total	Density person /Km
Chwele	98.6	56,965	65,525	122,217	1,240
Webuye	74.6	42,077	49,458	91,535	1,227
Tonagaren	88.2	99,042	114,710	213,752	1,234
Kanduyi	91.1	100,102	119, 109	219,211	1,342
Mount Elgon	80.3	79,098	112,110	191,208	1,210
Kimilii	90.2	110,179	111,016	221,195	1,240
TOTAL	523	487, 463	571,928	1,059,118	7,493

Source Bungoma District Development Plan, 2009

From the statistics above, it is notable that the female population is slightly higher than that of males. This could be explained by both mobility and average life expectancy of the area.

Statistical analysis given could also explain the prevalence of circumcision among *the Bukusu people*. Bungoma District was estimated to have an adult population of 1.2 million by 2012. This figure would comprise of 46.3% male and 53.7% female.

3.3 Target Population

The Bukusu boys undergoing circumcision, their parents, circumcisers, Church and cultural leaders thus the respondents/participants and government officials formed the target population. According to Festnger (2005:15), "Population is the entire pool of subjects or participants that have common characteristics that create interest to the research". According to Bungoma District Development Plan, 2012, there were 487,463 males in Bungoma County of which 16, 123 were between the ages 12 – 18 years. This study was about Bukusu male ritual circumcision and it targeted a small section of the entire population who had information about Bukusu male ritual circumcision. However, church leaders and other opinion leaders among the Bukusu were involved in the study to ensure a balanced view on the subject. Due to the nature of the study, kinds of data generated and qualitative approach chosen, the researcher did not see statistical data to be of great consequence. The government officials, initiates, circumcisers, parents, cultural elders and church leaders among the Bukusu people became the focus of this study's unit of observation.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size.

Singleton (1988) describes a sample design as a part of the research design that indicates how cases are to be selected for interviews. A combination of personal inquiry and self-selection sampling technique were employed to draw a sample size of 186 respondents. The researcher contacted respondents he knew who in the end led him to others. The researcher employed snowball sampling techniques to get to the respondents who would provide relevant

information. This means that respondents were hand-picked because of their experience and insight regarding male ritual circumcision among the *Bukusu people* (cf. Kinoti 1998). This research being qualitative that intended to explore the experiences of people about Bukusu male ritual circumcision in-depth, the researcher worked with a small number of respondents (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Bungoma County was selected because of several reasons. First, there is a prevalence of the male circumcision phenomenon in this area. Second, due to its rural and peasant proletarian nature, its people, the *Bukusu*, are culturally and religiously homogeneous. Third, the researcher as a native of this area is fluent in *Lubukusu*, the language of the *Bukusu* people. This saved on time and resource since there was no need for translator and already had contacts of potential respondents.

Four denominations that represent different shades of Christianity were Friends Church, The Anglican, The Catholic and the Pentecostals have the highest numerical strength within *Bungoma County*, were selected to give a picture of Christian influence on Bukusu male ritual circumcision whereas the Pentecostal Assemblies of God representing the new religious movements and Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa. A total of 186 respondents were involved in this current research. 50 respondents were purposively selected and categorized as follows: 12 (Twelve) initiates, 8 (Eight) cultural informants, 14 (Fourteen) church/religious leaders, 8 (Eight) parents, and 5 (Five) circumcisers, 1(one) social worker, 1(one) gender officer, and 1(one) nurse were interviewed and engaged in Focus Group Discussions. In addition to the 50 respondents sampled purposively, a total of 136 selected respondents were selected by snowball sampling to whom questionnaires were also assigned.

Sampling was undertaken as follows: First for initiates before and after circumcision. The researcher began by writing down the names of the initiates that the researcher knew or were

suggested to him through his contact persons. Their age, and location (Kanduyi, Kimilili, Chwele, Mount Elgon, Tongaren and Webuye sub counties) were specific characteristic descriptions. It is worth noting that the age threshold for participating in this research was 18 years. Then from that pool the researcher picked the ones that were representative as on the table below;

Table 3.2: Representation of the initiates

Initiates' Age	Total
10 - 12	4
11 -15	6
16 - 18	2
Total	12

Source: Researcher, 2018

The above table shows the age representation of the selected initiates that participated in this research. Second is the sample for church and religious leaders. The rationale of the selection was prompting that the researcher was to work with those who were conversant with circumcision issues among the *Bukusu* in order to provide a balanced perspective on the subject. The leaders who were accessible, available and willing to participate in the study were selected. The sample for church/religious leaders was selected by considering denominational representation in the study area. Table 3.3 provided information on the selection of the participating denominational leaders. The selection of denomination was based on its shade and strength in the study area. This explains the selection of the Friends - Quakers, Anglican, Catholic, and Pentecostal. Willingness and availability to participate in the study was by choice.

The selection of participating was based on denominational seniority both in age and position and availability. Hence, the senior most, willing and available denominational leaders, women leaders and pastors(s) of the participating denominations were selected. The researcher pre-

determined to work with a number of 14 (Fourteen) denominational leaders according to denominational numerical strength as illustrated in the Table 3.3 below:

Table 3.3: Representation of church Leaders

Church/Religious Leaders	Total
Friends Church (1 Senior Officer: 1 Woman Leader & 3 pastors)	5
Catholic (1 Senior Officer, 1 women leader & 2 pastors)	4
The Anglican (1 Senior Officer, 1 Woman leader & 1 pastor)	3
The Pentecostal representation: 2 Pastors	2
Total	14

Source: Researcher, 2018

The above table shows the denominational representation of the leaders that participated in this research.

Finally, the sample for the Cultural elders, parents and government officers were drawn as follows: The researcher had the contact of some of the members of the *Bukusu* elders council which comprises of twenty members' sample of five elders was drawn to facilitate a focus group of four members and an informant on the *Bukusu* culture on Male ritual circumcision. The sample selection was drawn based on geographic location, wealth of knowledge on the subject, accessibility, availability and willingness to participate in this study. Thus, the most knowledgeable, from the peers perspective, yet well-located elders were selected to participate. Circumcisers, parents, and a nurse in charge of reproductive health attached at Bungoma County Referral Hospital were purposefully sampled to provide information on the status of their interaction with circumcised boys who are brought for medication in the course of their work. Hence, Table 3.4 below is a tabulation of these sample categories:

Table 3.4: Representation of *Bukusu* Culture Experts (elders), Government officer, Health and Social Workers

Designation	Total
Culture Experts (On Bukusu male ritual circumcision) 8 parents, 5 circumcisers, and 8 cultural elders	21
Social Worker	1
Government official(County Gender &Social Development Officer)	1
1 Health Worker	1
Total	24

Source: Researcher, 2018

The above table shows the other resource persons involved in this research in order to provide an expert view.

The sampling strategy employed was purposive non-probabilistic informed by the general presence of specific shade of informants as represented by the selected categories among the Bukusu and a special knowledge a particular respondents had pertaining the subject of study. The small sample size is recommended in qualitative study for its effectiveness to explore in-depth of the subject and not for generalization (Fain , 2013). The researcher chose to work with a sample size of 186 respondents: 136 respondents; 12 initiates; 14 church/religious leaders, and 24 experts on Bukusu culture and circumcision ritual who included 1 Gender & Social Development Officer and 1 Reproductive Health Nurse. They were selected to provide expert information on Bukusu male ritual circumcision, *Bukusu* culture male ritual circumcision and the influence of Christianity and modernity. It is also worth noting that to the sample size in qualitative study do not automatically control the quality of importance to the study (Holloway &Wheeler ,2013).

FIGURE 3.1: The researcher’s illustration of the interaction between purposive and snowball sampling techniques



Source: Researcher, June, 2018

Figure 3.1 shows the interface between Purposive and Snowball sampling techniques as was used to identify respondents including cultural leaders, village elders, circumcisers, initiates and their parents, and provincial administration that may have information related to this study. Among other key informants were cultural consultants. Audio recordings were done to capture individual interviews. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), “in this method, initial subjects with the desired characteristics are identified using the purposeful sampling technique. The few identified subjects name others that they know have the required characteristics until the researcher gets the number of cases he or she requires (p. 51)”. In this current study, the researcher used snowball sampling by identifying some of the Bukusu students at Friends Theological College – Kaimosi (where the researcher is a lecturer) whose neighbours were to be circumcised. This was done from January to March, 2018. These students informed the initiates’ parents or guardians of the intended study and its general objectives. Between April and June, 2018, the researcher organized meetings/sessions with the initiates’ parents with whom he discussed the issue and further requested them to identify key informants, who mainly included elders from the respective localities that were knowledgeable in the study area. Moreover, the researcher

requested the initiates' parents to identify local government officials such as village elders, chiefs and Members of County Assemblies who had crucial and relevant information in regard to this study.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

The current study explored a variety of subtopic with different subthemes related to Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital. Methods employed to collect data included were preferred for their ability to generate a lot of information quickly from a relatively small sample. They are also best in exploring personal information, beliefs, opinions attitudes, perceptions within a community due to an in-depth interaction. They are flexible and enhance rapport between the researcher and respondents (Maseno, 2014).

3.5.1 Interview Schedule

Interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on a particular idea, program or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). It is a self-report instrument used for gathering information about the variable of interest to an investigator. It is preferred because of its flexibility since questions can be repeated or explained to the interviewee (Gall & Borg, 2003). Hence, as rightly observed, it is the only way the evaluator can fully explore and understand the audiences' perspective and the reason for it (Obwono, 2011).

The interview schedules (appendices 3 - 5) were administered accordingly to respondents and other key informants by the researcher. These comprised of 186 respondents of whom 50 were key informants who were purposively selected and categorized as follows: 12 (Twelve) initiates, 8 (Eight) cultural informants, 14 (Fourteen) church/religious leaders, 8 (Eight) parents, and 5 (Five) circumcisers, 1(one) social worker, 1(one) gender officer, and 1(one) nurse were

interviewed and engaged in Focus Group Discussions. They provided information relating to the traditional cultural and prevailing practice and behaviour relating to Bukusu male ritual circumcision as enshrined in its teaching, practice and behaviour relating to male ritual circumcision among the Bukusu people of Bungoma County.

This being unstructured interview, the researcher followed up the answers from time to time whenever the researcher felt that the information given is inadequate or the respondent did not understand the question. Notes were taken and audio recording undertaken as circumstances would allow. The recorded information was then transcribed ready for analysis. Open-ended questions focusing on the research objectives were employed. Mason (2000) observes, “they left open to enable the interviewees express their perspectives. More often they would come up with a new perspective not captured in the instrument. An interview schedule with open-ended questions differs from the more structured composition and uniform style of the survey interview” (p. 18). The purpose of this approach is to make it more approachable as Mason (2000) again observes, “This approach made the interview interactive, situational and have a generative approach to the acquisition of data. The questions in the schedule require the respondents to divulge information on culture as a changing phenomenon” (p. 67) in reference to the organization and practice of the Bukusu circumcision ceremony in which the ritual under investigation in this study belongs. All the respondents were successfully interviewed.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussion was preferred because of its ability to explore beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in a target group (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). It encourages natural communication as a result of its comfortable setting. It also gives a representative view thus best for capturing

feelings, attitudes, perceptions and motives related Bukusu male circumcision without injuring participants moral civility.

There were a total of 5 (five) main Focus groups formed: 2 (two) for the initiates (6 at Lugulu and 6 at Kimilili), 1(one) for 14 Church/Religious leaders, 1(one) 16 for Experts on Bukusu culture. Each of the Focus Groups discussed all the questions such as in (appendix 3 - 5) as guided by the topics and themes drawn from the findings of the interviews and secondary data. However, special attention was given to the area of expertise of each group; Church leaders and cultural expert groups who met once on (8/8/18 and 24/8/18 respectively) while the 5 (five) circumcisers met on (6/8/18 &2/4/18) and the 12 initiates met on (Lugulu 25/8/18 and 3/4/18; Kimilili on 20/7/18 and 24 /8/18) respectively. Groups met twice due to the bulk of information that was generated. I had other Focus Group Discussions as need arose on different dates.

All FGDs were conducted in community spaces, except for the elders who met at one of the elders home due to his ill health. Kimilili initiates preferred to meet at the ICEFEM Mission station in one of the halls that was graciously reserved and set by one of the discussants who works there. The same hall was also utilized by the church leader's Focus group. The church and religious leaders Focus Group met at Bungoma County in the Gender, Social and Development office Boardroom that they reserved for that purpose. The Lugulu initiates were hosted by one of the elderly circumciser. His spacious house and compound provided a serene environment for discussion. All discussants agreed to meet as from 10 a.m but most of the Discussants would come in half to one hour late. This always caused delays because discussions could only commence after every one had arrived. Each of the eight discussions could only commence after every one had arrived. Each of the eight discussions lasted between two to three hours depending on the group. The cultural experts and elders and the initiates groups were the most fruitful and

longer. The researcher moderated the discussions ensuring a maximum participation of respondents and that the agenda were maintained and questions were fully discussed. The researcher took as much as possible while recording some incidence as deemed fit.

3.5.3 Observation method

The researcher employed observation as a major tool. He observed the public pronouncements, circumcision acts, the slaughtering of animals and the last trip from the river. Kothari (1990) argues, “Observation method is the most commonly used method especially in studies relating to behavioural sciences. In a way we all observe things around us, but this sort of observation is not scientific observation. Observation becomes a scientific tool and the method of data collection for the researcher when it serves a formulated research purpose, is systematically planned and is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability” (p. 118). Kothari agrees with Binnet (2003) who says, “observation is used as a research technique when data on actual practices are required. Like questionnaires, observation generates factual information rather than explanations (p. 97)”. The researcher concurs with the foregoing views, because without conclusive observation, one cannot come out with coherent information in research. Patton (1990) adds, “the purpose of participant observation is to develop an insider’s view of the setting and persons under study (p. 116)”. To get the inside story, the researcher participated in singing and giving instructions to the initiates upon their departure from seclusion homes.

3.5.4 Secondary data

Finally, the researcher undertook extensive library research to enable him understand the concept involved in the study and to compare them with what was emerging from the field research in order to make recommendations. Literature related to male ritual circumcision and social capital was reviewed in an effort to ascertain the prevailing cultural perceptions and

attitudes on Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital. Both published and unpublished masters and PhD thesis, books, articles, and reports were reviewed. Library research mainly focused on the elements of social capital as generated by the process of male ritual circumcision. But other related issues that add to the understanding of this phenomenon were considered. The researcher carefully took and recorded notes under specific themes as they emerged in the course of the study. Field and library research were carried out concurrently to gather relevant information to this study. Libraries of Friends Theological College, School of Graduate Studies of Maseno University, Nairobi University, Masinde Muliro University of science and Technology, Kaimosi Friends University College and Research were visited for both print and electronic collections.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Willington (2000) in his book, *Educational Research: Contemporary Issues and practical Approaches*, outline four stages in preparing and carrying out interviews. These include preparation, piloting, selection and interviewing. In the piloting stage, the questions are scrutinized and revised for meaning and attitude they generate. In this study, the researcher took cognizance of these stages to ensure validity and reliability. Validity and reliability of investigations results are foundational considerations for a research enterprise. Validity herein refers to the degree to which results obtained from analysis of data represents the extent at which Bukusu male ritual circumcision generates social capital in the social economy among the Bukusu people of Bungoma County. The issue at stake here is whether right data being collected in the right way.

It deals with the accuracy of data obtained. Face validity is the degree to which a test appears to cover the relevant content it purport to (Robson, 2002) was employed. Mugenda and Mugenda

(2003) advocates for validity of the instruments be checked by the experts or supervisors. To verify the validity of the research instruments be checked by the experts or supervisors. To verify the validity of the research instruments were presented to my supervisors and later the examination panel comprising of lecturers in department of Education and Social Sciences of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology for them to judge and make recommendation for adjustment before they were fully engaged in the field. The corrections and recommendations made were factored into crafting of the final draft that was employed in the field. Furthermore, the preliminary data collected and analysed was presented to the participants in this study to ascertain that it is a true representation of the phenomenon to of their knowledge.

Reliability is the degree to which research instruments yield consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugendi &Mugendi,1999 cf. Robson ,2002). The concern here is as to whether if the same approach considered was taken again, the same data on male ritual circumcision among *Bukusu people* would be derived .To ensure reliability, interviews that establishes rapport and engages the interviewee schedules in the appendences were piloted with a small sample that was not part of the actual study. During the piloting stage, the researcher was also checking for methods of opening interviews that establishes rapport and engages the interviewee (Gall &Borg, 2003).The interview questions were then fine-tuned to produce the data that addresses the research questions.

Perakyla (1997)), “it is possible to ensure validity of qualitative data if the researcher follows procedures that minimize biases. In this study, several strategies were used to ensure the accuracy of the findings. Data collected through different techniques like observation, and interviews were triangulated to build coherent justification for various themes (p. 22)”. The researcher and assistants compared notes at the end of every data collection to ensure that what is

recorded is not subject to personal bias. Also, audio recorded data was used in cases where there was uncertainty or incomprehension of the respondents' actual words. Since the research assistants are known within the study area, most respondents were willing to provide the necessary information. The research assistants also followed similar interview guides and the researcher impressed upon them to keep accurate and thorough field notes.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher proceeded data collection by first acquiring a clearance from the University (Appendix 9). This letter was used to obtain research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and innovation to conduct research, and letters of authorization from Bungoma County Commissioner and the Bungoma County Directors of Education (Appendices 8,9 and 10). The researcher, having been licensed to carry out research, sought the consent from the participants and other informants to participate voluntarily (cf. Appendix 14).

Interview schedules were administered to the respondents by the researcher at an appointed time and place (see Tables: 3.2 and 3.3 and 3.4). The same was done for the FGDs which met as indicated under Focus Group Discussions above. Fieldwork time was spent interviewing and moderating discussions with an aim of gathering data that would effectively meet the objectives of the study. The researcher always concluded interview and discussion session by expressing gratitude to the participants for finding time and availing a wealth of information and knowledge. Field and library research were carried out concurrently to gather relevant information to this study. Libraries of Friends Theological College, School of Graduate Studies of Maseno University, Nairobi University, Masinde Muliro University of science and Technology, Kaimosi Friends University College and Research were visited for both print and electronic collections.

3.8 Methods of Data Analysis

Merriam describes data as “the process of making sense out of ones data. In the process of analysis, data are consolidated, and to some extent interpreted. In qualitative inquiry, data collection and analysis is normally a simultaneous process (Merriam ,1988: 127-130)”. Deductive and inductive methods of data analysis were employed. This being a descriptive research that employs interactions and dialogue with the transcripts from mother tongue to English. Data analysis is about classification of the data into particular recurrent themes and grouping them appropriately. Patterns are then identified and described as far as possible from participants’ perspective. Finally, the researcher tries to understand and explain the patterns and themes, then arrange them in categories (Cresswell, 2003). Data collected through interviews, Focus Group Discussions and Library research was assembled and grouped individually as relating to Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital Among the Bukusu people of Bungoma County: A cultural Autopsy in the Kenyan Context. Common themes were identified by trawling and searching for key words and comments and subsequently and theme apportioned into categories and subcategories (cf. Doodley, 2004).

The researcher critically read and identified major themes and categorized them according to how they relate to the main variables – Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital as presented in chapters four through six. Furthermore, the researcher undertook an analysis and interpretation of the data using the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for this study. This process involved a critical examination and evaluation of the general cultural understanding, beliefs and practice of Bukusu male ritual circumcision. This was scrutinized in relation to its teachings to avoid precipitations and prejudice and hence avoiding conclusions that are more or beyond that, which is gathered. The analysis of the ritual situation employed material made

available by the informants. Apart from his analysis, the researcher sought critically for analysis of similar themes from the sources he had read. Hence the analysis entailed a critical comparative study of opinions to grasp popular opinions from respondents and literary works perceived through the lenses of the study conceptual framework and theoretical frameworks. The findings were then synthesized systematically and compiled logically.

After the fieldwork, data collected from documentary sources and the field was qualitatively analysed. Here the information on audiotapes was edited and interviews summarized and coded to come up with clear understandable statements and conclusions. Descriptive data and evidence relating to each research question was classified into distinctive classes based on their common qualitative characteristics. Being basically a qualitative research, the results were discussed in a narrative manner. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), “observe that the units of analysis, also called the units of statistical analysis refers to those units that we initially describe for the purpose of aggregating their characteristics in order to describe some larger group or abstract phenomenon (p. 109)”. In this study, the main units of analysis were derived from the form, content and performance of the cultural practice of male circumcision being studied. “Specifically, the main units were: Identification of cultural and religious images, the people’s view of the practice of circumcision, and lastly analysis of circumcision in the light of the formation of social capital.”

3.9 Reporting Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussions of the findings were presented as indicated in chapters 4, 5, and 6 through descriptive design as narrated themes. The reporting was in the form of statement. This was used to evaluate and integrate the relationship of independent variables to dependent variables. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were drawn according to findings of the study in light of the objectives, research questions and conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

The findings of this study are given in seven chapters as follows: Introduction, literature review, methodology, philosophies, attitudes, and perceptions about Bukusu male ritual circumcision, Elements and meaning of social capital in reference to Bukusu male ritual circumcision, the role Bukusu male ritual circumcision in generating social capital in the social economy, and finally the conclusion and recommendations. Each chapter's length was determined by the amount of data generated on the subject both from primary and secondary sources.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is a research process that deals with matters of integrity and protection of the respondents' dignity. Integrity in research is where the work is original, authentic, academic and scientific inquiry. The researcher preceded the exercise with clear consciousness of these requirements. A research process involves a lot of people and data that is sensitive. Caution was taken to protect the integrity and personal lives of those involved in one way or the other. This study took cognizance of ethical issues involved in research process and ensured due process is followed. This included acquiring a letter of introduction from the university (Appendix 9). This letter was to be used to obtain a research permit from NACOSTI (Appendix 10) and clearance letter from Bungoma County Commissioner and the County Director of Education (Appendices 11 – 12) to conduct research. The researcher, having been licensed to carry out research, sought the consent from the participants to participate voluntarily (see Appendix 14). This was in keeping with Biber (2005) who notes that in undertaking a study, participants' consent is a must.

As a matter of fact, having access to confidential data the researcher is bound by the professional code to respect the conditions set out in the research clearance permit. Consequently, the researcher ensured confidentiality and always concealed identity of informants when dealing with sensitive information by using the first and last letter of their first name. In addition, the

researcher adhered to professional competence rule by acting in no other capacity other than that of a researcher. Furthermore, the researcher held with respect other persons' rights, dignity and diversity of values, attitudes and opinions that differed from his.

3.11 Pretesting of the Study

Blanche (2006) observes, "To ensure reliability and validity, a pilot study is conducted in order to pre-test the research instrument, identify its appropriateness and measure its intended purpose. Pre-testing the questionnaire provides a channel to discover whether the questionnaire was adequately prepared. Moreover, it presents a platform for refining the structure and order of the questions, rephrasing the questions as well as eliminating vague areas and repetitions (p. 29). In November, 2017, a pilot study was undertaken with 36 students of Friends Theological College. This aided in exploring to ascertain the more appropriate procedure to apply in data collection from the respondents. This enabled the researcher to settle on the procedure that was employed for the eight months of field work included; identifying respondents, making initial contacts, familiarization and booking appointment. However, due to the nature of the study, the prospective participants were hesitant for fear of the nature of the questions and the imminent engagements that would come. Even though, when the researcher talked to them and clarified the intent of study, they were all willing to participate objectively. This was arranged to be in one forum at Friends Theological College chapel where the briefing was done; and there was an allowance for questions in case something needed to be clarified. All the participants were asked to convene again at the same venue to submit their finding. The findings were a platform upon which the subsequent fully fledged research was based. All the research instruments employed were valid and reliable because they achieved the aim they were set for.

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research methodology pertinent to the study has been discussed. In summary, focus was put on the research design: Descriptive research approach, the qualitative dimensions of case study research and research strategy. The effectiveness of the two sampling methods were used namely: snowball and purposive sampling has also been discussed together with data validity, processing and analysis procedures. Moreover, data collection methods, such as interview, observations and content analysis was evaluated in terms of how they are effectively used. Lastly, while discussing the scope and limitations of the study, delimitations of the study and its impediments will be illuminated. The findings of the study are presented in chapter four, five, and six.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PHILOSOPHY, PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE ABOUT BUKUSU MALE

RITUAL CIRCUMCISION

This chapter presents the philosophies, attitudes and perceptions about Bukusu male ritual circumcision in general as reflected upon by the respondents to this study. This is an attempt to realize objective one and answer to research question one of the study. The first step taken was to give a history and characterization of Bukusu people. This was followed by the mythical origins of the Bukusu male ritual circumcision. An intent of engagement with the participants was drawn to give reflection on various themes in this chapter. The study focused on the implications of age-set interactions, ritual meat and its symbolic meaning and registration of practitioners. There was need to give a description and stages of Bukusu male ritual circumcision which include formal entry into seclusion, the symbolism and messages transmitted during the period of seclusion, administration of the oath, circumcisers and their views about male ritual circumcision. It was deemed prudent to discuss the arising opposition against male ritual circumcision, and finally, alternative clinical circumcision.

4.1 The Bukusu people

According to Makila (1978), “The Bukusu people are one of the seventeen sub-tribes that comprise the larger Luyhia cluster of the interlacustrine Bantu tribes of East Africa” (p. 116). Specifically, they inhabit Bungoma County of Western Kenya. The sub-tribes of the Luhya people tribe are: “Tiriki, Maragoli, Banyala, Bakhayo, Maraki, Samia, Kisa, Itakho, Bachoch, Kabras, Tachoni, Wanga, Khayo, Banyore, Isukha, and Marama. Bungoma County is bordered Kakamenga County in the east, Busia County in the south, and Transzoia in the north” as shown in maps 1.1 and 1.2. The current research was conducted in Bungoma County in areas

that are traditionally known to practice male ritual circumcision actively. They include, Kanduyi, Kimilili, Sirisia, Tongaren, and Webuye. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, “Bungoma is well-endowed with many rivers and streams, and has open grasslands that in some places are interrupted by rocky hills and phases of forests. The land in Bungoma is fertile and well-watered, experiencing minimal instances of drought. The main rain seasons occur in the months of March to August. The soil is largely an association of dark clays and dark-brown loams, all of them belonging to the well-drained soil types”(Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009). The soils are highly classified as agricultural potential. These conditions contribute immensely to higher crop production and animal husbandry. The animal reared such as cattle, sheep, and goats are majorly used for sacrifice in the event of circumcision ritual. The history of the traditional Bukusu reveals that they had a technique of constructing and living in fortified villages. These were stone walls that were used for security purposes. Behind the walls, populations felt secure from surprise enemy attacks, and they also afforded the maintenance of their social cohesion as they observed their cultural practices. They moved down to their present location around Mount Elgon and Bungoma, they began to live in plain mud-wall houses without fortification. However, they still maintained their cultural practices.

In “*Our rich heritage: Bukusu proverbs,*” Otiende and Sifuna (2003:6) describes the Bukusu as “a very proud people, extremely assertive and very daring”. The Bukusu people are praised for, “their cultural heritage by asserting that their initiation rites, particularly those of circumcision, are designed to bring out toughness and strength in the initiates”.

The research was conducted in Bungoma County in purposively selected areas where circumcision exercises took place. Having employed purposive and snowball sampling, the researcher managed to traverse the County to areas where circumcision was scheduled to take place. Observation, participation, and interviewing of the participants became possible after first

introducing myself and my research study to the offices of the local chiefs and showing them my research permit and ethical clearance letters in order to be allowed to carry out research. Taking Kluckhohn's definition of observation as "conscious and systematic sharing" (Hatch, 2000: 73), the researcher initiated a forum for discussion consisting of 13 adult male participants ranging between 22 to 72 years old whom the researcher had experiences pertaining Bukusu male ritual circumcision. They defined themselves in terms of *bibingilo* (circumcision age-sets) other than dates of birth. They also varied in their levels of education ranging from elementary to graduate level. This forum took place in one of the ceremonial homes after the circumcision rituals. The researcher drew out six major questions for discussion in this forum. These questions emerged from the statement of the problem, research objective one, and research question one in chapter one:

1. What is male ritual circumcision?
2. How important is male ritual circumcision in the contemporary setting?
3. What are the underlying values embedded in the Bukusu male ritual circumcision?
4. Should this practice of ritual circumcision continue in the way it has been from time immemorial or should there be some changes? If so, what should be changed and/or should be maintained, and why?
5. Why do you think it is important for the male ritual circumcision rites to be recognized by the County and National governments?
6. What aspects of the Bukusu male ritual circumcision appear retrogressive that requires removal?

4.2 Mythical origins of Bukusu male ritual circumcision

According to Phares Wafula, Philip Wekesa, and Titus Makhino (2017), “The origin of the Bukusu circumcision ritual is associated to a man called Mango”. He set out on a mission to kill a snake that terrorized people. To many people, this historicity about the serpent that terrorized people has for a long time been handled with a lot of obsession. The obsession is not very significant; what is most important is to trace the origin of this fundamental ritual. The attempt to kill the snake was not an easy venture for Mango. As an astute warrior, he had to strategize in order realize his mission.

Circumcision is an invaluable ritual; that whenever it is taking place, there is a lot off merry making – People eat and drink. They interact in different ways and friendship is established. Lonratt (2004) observes, “the eve of circumcision is characterized by feasting, drinking beer, singing, dancing and mocking the initiate and his parents. In a few cases, the participants and the initiate go to sleep after midnight for about three hours. More often, the singing and dancing goes on up to dawn. In the morning between five and six O’clock, the initiate is taken to the river (*sietosi*) where he is smeared with cold mud and taken back home for circumcision. It is believed that the morning chill coupled with cold mud contribute to making the body numb and reducing the pain. It is noteworthy that unlike the Tiriki and the Xhosa circumcision rituals, the Bukusu circumcision rituals are a public function that are not a preserve for a few people mostly male members of the society. For instance, women then and children are allowed to accompany the initiate in all stages of the ritual. However, they are not given leading roles especially as song leaders. Moreover, especially on the circumcision day, they are not allowed to be too close to the initiate or even walk ahead of the processions. It is arguable that is so because of the indelible effect circumcision has on their personhood.

On this very aspect, Phares Wafula, a key cultural; informant observes that women and children are not allowed to participate and watch all the events, including watching the initiate when he is naked to symbolize the fact that at this stage he still ‘a child’ and he deserves no respect. It is only after he bravely undergoes circumcision that he is accepted and respected as a full member of the Bukusu community. This dimension also inspires the initiate to be more eager to go through the circumcision process so that he can do away with the constant embarrassment.

4.3 Implications of Age-Set Experiential interactions

The major questions in this chapter were in relation to the objectives and the statement of the problem. They were addressed to forum members in accordance with seniority of circumcision age-set and drew varied responses. The questions were harmonized with those on questionnaires to ensure that there is no mix up and that, the respondents are not confused. The forum was audio recorded. Table 4.1 below shows the distribution of the participants categorized in their circumcision age-sets. The information acquired from them was transcribed.

TABLE NO. 4.1: *Circumcision Age-set distribution of forum participants*

AGE-SET	AGE-SET NUMBER	YEAR OF CIRCUMCISION	LEVEL OF EDUCATION
Nyange	4	1954	Elementary
Maina	3	1964	Intermediate
Maina	5	1968	Elementary
Maina	5	1968	O’Level, P2 teacher
Chuma	2	1974	Graduate
Chuma	3	1976	O’Level
Chuma	3	1976	Form Two
Chuma	5	1980	P1 Teacher
Chuma	5	1980	Class Seven
Chuma	6	1982	P1 Teacher
Sawa	1	1986	Graduate
Sawa	2	1988	O’Level
Sawa	3	1990	Graduate

The *Nyange* was represented by one participant of age-set number 4. Maina was represented by three while Chuma had the highest representation on the forum ranging from 1974 to 1982 circumcision years.

The research technique used in this procedure was interviewing. As Rubin and Rubin (1995:90) state, each participant interviewed brought to the research his or her own experiences and opinions. And as Rubin still observes, these individual experiences and opinions do not compete against each other. No particular experience or opinion was treated as more accurate than the other. These interviews were meant to establish right and wrong answers, experiences, or opinions to the questions posed. In this very exercise, the researcher used these interviews as a means to explore social capital or ways of learning embedded in circumcision rituals. The researcher used Rubin and Rubin's (1995) ideas of mixing voices as his guiding principle. Since the interviews were dialogical, mixing of the voices of the researcher and those of the participants was an essential part of the exercise. Relying on the experiences and opinions of the elderly and not mixing ideas and experiences of the youth would yield imbalanced results. Spradley (1980) argues, "This was a method by which the researcher got to understand the people's feelings in the community. In cultural anthropology, such understanding comes about in three aspects: what people know; what people do; and things that people make use of (p. 11)".

Based on the data analysis, it is indicative that the Bukusu community has a culture that is dynamic. It can be described in Grimes (1995: 153) understanding as, "one of the social world" as opposed to a world in becoming). For Grimes, 'a world in being' is a description of the static in nature, meaning, a world or culture that is devoid of change and growth. Basing on Grime's views therefore, the researcher would render Bukusu culture and other African cultures in equal measure with a characteristic of growth and not stagnation. This growth is manifested in all ages

among the members of the community. A lot of its evidence can be captured through the conversation groups. Conversation groups among the Bukusu community are, “More or less naturally determined by age and division of labor. Boys, for whom this study is all about, look after cattle. They periodically meet at popular joints to engage in the conversations about their endeavors. They commonly share their secrets, joys, and woes. No feelings of intrusion into someone else’s business (Spardley, 1980:112)”. They all have the urge and ambition, and desires. For that reason they share their joys and concerns. The boys’ conversations are reminiscent of the adult men except for their seriousness in the amount of indigenous knowledge they have accumulated throughout the years. It is out of this accumulated knowledge that the researcher sought to tap through a forum that he formulated in one of the ceremonial homes.

Experiences and opinions of the participants on the forum are presented in this section. As Mandela (1994: 22) points out in his memoir that “As a Xhosa, I count my years as man from the date of circumcision”. The participants introduced themselves and gave their experiences and views on the topic in accordance with the seniority of their circumcision age-sets other than their dates of birth:

Peter Wechuli was circumcised in 1954 and his circumcision age-set was Nyange number 4. He named ten of his *babakoki*, colleagues, with whom he was circumcised in that same year in his village. Some of these ten are still living while others have passed on. Wechuli has two wives and is a peasant farmer. He was educated up to the elementary level by a Catholic mission center based in Kabula.

Samuel Onyango is Omumaina number 3 by the circumcision age-set, 1964. He and all those that were circumcised in this year identify themselves as Bamaina. Onyango is a peasant farmer and widower who lives by himself.

Alfred Wakuta introduced himself as son of Lukorito. When the researcher asked him whether it was fine for us to have the interview, he responded in the affirmative. He also gave consent for his real name to be in the researcher's final analysis. He described himself as a cultural man who has studied Bukusu circumcision since his youth. Born in 1951, Wakuta was circumcised on August 13, 1968. He is Maina circumcision age-set. He said that he was an overgrown already married with a child by the time of his circumcision. He got the child out of wedlock with another village girl before he got married. Wakuta sees himself as a man with unique characteristics with the Bukusu community.

When Wakuta started *Khulanga*, summoning relatives and friends, the elders unanimously decided to send his wife away until after the rituals pertaining to what is known as *khukhwalikha*, the coming out of seclusion were performed. After *khukhwalukha*, Wakuta resumed his matrimonial life with his wife and they got twins. During those days in the Bukusu customs, first birth of twins or triplets was considered a curse especially to the husband. Wakuta said that he was given two options by the elders: either to divorce the wife or to have the triplets killed. That was the darkest day in my entire life. And since I loved those kids so much, he said, "I decided to divorce my wife who took the two kids with her." To neutralize the curse, a *ritual known as khusia kumusango* was performed by slaughtering a sheep to remove the curse from him and set him free. Wakuta qualified this action by saying that this belief was ratified by the dying of the man who married his divorced wife even before they got a child together.

In his introduction to African Religion, Mbiti (1975:90) attests to the above belief with an observation, "In other parts of Africa, the twins would be allowed to live." Such were regarded as possessing certain powers from God. In either case, Mbiti argues, "a ritual would be performed either to prevent the misfortune from happening again, to activate the special powers

of the twins” (p. 90) as benevolence to the community. Mbiti gives an example of a certain ethnic group in Uganda who, not only placed higher value on the twins, but also to the umbilical cords, which would be preserved for use in a variety of ceremonies for a number of years (p. 90). Mbiti (1975:90) cites higher infant mortality rate among the twins and triplets as one of the main reasons why such births were disregarded in Africa. He argues that the chances of survival for such cases are by far much less than those of single births. Mbiti (1975:90) continues to argue that:

In practice, the twins and the triplets died more often in infancy than did babies of single births. Therefore, people were shocked when twins or triplets were born, and everyone feared that they would die, which often happened. The frequency of such deaths must have created the belief that it was unfortunate or abnormal to get twins or triplets .

Based on the Bukusu ethnic community as my case study, the researcher would argue at this point that throughout the decades, these beliefs have either become obsolete or they be on the verge of extinction in most parts of Africa. With the coming of modern forms of medical care, many twins and triplets have been born and survived in the African communities than ever before. In the researcher’s observation, one major factor that may have contributed to the twin and triplet mortality rate was complications expectant mothers underwent during delivery.

As already seen in the literature review, Bukusu boys are normally circumcised “between the ages of 12-15 years of age”. Therefore, I asked Wakuta what caused him to delay in his circumcision. He responded by saying that these days, boys were circumcised during a very mature age. A twelve year old was considered a child, and therefore would not be allowed to be circumcised. Wakuta notes that, “When I was 15 years old, I went to my grandfather and uncles and I asked permission to get circumcised. The go-ahead was given but a few days, I suddenly lost my spirit and morale” said Wakuta. In retrospect, according to Wakuta, any teenage boy who

publicly announced his intention to be circumcised and eventually lost interest was later ambushed and circumcised by force. To avoid this scenario that came with shame and stigma, Wakuta decided to run away from home and went to Lugari to work on road construction under the management of the foreign contractors. Two years later, when his family learned where he was, they summoned him back home. While back at his grandmother's house, Wakuta learned a confessional secret from his grandmother.

The reason why Wakuta lost interest rather morale in getting circumcised and subsequently ran away was that his grandmother fed him with *etiang'I mubusuma* (a herbal drug in cornmeal) which took away the morale and spirit. The following is his grandmother's confession as told by Wakuta himself:

After I came from Lugari, my grandmother told me, 'Son of my daughter, I can see that you become a man without having been made a man (referring to his wife and the baby) in accordance with our Bukusu tradition. I took responsibility for the loss of your morale and spirit during the previous circumcision season. I still have the ability to bring back your spirit'. Therefore, she prepared a portion of Ugali lased with a concoction of a herbal drug. Immediately after dinner, I felt my spirit reactivated, and I began looking for the bells in readiness for summoning the relatives (Alfred Wakuta).

When the researcher asked Wakuta the reason why his grandmother de-spirited him in the past circumcision season, he said that she simply did not have enough grain in her granary to make beer for the ceremonies. After discussing at length about his circumcision, the researcher changed the subject and compelled members on the forum to focus the discussion about formal and informal education. The discussion took the question and answer format bas follows. 'Q' stands for question while 'A' stands for answers from members.

Q. Alfred Wakuta! At the beginning of our discussion, you mentioned that you have been studying Bukusu culture. In which way have you been doing this?

A. By attending and participating in a variety of cultural functions; attending local authority meetings; taking a leading role in the presidential dancing troupe from the then Bugoma District. I am also qualified in reading of the animal entrails and interpreting the message to the concerned parties at different ritual functions.

Q.James Wasike, did you attend any formal schooling?"

A. Yes! I went to Lwanda Primary School up to class four. During that time school education was divided into two sections, elementary and intermediate. The former began from class one to class four, while the latter started from class five to class eight.

Q. What made you stop at class four?

A. I would say I quit school after I was circumcised, but this was not the main reason. In every group, there is a personality of influence. In my age group during those days, there was a young man by the name Wafula Mutekhele from the Baala clan. He was the same age as many of us, but by the time I got circumcised, Wafula Mutekhele was already circumcised in 1964. He was the best footballer in our location and everyone looked up to him. When Mutekhele passed his elementary exam and got selected to join Bukembe intermediate, his father refused to let him go. Wafula's father feared that formal education was going to do him no good. Therefore, after Wafula who was a role model left school, I and many others of my age group also quit (James Wasike).

Q. What was your occupation after you quit school?

A. Dancing and walking around looking for girls. This is how I ended up marrying several women (J. Wasike).

Q. How did the ritual circumcision and its underlying values (Social Capital) benefit you?

A. For African children, learning does not begin when they go to class one as many people tend to believe nowadays. Boys received their education from their grandfathers, while girls learned from their grandmothers. The climax of indigenous knowledge for boys is at initiation. During my initiation, the first and foremost thing I was taught was respect – for elders, middle age, and the young age; and also respect to other people’s property. I was also taught to make peace with everyone. The Bukusu circumcision ritual is very rich because I vividly remember how I was instructed how to respect the elderly and work hard. Children of these days are not being such instructions and that is why morals in the society have degenerated (Hezron Soita).

Q. Were you given any instructions on how to take care of yourself health wise especially during the time you were nursing the penile wound?

A. I was given general knowledge on health care for myself during the healing process. I was taught to lie on my back in order to avoid my penile wound from sticking on my thighs. If it got stuck on the thighs, one would experience excruciating pain when separating it from the thigh skin. I was told to shake one of the bells I used during summoning of the relatives whenever there was lightening. This was a message to announce to the ancestors about my helpless situation. I was also taught to be gentle in everything – never to hit anything except when in danger such as if a snake charged towards me. We were told not to destroy forests anyhow because we will be destroying herbal medicine, which will be used for medication (Hezron Soita).

Q. What is your opinion on the validity of male ritual circumcision in this modern time?

A. I think modernity has brought with a lot of changes that have impacted the traditional male circumcision. I am of the view that traditional male circumcision should continue but only by removing what appears retrogressive and pervasive. The crudest aspects that casts a bad image to this ritual. I suggest that aspects of seclusion and friendly aspects should be maintained in this ritual because of the immense social capital that underlies it (Didymus Khwatenge).

Q. Personally, how have you benefited from this ritual circumcision as a person who underwent it?

A. During my time, I really took seriously what I was told during the period of seclusion and when I was being reintegrated back to the society. I was taught how to be economically independent and fend for the family. That is what am still holding on. I was also taught how to respect other people especially the elderly. By respecting people, I was to receive respect in equal measure. I remember my uncle telling me to work hard because poverty is a disgrace to a person and the community as a whole. Indeed, I embraced that and as I am speaking now I have been able to educate my children up to university out of the hard work. I have been a peasant farmer in cattle, maize, and sugarcane. I was given gifts by Nzoia Sugar Company for being the best farmer; and this is attributed to the virtue of hard work that I was told embrace (Samuel Onyango).

Q. How do you describe your relationship with the female gender during your time of seclusion and after seclusion?

A. We are told to keep away from the rain, cattle, and the female sex, especially adolescent girls and young adult women. The speed at which we ran away from rain and cattle was the speed we used to run away from women. This was to keep the neophytes from getting aroused at the sight of female sex. Even though, it was the neophyte's responsibility to yield, the females were also

told to respect and keep a distance whenever they spotted a neophyte in the way. Keeping away from cattle was away to ensure the neophyte's safety (Jamin Okwisia).

James Wasike is a primary school teacher by profession and was circumcised in 1968. His circumcision age set is known as *Simaina* number 5. He was circumcised in the same year with M. Masinde, the host of the feast where this forum took place. In the Bukusu custom, Wasike was in that home as *bakoki* (*circumcised in the same year*). The researcher asked Wasike a question as to whether he saw or sensed any differences between the old and the contemporary ways by which circumcision ceremonies were conducted among the Bukusu. He responded by saying "Yes, there are differences in style especially in the way ceremonies are conducted, particularly in the singing". Wasike was more emphatic especially when he pointed out the circumcision songs sang nowadays at the circumcision, ceremonies have no moral instruction, and that many of them are meaningless, unethical, irrelevant and they are punctuated by obscene language. He said that there are traditional and contemporary circumcision songs. The former carried good moral teachings while the latter are imbedded with meaningless phrase and obscene language.

Wasike continued in his emphases that in the past, at the traditional male circumcision ceremonies, people sang songs that pointed to *sichuubo*, post self-realization. He elaborated this by saying that in the past, some circumcision songs were sung like war songs stimulated the warriors' wrath. From my observation as I listened to the *sioyaye chant*, the voices in this were decorated with mixed energies from the crowds. These energies were directed in such a way that would hypnotize the initiates mind beyond what the researcher can only describe as the vestibules of self-realization. When these songs were sung, I witnessed some individuals in the crowds being carried away in frenzy or trance (*In Lubukusu, khurenga bukebi*).'' In either way,

Wasike concluded that, Music is powerful tool of communication. It is powerful when it is positive, and it is also powerful when it is negative’.

Mbiti (1975) says, “Most African rituals ,ceremonies, and festivals are always accompanied by singing music” (p24). The Bukusu circumcision ceremony is always vibrant with dancing throughout. The Bukusu word for this exercise is *Khuminya*. A great number of songs are introduced during the ceremony, and these fall into two categories. There are those that are specific to the circumcision ceremony, and those that can be sung at any other ceremony .Nevertheless, either specific or common, all songs always carry meaning. In Mbiti’s (1975) opinion, “Music gives outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life, and it is a powerful means of outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life, and it is a powerful means of communication in African Traditional Life (p.24)”. The wordings in the specific songs of the Bukusu circumcision ceremonies clearly refer to the circumcision ritual itself or at most to the initiate during dawn while on his way to the river goes like this:

Orao babala!babala!haho,eh

Orao bachonga

Translation:

Be brave, put it there and let them (circumcisers) peel it.

Put it there and let them sharpen it!

Each song lasts between ten to fifteen minutes, sometimes longer. Most of them are normally one or two lines repeated again and again with the wording determined by another song randomly started by another soloist and it is immediately picked up by a few singers. Eventually, the previous song gets drowned into the renewed enthusiasm. All the songs are seen as being linked to *esambo ye Babukusu*, (Bukusu old tradition). They are viewed as songs of joy, of thanksgiving to *Wele kulayi*, benevolent god, and of expectation of future prosperity. They look

forward to the life of the boy to be circumcised and backward to the life of the boy to be circumcised and backward to the ancestors, the presumed stewards of that life (Mbiti, 1975). The stress placed upon musical activity (Lubukusu, *khuminya*) as an integral and functioning part of the Bukusu male circumcision ceremony is a feature that provides a stage and a voice to certain members of the crowd at the ceremony. Some songs are used in such ceremonies to express or reveal certain peoples characters that are used in such ceremonies to express or reveal certain people's character that are otherwise hidden to the eyes of the community.

On the question of whether this tradition should be changed or continued in the way it has always been, Wasike was religiously emphatic in his response. He said "Since circumcision was initiated by God on man and sealed by God's command, the tradition is there to stay". He was making references to the Biblical Old Testament narrative of the "sign of the covenant between God and Abraham - *this is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you. Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you (Genesis 17:10 - 11)*". He made this remark while cognizant of the fact that, the Bukusu male ritual circumcision came many years after the Abrahamic circumcision.

Wasike's argument here was most likely that Abraham was circumcised by his wife Sarah. After Abraham circumcised his son Ishmael and all his slaves (Genesis 17:23), it is most likely that he asked his wife to circumcise him after he looked around and saw no one else to perform the act. However, as indicated in the literature review, since the Abrahamic covenant with Yahweh, Jewish name for God (Genesis 17:1-14,21). Bigelow (1995), "Predates Jacob's journey with his people into Abraham's wanderings in the region might have certainly taken him to Egypt. Since there is no any other recorded dialogue between Abraham and Yahweh regarding the

circumcision rite besides the Genesis narrative, again one would still assume that the concept was already in existence. Taking the Old Testament record as literal history, it is therefore most likely that ritual circumcision was already in practice either in Egypt or elsewhere in the region before Abraham (p.116)”. If this so, then it is probable that Abraham hired a circumciser from a foreign land (most likely Egypt) who circumcised him together with his son Ishmael and all his slaves. This speculation points to Wasike’s assertion that the Bukusu Male circumcision tradition stems from the patriarch Abraham, and that it was probably began by a woman as a the circumciser.

Wasike further argued that as long as boys are being born of women in the Bukusu community, then, there is nothing that will deter this tradition from flourishing. The researcher asked what Wasike sees as the greatest obstacle to the traditional male circumcision in our present society. He (Wasike) cited the new age Christianity as the number one obstacle. At that stage, Wasike’s response was intercepted by Christopher Mwanga, one of the junior members on the forum.

Christopher Mwanga *omuchuma* 1974 number 2 by circumcision age set, Christopher Mwanga maintained, “Christianity is not going to overcome our coveted tradition laid down by our ancestors”. He likened both the Bukusu culture and Christianity to a tree and its branches. He argued that branch; however big it is, shall never be mistaken for tree. As long as it still stands on a trunk, it will always be a branch. “In this case,” C. Mwanga argued, “Christianity was founded on our Bukusu tradition and should never be at any given time claim to be in competition with our culture”. However, on the overall, the bottom line for C. Mwanga’s argument here is that as long as it does not interfere with our tradition, Christianity by itself is not bad. It is (Christianity) like a parasite growing in a tree branch that tends to assume control of the nature of a tree and threaten to eventually consume the entire tree,” Mwanga argued. He

emphasized his point by saying, “that is a time when the parasite should be eliminated even if it means cutting the whole branch down in order to save the tree”.

Another point of argument Mwanga voiced out was on economic concerns. He emphasized that one of the reasons why some parents within the Bukusu community take their boys to clinic for circumcision is not because of their Christian Faith or economic constrains, but rather, it is because they are just being mean. The following is his argument in his own words:

People should not hide behind the prevailing economic hardships to kill our tradition. In my view, many parents who are taking their boys to *khulubao* (literally translated as the board, meaning the circumcision bed in hospital) for clinical circumcision are doing so not because they lack what to feed the people or because their Christian faith. Rather, they do so simply because they are naturally mean (Christopher Mwanga).

Nevertheless, as far as J.Wanayama, omumaina number 5, 1968 is concerned, there was no debate. For him, and it was simple and clear. “Despite the many Christian churches we may have, he pointed out, “I shall only go to church to worship but when August (circumcision season) comes around, I will still participate in our traditional circumcision ceremonies.”

Wycliffe Wamalwa describing himself as an *Omuchama* number 3, 1976, and with due respect, he just differed with the views expressed above. “I will be different from others, “he said. The rest of Wamalwa’s argument went as follow:

I consider clinical circumcision okay in our present generation because we are living in very different and difficult days from our forefathers. Unlike the days of our grandfathers and great grandfathers whereby a father would just pick one bull from among the many in *mwitala*, a kraal for slaughter, school fees has become a priority over ritual circumcision. In my view, village circumcisions have become very costly, income for average family has become less and less as the population keeps on increasing. Even though those who are clinically circumcised are highly despised and ridiculed within our Bukusu community, to me, circumcision is circumcision. They are also men just like any other (Wycliffe Wamalwa).

Wycliffe Wamalwa is Wekesa's maternal uncle, the initiate in whose home the ceremony and this forum were being held. Wekesa's mother M.Nanjala is sister to Wamalwa. As a tradition, W. Wamalwa had to slaughter a bull in his home to provide *luliki*, a special piece of meat to his nephew, and also to send some of the meat to the ceremonial home to feed the guests. When the researcher asked him how he feels after having the honors to provide *likhoni* to his sister's son, he was apprehensive in his response. He said, "for a feast like this one to be accomplished, besides the provision of other foods, it requires the slaughter of at least two bulls. Therefore, the parents and uncles have had to gamble between selling the animal in order to meet the demanding school requirements for their children or slaughter them at a ceremony like this one for people to eat".

When the researcher asked W. Wamalwa whether clinical circumcision is offered for free, he quickly responded, "Not exactly. But they relatively have less expense, less headache, and no much hustle". Wamalwa's response on the above question prompted P. Wechuli's reaction. As a senior member on the forum basing on his circumcision age set *Nyange*, 1954, Wechuli observed *that* currently, clinical circumcision is relatively cheap for the following factors: First, it is a new phenomenon to most Bukusu community members: secondly, it is noncompetitive, and third, low charges are used as an enticement to undecided parents, more especially those experiencing economic constraints.

If all of us (Bukusu community) abandon village circumcision and turn to hospitals, expenses are likely to go higher than they are now. And this will even make us to turn to our tradition and perhaps use the simplest means such as slaughtering goats instead of bulls to fulfill the rituals (Peter Wechuli).

Hezron Soita is an *Omuchuma* number 3 by circumcision age set. He was circumcised in 1976. During his contribution to the debate, Soita emphasized the importance of ritual circumcision as opposed to other forms of circumcision among the Bukusu. He observed that one of the most

important factors of village circumcision is the coming together of relatives and friends for a feast. “In our world today, people have become so busy such that meeting together as family and friends has become so rare. Therefore, ritual circumcision ceremonies have remained as the only means by which we meet each other after many years”, Soita observed. Soita amused people especially when he added that also one of the best places where some people who can’t afford to buy meat from the market get to eat some after a long time.

Didymus Khwatenge is among the middle aged members on this forum. He was circumcised in 1980, and he describes himself as *Omuchuma* number 5 in accordance with the numbering of the circumcision age sets. His views on the belief, meaning and continuity of the Bukusu male ritual circumcision were somewhat similar to the previous speaker, Hezron Soita except that Didymus’ were more on the side of historical and educative information. Besides the families and friends meeting together and feasting, Didymus believes that ritual circumcision is one of the means by which the Bukusu history is revived and taught among the present and future generations. “It is a means by which our children and the children to come are reminded of our tradition”, he maintains! When the researcher asked D. Khwatenge about what he thinks of the current economy in relation to the community of these rituals, he replied with what I regarded as a broad based inclusive view:

Economic constraints, or let me just say, poverty is not new to us nor is it a preserve of us as a Bukusu community .All nations of the world, and every ethnic community on earth experiences economic hardships. In my view, ritual circumcision is not dependent on how much people have to eat in a ceremony, but rather, on the maintenance and adherence of the ritual acts themselves (D. Okhwatenge).

Jamin Okwisia whose circumcision age set is *Sichuma* number 5, 1980, views Bukusu male ritual circumcision as a sacred tradition. However, he expressed disappointment with “the outsiders who have come among us and have despised our culture”. But was also quick to add

that this should not deter us from carrying on with our tradition. By “outsiders”, Okwisia was referring to members of other Kenyan ethnic communities that have come into the district either for employment or bought pieces of land and settled among the Bukusu.

Bungoma County has two major industries, Pan African Paper Mill based in Webuye town on the banks of Nzoia River, and Nzoia Sugar Factory in the swamps (formerly known as *Ekewa ya Hututu*) of Kuywa River, in the Western Region of Kenya. Construction for the Pan African Paper Mill began in the late 1960s on the slopes of *Chetambe* hills at the base of the waterfalls locally known as *Mwikhupo*, later christened by European settlers as Fredrick Falls. Supported by the International Finance Corporation, and the Orient Paper Industries Ltd of India, “the Pan African Paper Mill services were commissioned in 1974 by Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of the Republic of Kenya. It had a record of over 4,600 full-time and part-time employees, drawn from different ethnic groups of Kenya (International Finance Corporation, 2004)”.

Nzoia Sugar factory (hereafter Nzoia Sugar Company, NSC) whose construction began in the mid-1970s by a French company called Five Cail Babcock was commissioned by the Kenya government in 1978. The commercial growing of sugarcane by farmers in Bungoma District began in 1976. At its inception, the government of Kenya owned 95 per cent and the remaining shares of five per cent were controlled by agents of the Five Cail Babcock, whose contract ended in the early 1980s. The Factory is located 25km east of Bungoma town, and about 30 km south west of the Pan African Paper Mill in Webuye town (Ossrea, 1992). Both of these industries were started with the objectives of first providing an income for local farmers and thus, boosting their socio-economic status, and secondly by creating employment opportunities in the rural areas of the district. This was also done as an endeavor to minimize the rural urban migration of the male youth from the area to major cities of the country. The 2004 Kenya Central Bureau of

statistics indicated an employment record of 3200 for Nzoia Sugar Company (NSC) plus an equivalent number of employees, mostly men being hired on temporary or contract basis to cultivate and harvest sugarcane (Kenya CBS 2004).

By 2004 the NSC Company had registered a total of 20,000 farmers. This figure represents the number of families whose livelihood more or less depends on commercial sugarcane growth for the NSC (Kenya, CBS 2004). The total area of land under sugarcane is 41,516 hectares, out of which, approximately 38,278 hectares is managed by individual farmers while the remaining 3,438 belongs to the company also referred to as Nucleus Estate, (Kenya, CBS 2004). In the final analysis, the researcher would conclude by saying that Nzoia Sugar Company is the economic backbone of the Bukusu ethnic community without which many parents would not have been able to send their children to school.

Jamin Okwisia's second concern was the new forms of singing in the ceremonies, which, in his view, "is becoming more and more unethical". He apportioned this blame on what he termed as an ever increasing generational gap "At this point, the researcher interjected and asked him to explain what he meant. Okwisia said:

During the days when we were growing up, we spent most of our time at home with our grandfathers and young girls with their grandmothers to listen to stories and good meaningful and ethical folksongs .These days ,the scenario is completely different .The youth hardly find time to sit with the elderly people for instruction on our traditional norms. Therefore in a ceremony like this one, they (youth) feel like they want to sing, and when they sing, their songs are quite unethical and full of profane language (Jamin Okwisia).

Jamin Okwisia appealed to the elders in the community to advice the youngsters to sing ethical and meaningful songs at circumcision ceremonies. James Wasike, one of the elderly member of the forum as P. Wechuli and Samuel Onyango rose to give his views on the subject. He pointed out that there are differences between the traditional and contemporary circumcision songs. The

former were imbedded with moral teachings. Such songs were meant for praising and correcting moral characters of certain personalities within the community. Some teach the history of certain events that took place or affected people's lives. James Wasike gave an example of a song titled:

Amba Mutalia, literally translated as "Capture the Italian" It goes like this:

Amba mutalia! Hoo

Hee amba mutalia!

(Refrain)

Amba mutalia!

In Wasike's interpretation, this song reminds us (the Bukusu community) about the days when the mighty Italian army was captured by the African fighters who launched a combat from Kenya during the World War II. Biko (1998) also observes in his literature "the African people share their burdens and pleasures of the work they toiled through music. He cites the *Negros spirituals* as an example. He says that these songs were sung by Black slaves in the United States as they toiled on White farms under oppression" (p.78). These, Biko observes, were symbolic expressions of their African Heritage. Wasike's and Biko's observations rightly satisfy the fact that music was one of the greatest means by which indigenous knowledge regarding the African History was disseminated to the African generations.

When the researcher interviewed Zablon Mayeku, a renowned teacher in Africa folk Music and one of my informants who lives within East Bukusu location, I asked him to share his views on the role of music in the African communities. Z. Mayeku explained that in traditional African societies, "music and rhythm were not luxuries, but part and parcel of the black people's way of communication (Dunn, 2012: 18)". Their love for songs was what dramatized their eagerness to communicate to each other. Mayeku also went on to remind me that the African communities have been through several events: wars epidemics, famine, slavery, and colonialism, "and that

these events were made real in the hearts and minds of the Black people by song and rhythm”!. He gave an example of a song he jointly composed with a now retired primary school headmaster, Painto Walela, titled, *Euyo*, literally translated as “migration or eviction”. This song was presented as a folk song by Lwanda Friends Primary school led by Mwalimu P. Walela up to the Provincial level in the Kenya Primary Schools Music festival in 1979. In my interview over the phone with Silas Maina, a former student of the School who took part in this choir, he recalled a section of the song as going like this:

Euyo yino, basoleli balila

Euyo yino ba baba bakonela Khungila

paile wa Sikuta mbo kalilila khungila

Alise umulunda sikimbo nakonela khungila.

Ekkhafu yase sikimbo nakonela khungila

Ekkhafu yase embesemu yebulila khungila

Nende omwana omukhana, bamulanga Nangila!

(Refrain)

Ningonile nendengecha, kona busie!

Baba,kona busie.

Translation

This eviction, boys are crying

This eviction, our fathers slept on footpaths

Paile son of Sikuta cried all the way,

That even me the rainmaker of the Balunda clan,

Now sleep on footpaths?

Even our brown cow calved on footpath.

And a little baby girl, they called her Footpath.

(Refrain)

With open eyes, I slept till dawn (x2)

Father, to dawn.

Silas Maina, who is now deputy headmaster of a primary school in Busia County of Western Kenya, confessed, “like many others in that school choir, he did not comprehend the real meaning of the song by then until later while in high school. He said that he now fully understands the song as one of Jamin Okwisia’s and Painto Walela’s legacies in their works as educators in the African indigenous knowledge through folk Music. This song will remain as a monument and an open book from which the Bukusu people will read about their history of migrations”. In an interview with him as an original co-composer, Okwisia explained the meaning of the song and said that it reminds the current and future generations about the suffering the Bukusu people went through during their evictions from *Hututu and chalicha* locations. This was done to give way for the construction of the Nzoia Sugar factory in 1975. Okwisia and Walela earned many awards from different sectors as the song became vibrant in social halls and eventually gained a central stage in circumcision ceremonies.

When the researcher asked Okwisia about what became of those who were evicted from the region, he responded with a lump in his throat saying, “it was sad! People could not imagine being given notices by the government to vacate their ancestral homes to unknown places? That is what happened”, he lamented. M. Masinde, the host of the forum where the ceremony took place was a victim of this eviction. During the researcher’s interview with him, “I asked him how he felt about *Euyo*, and he explained that he received information with mixed emotions. Why mixed emotions?” I asked him. He said that the government was compensating all families that were affected with lots of money, and “therefore as a young man in my middle ages by then (he was in mid 30s of age), I thought that was cool.” Masinde regretted that the cheque become too

small especially when his father began to divide up to each one of his many sons (number of sons not given). That is why I ended up into small two acre piece of land ” he explained.

But the one thing Masinde and many other victims of the 1975 eviction regretted most, besides owning large mass of land before the eviction was detachment from things of sentimental value. These included loss of a cohesive community, disintegration of families and clan units, destruction and loss of historic sites which include tombstones for their ancestors and shrines and fetishes for variety of religious functions. Masinde felt that although he was settled where he is now since 1976 and even found a local girl named Nanjala, who later became his wife. He confessed that sometimes he feels like he will one day go back to his ancestral home. He regrets that “he has had to bury *kamafunga*, prepuces or foreskins for the three of his sons he has circumcised in a strange land away from the rest. For him the “rest” refers to the prepuces of all his male family members beginning with his great, great grandfather, coming down to his father, his brothers and himself were all buried at *Chalicha* in the same anthill. Those sites were sacrilegiously destroyed by the government bulldozers at the inception of Nzoia Sugar Company (NSC),” Masinde lamented.

Back to forum, Hezron Soita concurred with Didymus Khwatenge on the subject of value, belief and meaning of traditional customs in the contemporary Bukusu society. He added by saying that the whole of “our Bukusu education is losing meaning because there are no more elders to provide knowledge”. He used the Bukusu male ritual circumcision as an example by saying that it is no longer the same. He observed that this practice is rapidly losing out on principle element in the hands of our new generation. He conceded that the elders who are supposed to provide counsel to the youth are becoming fewer and fewer due to a drastic drop in life expectancy.

Circumcised in 1980 Didymus Khwatenge introduced himself as *Omuchuma korokoro* number 5, as his circumcision age set. Korokoro is a local name given to a two kilogram metal or plastic container that normally carries vegetable cooking oil manufactured by East Africa Industries. When it is empty, this container is used for variety of domestic purposes, but the one purpose that popularized it is when it was used to measure maize (corn meal) to the consumers on open markets during the 1980 famine that struck the entire country. Therefore, all those who were circumcised in this period are identified as *Buchuma korokoro*, named after the maize-measuring container. Before D. Khwatenge went further, I drew him back seeking for clarification over a statement especially when he said that Bukusu traditional education is becoming obsolete due to lack of sufficient elders who can provide wisdom. How about the elders who are still living within this community? How about these ones sitting here with us on this forum?” D. Khwatenge took two steps back and began first, to clarify the previous point he made when he said that the youth are losing out on morality due to lack of guidance. He pointed out that the only few wise elders we have are not taking their counsel to the youth. The researcher interjected into his speech again and sought to know whether it is the youth who are in fact trying to avoid the elders counsel? D. Khwatenge was emphatic at this point, “No!, the elders are the ones who are keeping a distance from the youth”. After sensing that there were many dissenting voices from within the forum against his opinion, he made a detour and said:

Please do not take me wrong .I just do not want people to be surprised at the way things have changed in our traditional way of life. It is due to the following factors; first, life expectancy has been reduced such that we no longer have enough elders to provide counsel to the young generation .Second, populations have multiplied while land, our only resource has become scarce. Formal education has taken priority and eaten too much into our time and resources (D. Okhwatenge).

D. Khwatenge main points in his argument were time and priority .With time, he meant that both the elders and the youth have no time left in their hands for each other. By priority, he meant to

say that the current life is so demanding and that it is dictated by priorities. “Priority to provide food and clothing for the family on the side of the elders and formal education on the side of the youth is what defines life in our current Bukusu Community”. He argued!

Christopher Mwanga came back to further press his anti-Christian sentiments, “I will be frank and speak out what is in my heart. It is the youth who are avoiding sitting with the elders to listen and learn from them. The youth of nowadays think they are too smart with Western Knowledge and too religious with Christian spirits to stoop down to the traditional elder’s stool of for guidance and pedagogy”. Offering what he termed as his last opinion, Mwanga differed with D. Khwatenge’s idea that time and formal schooling have taken priority in the current Bukusu lifestyle. He blamed it on the new religious movements. “Our youth have fallen for the new religious movements and as a result have come to despise our culture, our elders, and our customs altogether.” (D. Okhwatenge).

Before the researcher introduced another subject for discussion, he sought to know if the two senior elders on the forum had anything to say with regard to the subject at stake. Samuel Onyango, second to Peter Wechuli in seniority by birth and circumcision age set responded as thus: “take for example, as elderly as I am in my age (in late - 60s) and you, Wekesi my son (pointing at me calling me by my surname), if you do not come to me as you are doing now to seek knowledge from me, how shall I know your needs?” Onyango asked. He posed a question which I found to be somewhat a challenge to the young members on the forum: Why do you find it easier to go to school and sit in class to listen to a teacher but yet find it difficult to sit with me in my house or under a tree to learn from me? Onyango asked. His point was that the principles that drive the youth to seek Western Knowledge in the formal system should be the same that can direct them to seek indigenous knowledge from the elders in the community.

On the question of priorities and time, D. Khwatenge came back into the conversation to voice out what he termed as his major concerns. He said:

I do agree to the elders view that, yes it is important that we maintain *sikhebo* ritual circumcision as laid down by our ancestors. But my main concern however, as I said before, land, which is our main resource, has become less and over utilized. Take for example: in my life, I have never held Kshs. 100,000 (a hundred thousand Kenya Shillings) (about \$1000) in my hands at once. My small sugarcane plantation gets harvested for the first time I get paid this amount in just one day. Do you think I am going to use this money to buy a bull for the circumcision feast when my children have been sent home from school for tuition, school uniforms, and other demands? And besides, I have other domestic needs such as buying food, clothing and medical expenses for my family. People (referring to the Bukusu community) should understand that we are living in different times, and our priorities have been changing over time with the entrenchment of western system of education in our society. I would rather take Kshs.500.00 (about \$15.000 and pay a clinical doctor to circumcise my son in hospital than spend Kshs.50, 000 on a feast (D. Khwantenge).

Enos Kundu is an *Omusawa* number 1, circumcised in 1986. He was in agreement with the sentiments of other members on the forum for the continuity of the male circumcision practice saying that “the birth of a baby boy in our Bukusu community is a perpetuation of this traditional practice”. However, Kundu was also quick to add that. People (the Bukusu) should understand that when male circumcision practice began in antiquity by our patriarch Abraham, it was done in a home site. There were no clinics or hospitals. Since now we have these facilities, people should circumcise their boys as they please.”

Nevertheless, E. Kundu further advised that lack of a bull to be slaughtered in a feast should never deter one from circumcising his sons in the village. Additionally, people should observe our tradition within their means. If one can afford a big feast, it is fine”, Kundu advised. But if one has only a cockerel to slaughter as a fulfillment in the rituals, I would say it is also fine as long as blood has been spilt on the ground; the ancestor should be able yet understand the situation of the living.”

4.4 Ritual meat and its symbolic meaning

Kundus middle ground opinion aroused questions especially from among the young members on the forum. They wanted further clarification from the senior members on the forum about the real meaning behind slaughtering of a bull (*see plate 4.1*). The researcher also sought to know under what circumstances a cockerel should be used in the place of an animal for ritual fulfillment. Samuel Onyango (FDG, 14/8/2018) responded by saying that in the old days when a girl got married, *Bukwe*, bride price was sent to her family from the grooms family. Therefore, the slaughter of a bull by the initiate's maternal uncle has a variety of meanings. First, it was a symbolic demonstration of love that exists between the two families and second, it signified a return of the animals that the initiates uncle received from his in-laws for bride price.

Under normal circumstances, Bukusu tradition has it that on the circumcision eve, the initiate is escorted by members of the family and close paternal relatives to his maternal uncle to be honored by the hooding of a special piece of meat known as *Luliki*, also known *likhoni* in his shoulders from a slaughtered bull. Initiates of mothers whose bride price was not paid dowry would only be hooded with a cockerel gizzard on a string from their maternal uncle's homesteads. This would be viewed as a mockery to the initiate's father and his entire clan for their meanness. Such was a moment of gloom for the initiate's mother.



Plate No. 4.1: The plate shows a bull being slaughtered for ritual meat (Source: Researcher, 2018).

The application of terms “bride-price” and “dowry” have been disputed by some African scholars as being confusing and misleading (Mugambi & Kirima, 1976, Fiedler, 1992). Mugambi and Kirima argue that the term “bride-price seems to over emphasize the economic aspect” while the term ‘dowry refers instead to the wealth brought by a bride to the marriage’ (p.48). While the anthropological term “bride wealth “seems to be more favored by Mugambi and Kirima as the payment made by the groom and his kinsmen to the father of the bride and her kinsmen”(p.49). Reasoning from a Christian point of view, Fiedler (1998) is reluctant to its application. He argues “since in these days the payment are very often converted into cash and since the prices are ever rising, I prefer the term “bride –price” (p.46). However, they were all

agreement that the exchange of wealth between in-laws over a bride was the African way of constituting a legal marriage.

Mugambi and Kirima (1976) caution that as much as the African societies keep practicing it, bride wealth should not be handled in terms of purchase price” but as an exchange of a bride for bride wealth”(p.49) as compensation to her family for her physical removal and the long term absence of the services she would otherwise have provided. In Mugambi and Kirima’s analysis, “bride wealth was an expression of gratitude from the groom’s kinsmen to the bride’s family for the gift of not only a wife, but also a mother who is going to increase the groom’s community by means of procreation (p. 50)”. Viewed as a token of exchange, bride wealth also enhances relationship and serves to join the two families in a union (Mugambi & Kirima, 1976). Therefore, in Samuel Onyango’s views in this forum, the slaughter of a bull by the initiates maternal uncle or lack of it is done on the basis of these principles.

Philemon Khaemba is another Omusawa number 2. He was precise and gave his circumcision date as August 16, 1988. On the eve of his circumcision day, Khaemba recalls hearing all kinds of encouraging language from the crowds. One of the statements he heard, which is still popular was, “*Wima busa paka chinyuni chifwe, chame khumurongoro ne chekhupa asi!*” Translation, Stand still (brave the circumcisers knife) until the birds begin falling off from trees dead.” Khaemba amused the forum when he said that after he braved the knife on the material day, he looked up the trees and the birds were comfortably perching from twig to twig. He later realized that that was a symbolic language, an expression of our heritage.

Philemon Khaemba stood on *Khuluya*, threshold with two of his paternal cousins (not in the forum), H. Sawenja and S. Murutu. These two are step brothers from a polygamous family. Their participation in the circumcision ceremonies was conspicuously missing due to their

devout involvement in two different local charismatic Christian movements. The researcher was informed by some members on the forum that they even refused to lend their chairs for use in such ceremonies and constrained their wives and children from taking part in these ritual ceremonies. In one of the recent writings on the new religious movements by Robert Wafula (2005), “becoming a member of a cult or sect is not merely a relatively minor change but a dynamic one. It compels a convert to take a whole new venture that dictates the imperative acceptance of a radically different lifestyle and belief system” (p.9). In this particular literature, the researcher cited separation, withdrawal from the general society, and defiance of mundane world and its values and institutions as tenets of some of the new religious movements.

4.5 Registration of Practitioners

Turning back to the forum of discussion with the participants, “the researcher tried to guide the members back to the subjects”. He (researcher) asked Philemon Khaemba what he thought were some of the embedded values of male ritual circumcision that benefit the contemporary youth, the practitioners and/or the entire Bukusu Society. Khaemba responded by first acknowledging the occasion, “It gives me pleasure whenever I sit and participate in such ceremonies, and to contribute in a debate like this one to talk about our heritage”. He emphasized that in retrospect, this forum was a replica of the African traditional lecture circles, which should be encouraged.

Khaemba concurred with the previous speakers by staying in favor of the continuity of the practice. However, to make it better and hygienic, he suggested “It is important that we conserve certain core elements and modify some within the ritual circumcision practice”. Khaemba proposed the following:

1. The Ministry of Health (MoH) in conjunction with the County Government Act should pass laws and statutes that would govern all ritual practices. These statutes, he proposed would

compel all practitioners who would include ritual circumcisers and local nurse aides that participate in the rituals to be registered with the County Health Registry (CHR) and be issued with certificates of operation, which will be subject to renewal annually.

2. All practitioners' operations to be supervised by the office of the County Health Officer (CHO)

3. All practitioners to attend mandatory regular meetings, seminars, and training on sanitary health under the organization of the MOH in collaboration with County Government.

4. All prospective initiates (for either village or clinical circumcision) to be identified in advance (between January and April of every circumcision year) and their names to be put on the local chiefs registry. Copies to be forwarded to the County Commissioner's (CC) office the office of the CHO, and the office of the County Director Education (CDE). Philemon Khaemba concluded, "Then our old circumcision tradition will continue under a healthy and organized society". As attractive and elaborate as they may appear, some of Philemon Khaemba's proposals did not go without challenge as would be evidenced in my later interviews.

On a later date, the researcher had an interview with the Bungoma County Director of Education (CDE) Mr. Jacob Oyiengo whose response was somewhat apprehensive especially on Philemon Khaemba's proposal number 4. As an education administrator from outside of the community, first, Oyiengo was positive at all the proposals adding that these would bring some order and seal the rift that existed between the government administration, human rights activists and the local communities traditional ceremonies. He categorized the Bukusu male ritual circumcision as the most controversial one.

4.6 Description and stages of Bukusu male ritual circumcision: An African perspective

Apparently, circumcision is manifested in various stages. Every stage has a significant ramification to the initiate. Taking the example of the Bukusu circumcision, nothing is left to chance lest, the consequences would be horrendous. Wagner (2009), “Describing the main features of the male ritual circumcision, as is variously practiced, scholars in this field have distinguished in three phases: preparation leading to the actual procedure of male circumcision, which is followed by a protracted period of seclusion and then reintegration of the initiates back to the society (p. 31)”. We have three major stages in circumcision. Van Gennep (1999) observes, “The three-stage process of transition of circumcision as described by Van Gennep starts with separation from society. However, the preparation of the initiates seems to play an important role in some communities (p. 87)”.

La Fontaine (1986) points out that the rituals surrounding circumcision do vary, from the private family affair to large-scale (p.13). For the Bukusu people, it is never a private affair. Before ritual circumcision takes place, there are four important initial stages that involve the initiate. These are: *Khureba*, formal request; *Khulanga*, public pronouncement; *Khuchukhila*, clay pot water –fetching for the brew; and *Khucha ebukhocha*, trip to maternal Uncle’s home. In this section, the researcher will provide detailed account of each of this four stages, some of which the researcher witnessed by observing ritual circumcision ceremony of a 14 year old village boy known as Dickson Wanyonyi. Other detailed accounts will be analysis of credible narratives as told by participants and informants. While using Wanyonyi as case study, the researcher will be citing other cases of the initiates whose circumcision ceremonies the researcher attended, participated and observed in selected homes.

4.6.1 Preparation stage: Formal request

Preparation of the initiates comprises the physical, social, psychological and spiritual dimensions: Firstly, we have, “The Physical, where the penis is prepared for circumcision in order to be able to retract the foreskin easily at the moment of circumcision. This may consist of massaging of the tissue covering the glans, by the boy himself or by his mother, grandmother or aunt (Niang, 2007:18)”. Secondly, we have, “The Social, the initiate’s family is responsible for preparing him for pain and other challenges that he may face during the circumcision procedure. In some ethnic groups, animal sacrifice, for example slaughtering a bull, is also part of preparing for circumcision and in some tribes extensive feasts take place the night before the eventful day of circumcision (p. 19)”. And thirdly, we have, “The Spiritual where the initiate is prepared by ritual baths and concoctions for spiritual protection, as the period of circumcision is said to be one of great vulnerability to evil spirits. A symbolic renewal of family ties by visiting members of the extended family and announcing the coming event is meant to be similarly protective (Niang, 2007: 19)”. Responding to with reference to various contexts, Caldwell (1997) observes, “In Zambia, the Makish representing the ancestors who have returned to protect the boys and the communities, go from village to village to announce the event. Among the Bukusu people of Western Kenya in Bungoma, the initiates are secluded for up to six months before circumcision (p. 45)”.

In one of the researcher’s earlier interviews Alfred Wakuta commented that, “when it comes to decision-making for the circumcision of the Bukusu boy, there are no assumptions”. Before an initiate begins to look for *chinyimba* (bells) (see plate 4.2), in preparation for his circumcision, he has to place an official request to his father. The first person Wanyonyi had to talk to before he made his action public was his father Bramwel Masinde. He had to make three verbal requests

at an interval of seven days apart that he would like to be circumcised. The first two were dismissed by his father as mere “child talk”, but the father listened and took action on the third one. In the following week the father made consultations with some elders in the church for a possible way out. He and his wife finally decided to yield to traditional ceremony for Wanyonyi with the exception of certain critical segments that they felt would have otherwise compromised their Christian faith and practice.



Plate 4.2: This photo shows the bells that the initiate uses during the public pronouncement.

Source: Researcher, 2018

Emile Durkheim (1995) puts it in his understanding that ritual lies at the root of social connection, and his point ratified by Roy A. Rappaport (in Lambek, 2002: 113) in his argument that “it is through this that the bases of commitment and trust are forged”, hence Wanyonyi’s mother had to make a trip to her parent’s home. The one agenda she brought to her kinsmen was to make as formal announcement that her boy was ready to become a man, and also to find out

who among her brothers would take the responsibility to slaughter to provide *luliki*, special meat for her boy.

4.6.2 Public pronouncement

Rappaport (in Lambek, 2002: 454) analysis of the word “acceptance” he argues on the contrary that it is “not a private act”. For acceptance to carry meaning, it has to be translated into action and made visible between the performer and the witnesses. Therefore, it now comes a time Wanyonyi the candidate has to act upon his father’s acceptance for a ritual ceremony to mark Bowie’s (2000: 151) words, “a change of status”. It took Wanyonyi about fourteen days to go from home to home beating the bells to summon the relatives and friends. They call this process, *Khulanga*, literally translated as summoning. Relatives and friends would not only come to witness but also to provide assurance and courage to Wanyonyi with their singing and spirited dances. But as Rappaport puts it, participation in a ritual is a matter of choice and not condition (Lambek, 2002: 152); most of Wanyonyi’s relatives who were summoned came to the ceremony except a few who either by virtue of their Christian faith and having come from outside of the community by marriage.

Wanyonyi’s public pronouncement to summon the villagers was symbolic way of public pronouncement. This announcement is normally identified with, besides the bells, the singing, dancing, and carrying of clubs and twigs by a group of youths (*see plates 4.3,4.4,4.5, and 4.6*). The only inquiry a relative would stop to ask once Wanyonyi and crowds got to the door step would be, *omusinde akhebwa tare ngapi?*, “on which day is the initiate going to be circumcised?” Clubs and twigs were symbols of authority, war, and peace at the same time. That is, they signify “war” with the forces of the flesh, which will involve the spilling of the blood, and peace, which will come at the end of the ceremony. These come as personal symbols that

identify the Bukusu as a unique community. These symbols are culturally recognized to portray rational meaning and identity. The bells acted as the initiate's mouthpiece, which provides, as Bowie observes, an "objective reality to a state of mind" (2000: 61) and conscientize the initiate's psyche to realize that he is going through a state of public recognition.



Plate 4.3: The photo shows the candidate being taken around to announce the imminence of his circumcision. relatives and friends are invited
Source: Researcher, 2018



Plate 4.4: The candidates moving around the village inviting people for the circumcision ceremony. They dance at the sporadic tune of the bells and songs from soloists
Source: Researcher, 2018

4.6.3 Water-fetching

Three days prior to the circumcision operation (*Lubukusu, Khukhebwa*), the initiate normally undertakes a ritual called *Khuchukhila* (water fetching for brew)(see plate 4.3.5). This involves an initiate taking a trip to a river with a clay pot locally known as *esachi* on his head. In preparation for this particular ritual, the initiate's mother ferments the dough made from either sorghum or in recent days, cornmeal. Cornmeal dough is locally known as *sifu* in *Lubukusu*, while that made from sorghum is called as *sifuluko*. The ferment lies still in a clay pot for three days, and then the dough goes through baking process called *khukhalanga*. After it is baked on an open large skillet, the product is then put in the sun to dry. It now turns into what they call, *kamalwa kamahalange*, which actually resembles the present day corn flex cereal that is normally served for breakfast in modern homes.

Plate 4.5: Photo showing waterfetching from the well to perform the ritual called khuchukhilla. Source: Researcher, 2018



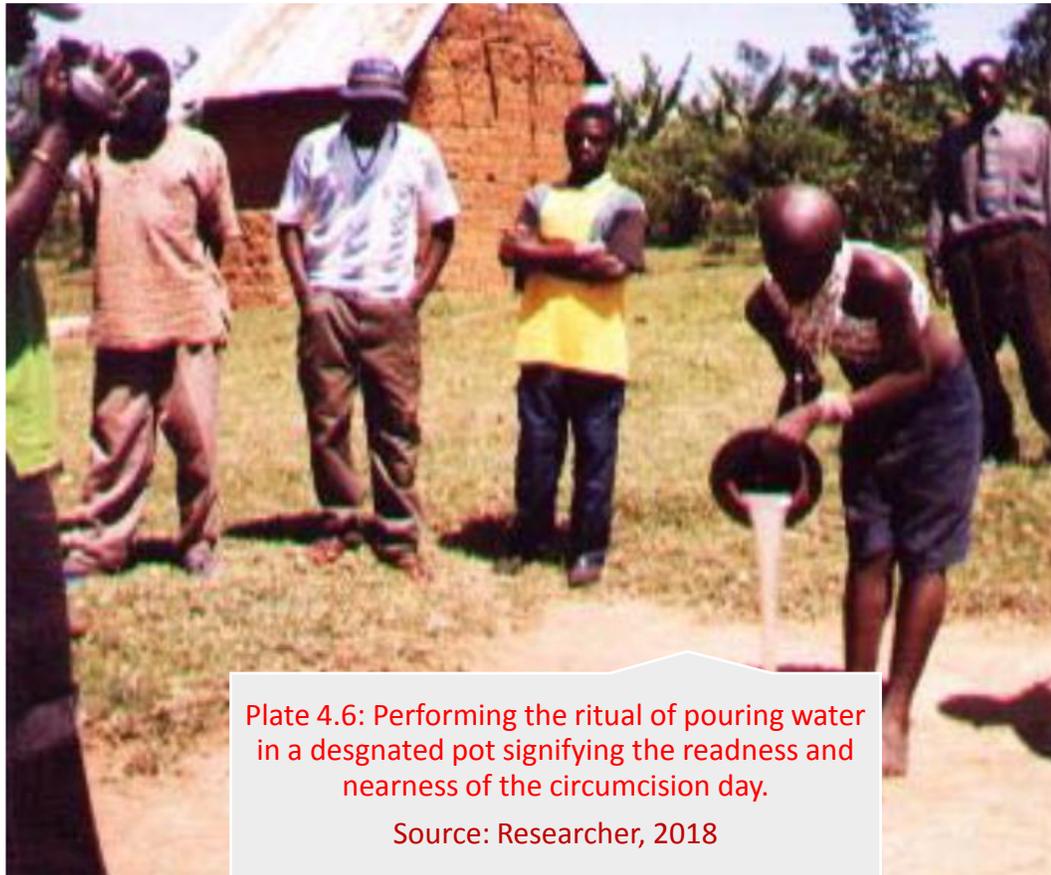


Plate 4.6: Performing the ritual of pouring water in a designated pot signifying the readiness and nearness of the circumcision day.

Source: Researcher, 2018

Tradition has it that during the brewing process of *sifuluko* from sorghum flour or *kamakhalance* from flour dough to turn into *kwete*, local beer, and the first drop of the water into the brewing pot must be done by the initiate. This is the ritual that is referred to as *Khuchukhilla*. The initiate goes to the river with a small pot called *Khasachi* without talking to anyone, he fills with water and balances it on his head to go back home. The small clay pot is distinctly identified with *lukhafwa*, (a special grass from the botanical *snodon* species) strapped around its neck. The initiate's trip from the river with a water pot on his head is governed by two string cautions: First, he should never at any moment turn his head and look back where he is coming from. Secondly, he should try his best never to trip or fall. Upon arrival at home, "The initiate arrives home and pours water into a large clay pot containing *kamalwa kamakhalance* (Wafula, 2006: 138)" as his mother ululates to announce the readiness of the occasion. The brewing process of

the local beer, which will be served in the ritual ceremony begins at this stage. After this stage the initiate can now go out with the bells to summon the closest paternal relatives in the ridges.

According to Alfred Wakuta, *Khuchukhila* is a complex of symbolic representations: First, it is a display of the initiate's generosity in his adult future life. This meant that then on, the initiate was able to make the beer and entertain guests of different kinds in his home. Secondly, in the Bukusu tradition, fetching water in *chisongo*, clay water vessels from the river was a preserve of the female gender. Therefore, the act of *khuchukhila* is the last feminine chore the initiate had to perform to announce to the female gender, including his mother that he was making a transition into masculine group. Thirdly, *Lukhafwa*, *snodon species grass* strapped in the clay pot's neck was a representation of wealth. In Alfred Wakuta's point of view, a home that was littered with cow dung was considered a wealthy home, meaning that the owner of that particular home was a herdsman. In the Bukusu community he was rated rich or wealthy with the "number of wives and a multitude of children he had, plus the size of his herd of cattle"! In this respect, therefore, a wealthy home was normally identified with the amount of *Lukhafwa* grass grown around the kraal.

And finally, the fourth symbolic meaning of *Khuchukhila*, according to Wakuta, was the caution on the initiate's backward looking as he headed home with water. As he walked home, the initiate was confronted with "two worlds: thus the world behind and the world ahead. The world behind is characteristic of formlessness, childishness, and unmerited responsibility; while the latter world in front is characteristic of form, adult and merited responsibility (Wafula, 2006: 133)". By not looking back, the initiates were encouraged to be forward looking and never top look back at things in the past.

Khuchukhila, is one of the main segments in the ritual circumcision that Wanyonyi was exempted from undertaking. This was mainly because of the Christian faith that the parents professed. Additionally, Zablun Mayeku said that in retrospect, not every Bukusu initiate undertakes this ritual. For instance, Zablun recalls that his father, David Sikwanyi did not undertake it, Zablun and his younger brothers were exempted from it. But Zablun was also quick to point out that unlike Wanyonyi, their exemption was not by Christian conviction, but by reasons his father did not explain. Peter Wechuli explained that certain factors such as sickness in a family would make an initiate to be exempted from undertaking the ritual.

4.6.4 Trip to maternal uncle's home

After summoning all the paternal uncles, aunts and other close relatives on the eve of the actual circumcision, Wanyonyi was escorted by a large crowd singing to his maternal uncle Wycliffe Wamalwa to be endowed with *luliki*. Such crowds are normally identified with a flying flag a pole carried by a designated individual in the singing crowds. The initiate only wears a pair of shorts. On this occasion, Wanyonyi's demeanor was quite different from the rest of the days when he went round summoning relatives and friends. He assumes the attitude of a warrior. He practiced little or no talking at all unless asked to do so by an elder.

On arrival at his uncle's home, Wanyonyi found a grand reception. His arrival was announced by a heavy blast of singing, blowing of whistles, ululating and frenzy dancing. A designated aunt, sister to his mother got out of the house and ululated highly. This was to announce Wanyonyi's arrival. His uncle, Wycliffe Wamalwa withdrew from a group of elders and made a step forward to directly face the initiate and immediately the singing stopped. With strong eye contact, Wamalwa the uncle looked straight in the eyes of Wanyonyi and uttered the following words:

Wanyonyi, who deceived that *embalu*, circumciser's knife is a small thing children can play with? It burns like fire when it lands from top to bottom. If you decided on your own, then you have to stand still as we do. I want to assure this crowds that if you shiver and tremble at the circumciser's knife, we shall disassociate ourselves from such a timid spirit. We, the *Bakhonjo* clan have never, and never have we shivered at the eminence of the circumciser's knife (Wanyonyi).

After saying these words, Wamalwa, the uncle to Wanyonyi stepped back and waved to the elders to go and resume their seats. Wanyonyi's cousin already circumcised reached out for Wanyonyi's bells and put them on top of the roof above the main door. This was to represent Wanyonyi's presence in the home and to define the occasion. Wanyonyi, the initiate is then led to sit exclusively behind the building or near the granary. A bull is slaughtered which would be used to honor Wanyonyi and also for feasting on by the relatives and friends that came.

4.6.5 The raw and the roast meat and sitting positions

The guests, relatives and the friends at the uncle's home were seated in three groups: men, women, and the children. Men sat on chairs in semi-circle on the south of the slaughter place, while women sat on the lawn in the eastern direction from the slaughter area. The children were relegated to the margins away from the men and the women. They were also cautiously watched lest they mingle, talk or disturb the initiate. However, children ran a variety of errands: First, cutting and bringing *kamaru*, green banana leaves and *kamakhola*, banana fibers. *Kamaru* served as equipment onto which chunks of meat were placed in order to keep them from accumulating dust and getting in contact with grass. *Kamakhola* were used as wrappings for small portions of meat that women carried to their homes. Children were also charged with collecting of firewood and keeping the fire burning, and roasting the meat. A ritually circumcised young male adult supervised all the jobs around the fire place.

While skinning or dressing was still taking place, the slaughter guide ordered for certain designated meat from certain parts of the animal to be roasted and some to be randomly tossed among the women seated in a group. Whoever got the meat, kept it. However, some pieces of meat were selectively handed out to some women, especially the elderly. The guide, who doubled up as the master of ceremony informed the researcher that this meat-tossing system is being discouraged as it is causing black eyes among the women because they got hit by the flying meat unawares. Also, some women were not active physically and they could leave the slaughter place without any meat. This according to Wechuli, could displease the benevolent spirits to the occasion. No explanation was given to the significance of the meat-tossing exercise other than arousing the spirit of alertness among the seated women.

Roast meat was sliced into small pieces and put on a silver bowl. Another designated elderly person took the bowl round among the seated elders. This is reminiscent of the Holy Communion practiced among the Catholic and some Protestant Churches, each elder picked a piece of the roast meat, shuffled it in grains of salt in another bowl and put in his mouth. A cup of blood from the slaughtered bull was voluntarily passed around alongside the roast meat as a beverage. Apparently, this was symbolic representation of solidarity among those who were present, and also with the host of his feast. “By sharing this meat,” explained Samuel Onyango, “it is not only a preserve of the old tradition, but also a demonstration of our solidarity between us, the living and the ancestors, who are our intermediaries.” In his *African Religion and Philosophy*, Mbiti (1969:59) adds “a symbol of fellowship, recognition that the departed or those already passed on are still members of their families and tokens of respect and remembrance”. Samuel Onyango continues to note that this act also enhances cohesiveness and mends broken relationships between the relatives and the neighbors. Any individuals who came to such a function while having a grudge or hatred with another also present at the ceremony got their differences solved

upon partaking of the roast meat from the communion bowl. The bowl made rounds as many times as the supply of the roasted meat lasted.

Every piece of meat is supposed to be put in the mouth and chewed whole without pulling it in the teeth or breaking it into two pieces once it left the bowl. It was believed that the gentle handling of those pieces of meat would be reflected in the act when the circumciser operates on the initiate. The stretching, the pulling, and tooth-cutting of the roast meat would reminiscent the tough handling of the circumcision act of the initiate. After the entire hide had been carefully sliced off the bull and the inside cut open, an expert in reading the entrails was ushered in to examine, read and interpret the symbolic signs on the entrails. At this very moment, there was a brief silence as everyone held their breath waiting for the reader's prediction. According to Wechuli, the entrails' reading does not only concern the initiate, but also about what is in the immediate future of the nucleus family and sometimes both the nucleus and extended families. The entrails results for this particular occasion did not show any serious concerns.

There followed a sumptuous meal, served to the guests and all in attendance while a special meal was prepared and served to the initiate and his team from the paternal side. Wanyonyi was ushered into the house by his uncle to be served with the last meal in his status as uncircumcised boy. A large bowl of ugali, corn meal, locally known as *busuma* and a separate dish filled with pieces of roast meat were placed at the center of the table. Water was passed around on a plastic basin and everyone present was supposed their hands beginning with the initiate. Normally, such meals were eaten hurriedly as if going for war. The handling of the pieces of the roast meat was governed by the same rule as was seen among the elders. Wanyonyi was strictly instructed to avoid pulling the meat on his teeth by all means. Following Wanyonyi's "last meal", the elders assembled at the slaughter place and formed a semi-circle as everybody else stood behind. The

initiate was made to stand in the middle of the circle facing the uncle. Amid the silence, Didymus Khwatenge, chosen by Wanyonyi's uncle to administer the oath took one of the knives that were used to skin the bull and sliced open the animal's rumen. With his right hand, he scooped the cud from the ruminants. As some dripped through his fingers, Khwatenge uttered words of wisdom and encouragement to the initiate a replica to the statement given by the uncle on the initiate's arrival at this home. Khwatenge's statement was as follows:

Wanyonyi, who convinced you to decide to get circumcised? The spirit at which you accepted to take this course should be the same morale you will display when the circumciser dawns on you tomorrow morning. I stood the circumciser's knife when it cut through from sunrise to sunset. This is what I am asking you to do tomorrow morning (D. Okhwatenge).

After uttering these sensitive words, Khwatenge gently hit the initiate's chest with the cud that was in his hands. He bent down and scooped another cud which he used to smear all over Wanyonyi's shoulders, neck, and head. Afterwards a controversy ensued whether to clothe Wanyonyi with *luliki*, ritual meat in the neck. But Wechuli, the master of ceremony, delivered a message from the initiate's parents who wished their son not to be fitted with *luliki* due to their Christian faith. This request was honored and therefore Wanyonyi was exempted from wearing a piece of meat in his shoulders back to his parent's home; however the piece of meat called *luliki* was just put in Wanyonyi's neck and then removed (*see plate 4.7*). This is one of the areas that the researcher witnessed modernity confronting tradition in his field of study.



Normally, a well cut out piece of meat with attached bull's testicles is snugly fitted into the neck and shoulders of the initiate. This was done as a form of advertising the greatness of the relationship that existed between the two families, and how much the maternal kinship loved their daughter, the initiate's mother. Before Wanyonyi set off on a grand march from his uncle's place, the occasion by the crowds singing of *sioyaye*, revered chant led by Wechuli. It went like this:

Hee, hee, hee; hooo, hoo, hoo-oo

Wangwe maalule wekhale,

Haaa-hoo;haa-hoo;haa-ho-oo

Embalu yefwe ekhalakhale yebele

Haaa-hoo;haa-ho;haa-ho-oo

Mango we mwiala wakuwa embalu,,

Haaa-ho; haa-ho; haa-ho-oo

Omusinde oteremaka achia obunyolo,

Haaa-ho; haa-ho; haa-ho-oo

Embalu eluma bubu eli ematabula,

Haa-ho;ha-ho; ha-ho-oo

Kumwoyo nekukhalimo taa webele,

Haa-ho-haa-ho;ha-ho-oo (Makila, 1978)

Translation

The leopard that scratches hard is waiting

Our old-age traditional circumcision,

Shall with us remain?

Mango our ancestor from mwiala gave it to us

A cowardly uncircumcised boy should take refuge elsewhere

The knife hurts badly when it cuts to the end

If you are not brave,

You better give up now.

Larger parts of the animal's meat, which included the head were wrapped in banana leaves, strapped on a bicycle and transported to Wanyonyi's home by designated maternal kinsmen who accompanied the crowds. The crowds busted into more singing with the flag raised higher above the heads on a pole as they escorted Wanyonyi back to his ancestral home. Wanyonyi's home was a beehive of activities. Wanyonyi's uncle Hezron Soita supervised everything to ensure that nothing went wrong. There were scores of guests from far and wide; on foot, vehicles, and

bicycles. The guests were all entertained by a variety of foods and drinks provided by the hosts except beer which was avoided due to the host's Christian faith.

On arrival, Wanyonyi was received home by a huge jubilant crowd who sang and danced around him. The initiate's mother, Nanjala, raised a high-pitched ululation as she tossed coins of money in the air and dished out a variety of foodstuffs to the crowds. Quite a number of the people in the crowds scrambled for the money than for the foodstuffs. After 45 minutes of great show of jubilation, Soita, the master of ceremony waved for the attention and uttered a few words of encouragement and welcomed the initiate back home. He took away the bells from the initiate's hands and led him to a secluded place behind the granary to rest. Shortly after nightfall, another ritual was performed known as *Khufwala khasombo* that is, fitting the initiate with the animal's rumen to wear overnight. This rumen was from another bull which had been slaughtered at Wanyonyi's home provided by the father. But due to the parent's Christian faith, the initiate was not fitted with *khasombe*, the bull's rumen. This ritual also ended with *sioyaye* chant after which the crowds were drawn into singing and dancing frenzy throughout the night. Most of the guests invited braved the cold night sitting in groups while drinking lots of tea and sneaked in different brands of beer.

At midnight, Wanyonyi was led by the master of ceremony to a quiet corner in a separate grass-thatched hut, which also served as a family kitchen to catch some sleep. At about 5:00 AM, he was woken up to join the singing, dancing, playing of pipes. Dressed in the shorts he had worn for the past three days, and standing in the midst of the singing crowds in a chilly August month morning weather, tears began rolling down from Wanyonyi's eyes. Provoked by the kind of songs the crowds were singing, he came to realize that the day had come. His transition into manhood will soon be defined by rising sun. The morning song went like this:

Bulibusiele wechuba, ho,

Bakheba,ho, khulalola!

Enje busiele, ho,

Wanyonyi ho, khulalola!

English translation

Every day you play circumcised,

We shall now see,

Wanyonyi, we are all waiting

Waiting to see you overcome

This song serves as a final inquiry into the initiate's spirit of bravery. He is being given an opportunity to either surrender before he is taken to the river. In most cases, once an initiate has been taken to the river and steps into mudding spot, there was no turning back.

4.6.6 Final trip to the river

Wanyonyi's trip to the river was delayed for about an hour as the circumcisers were not readily available. Normally, the circumciser's calendar may have three to five appointments with the same community. Wanyonyi's father had sent messengers who went out to look for circumcisers. Eventually, the circumciser arrived clad in red and yellow spotted uniforms. They announced their arrival by flashing their knives and blowing of whistles. The initiate was led to river for mudding. At about 8:00 A.M, Wanyonyi was led out of the home down to the river Siaka by a large crowd singing and blowing whistles. The tune and tone of the singing had changed at this time from that of jovial fun and dance to one of "war" and ambush. The one common song normally sung at such critical moments was *Orao bachonga*, literally translated as, "Put it there and led them sharpen it". The song goes like this:

Hahoo, eeh, oraobachonga

Bachonga! Ha-hoo,eeh, orao bachonga

Musinde, hahoo, eeh, orao bachonga!

Bachonga, hahoo, eeh, orao bachonga

Layoni, hahoo, eeh, orao bachonga!

Bachonga, hahoo, eeh, orao bachonga

English translation

Put it there and let them sharpen it

Peel it!, let them peel it

To sharpen it, let them peel it

The uncircumcised, let it be sharpened,

Put it there and let them sharpen it

This is the chant that escorted Wanyonyi to the river Siaka with tears still rolling down his cheeks while shivering in the August chilly morning weather. As they approached the banks of the river, the guide motioned the crowd and the singing came to a halt instantly. This was to honor the gods of the river, and to pay respect to the ancestors who were the presumed custodians of the mudding spot, locally known as *mustabicha* (see plate 4.8).

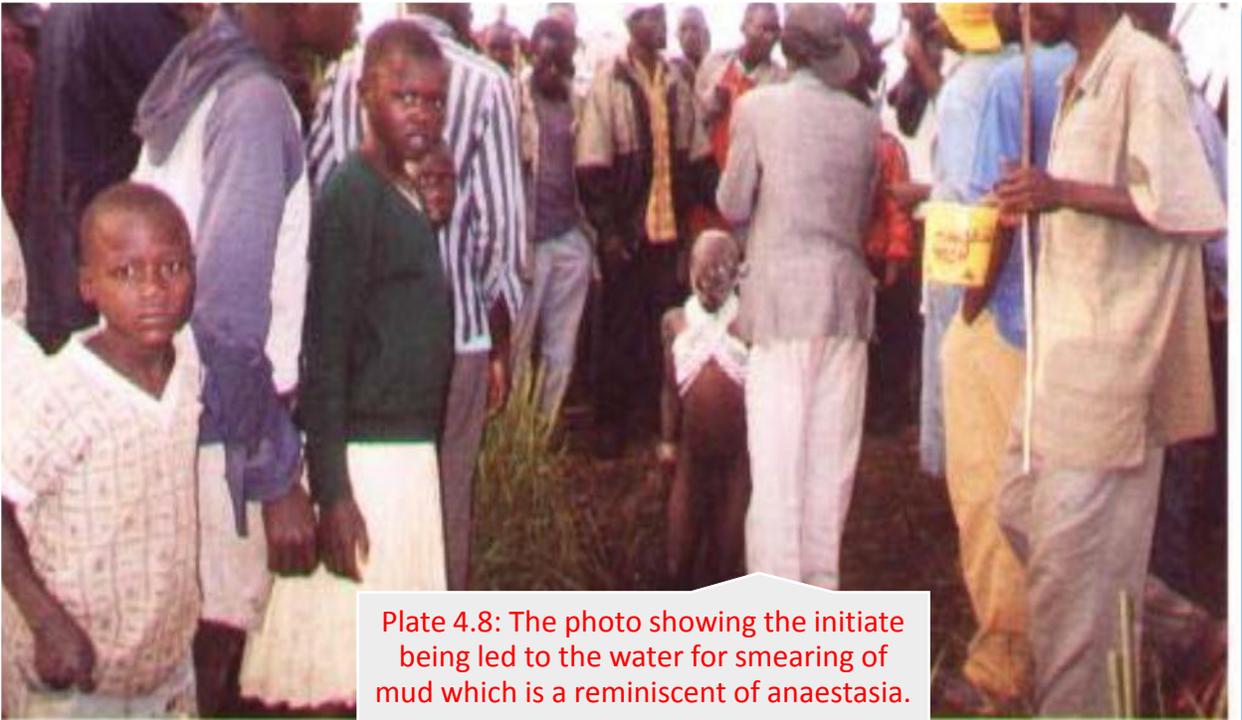


Plate 4.8: The photo showing the initiate being led to the water for smearing of mud which is a reminiscent of anaesthesia.

Source: Researcher, 2018

The guide snatched the bells from the initiate's hands and handed them over to a standby teenage girl called Namwenya. This marked the end of the initiate's beating of the bells again throughout his life. Wanyonyi was told to remove his clothes which were also handed over to Namwenya the sister to carry. The initiate was led by the guide behind a bush where he relieved himself of urine and probably long call. The purpose for this was to prevent the sacrilegious incidents of peeing or pooping on the circumciser during the actual circumcision at the threshold. According to Alfred Wakuta, if such incidents happened, they were normally appeased by the slaughter of a sheep as cleansing to the circumciser.

4.6.7 Gender positions at the river side

While at the river as the initiate was led down in to the river, the guide made an announcement to reinforce the Bukusu tradition policy that restricts the women gender from wading or crossing the river to the mudding spot locally known as *musitosi*. This marks the beginning of the female's exclusion from playing leading roles in the making of men out of boys in the Bukusu society. With the exception of Namwenya who accompanied her brother across the river, the rest of the females were told to wait and watch from a distance. While still shivering due to the cold, the initiate immersed himself into the water and his entire body became wet. Taking instructions from the guide, the initiate retracted his prepuce and carefully washed all-round the glans. This was meant to remove *smegma* that collects under the foreskin of the uncircumcised penis. Possession of this very substance under the initiate's while undergoing circumcision was considered unclean. According to Hodges (1994: 8), *smegma* consists merely of sloughed skin cells, body oils, and prostatic, seminal, and urethral secretions. From the point of view of Hodges, smegma "is not carcinogenic, but a protective and lubricating substance, necessary for normal penile functions" (p. 8). While he argues that females produce more genital *smegma* than males, he is quick to point out that frequent cleaning of this substance is vital for good hygiene.

According to Alfred Wakuta, the initiate dipping in water is a Bukusu traditional form of "baptism". It is the reminiscent of the Christian baptism which signifies repentance and cleansing of sins (Acts 8,9, &10). According to Wakuta, the Bukusu tradition of immersion in the river signified the burring and cleansing of the old childish nature. This symbolically demonstrated by the cleaning of smegma from under the initiate's fore skin. At this point therefore, and for this reason, the river is considered sacred, and only has to be waded by those who have already gone through a similar ritual. This answers the question why women, and the uncircumcised boys, and

the adult men who obtained clinical circumcision were strictly restricted from crossing the river and approaching the sacred shrine, locally known as *sitabicha*.

Guided by the same rule of sacred immersion, although she had been exclusively selected to participate in the rituals at the river side, Namwenya was shoulder lifted across the river by one of the men in the crowd. Because she is female, her feet were not allowed to touch the water. The rest of the circumcised men waded through the water as Wanyonyi was firmly supported by his guide to *musitosi*, the mudding spot. *Musitosi*, the mudding spot is a venerated shrine in the swamps where the circumcision initiates are smeared with grey earth in the wee hours of the day before they are led home for circumcision. One fun thing about the mudding spot is that it never runs dry. Although it is located on someone's piece of land, it is traditionally regarded as no-man's land since it serves a sacred purpose for all. The owners whose land these spots are supposedly located are traditionally advised not to cultivate or make any drainage near or through them. Any form of tampering within or around these grounds is considered sacrilegious. Those who violate are punished with a curse from the elders and presumably by the ancestors whom Mbiti (1979) refers to as the living dead.

After crossing the river, there was no more singing and there was total silence at the mudding shrine with the exception of the guide and one man who was selected to smear the initiate with grey earth. The man was referred to as *omulongi*, literally translated as the mud man. He was an immediate paternal relative to the initiate. Wanyonyi stood in the middle of the crowd that formed a semi-circle while facing west with his eyes across the river. The guide scooped the grey mud from the ground and put it at the initiate's feet. Looking straight into the initiate's eyes, the mud man took a small measure of mud from the lamp at the feet and gently hit the initiate's with it saying:

Eyino eli embalu eyefwe ekhalakhale

Eyama mwiala wa mango.

Wamwene wafukilile, omundu sekarurekho ta.

Nono okhoya wema enyanga yama ebukwe

Ekwe mumbo nebasikhukinginya busa.

Literal translation

This is our old circumcision tradition from mwiala wa Mango.

Since you have accepted to take it yourself,

And no one forced you into it,

You must stand the cut until the sun rises,

From east and sets in the West!

Wanyonyi was smeared with grey mud all over his body except the pubic area. His mother would have recognized himself easily had been in a group of other initiates. But since he was the only one at this function, it was easy to tell. The smearing man completed his work by putting a lamp of clay on top the initiate's head and stuck a six-inch long piece of grass locally known as *kwahututu* as a signal which determines the magnanimity of the initiate's demeanor as he stood at the threshold during the circumcision operation. According to the senior circumciser by the name Wakhungu, *Khulonga*, mud smearing of the initiate was a Bukusu form of anaesthesia. The cold weather was meant to numb the body and slow the flow of blood. And besides confusion on the initiate's recognition, *khulonga*, the mudding is meant to grip the skin and the nerves by the continual supply of cold spells in the body. This, they believed, reduced loss of too much blood during the operation. This notion was shared by "the Swazi of Southern Africa performed male ritual circumcision during the months of August and October when the climate was relatively cool (M'Passou, 1998: 67)".

In the ceremonial home, gender division was evidenced by the manner and style in which the crowds stood in anticipation of the arrival of the initiate from the river. Men who were traditionally circumcised stood on one side at the threshold. Women and children were advised not to stand directly facing the circumcision spot. Wanyonyi's mother and a few of his maternal aunts sat in the main house with stretched legs a few feet from the door directly facing *etiang'i*, the circumcision spot. From such vantage point, they could only see the initiate's back during the circumcision process. Normally, this could have been the most trying moments for Nanjala, but since Wanyonyi was the third boy to be circumcised in her household, she took it easy. Wanyonyi's mother later informed me in the interview that was not as critically heart rending as the days when Phaniel and Jared were getting circumcised. Wanyonyi's father also testified of the same feeling.

After everybody had assumed their rightful positions in the compound, Hezron Soita, the initiates' paternal uncle entered into the house and came out with a bundle of old newspapers. Consulting with his brother the father to the initiate and another elder, he spread the newspapers on the ground about five meters away from the entrance of the main house. This is the Bukusu venerated spot. Initially they used to simply spread a circle of sorghum, millet, or corn flour to mark a spot where the initiate would stand during the circumcision procedure. This, according to Peter Wechuli, was no longer practiced due to fear of witchcraft. Wechuli pointed out that people with ill motives would come a few hours or even some days after the circumcision and scratch away some particles of bloodstained soil to perform witchcraft against the neophyte. Since it was easy to dispose of the bloodstains and the severed foreskin by simply wrapping it up and throwing it away, the use of the newspaper therefore was the safest means of protecting the initiate's future from incidences of witchcraft.

However, some of the Bukusu elders that the researcher interviewed later were not in the favor of the use of the newspapers to mark the circumcision spots. Speaking in his capacity as a senior consultant in matters of Bukusu traditions and customs, mzee Henry Mulunda was emphatic on the use of flour for circumcision spots. He argued that the meaning behind the drawn circle by use of millet or sorghum flour to mark the circumcision spot supersedes people's fears in witchcraft.

In Henry Mulunda's interpretation, the grain of flour represented the people's subsistence, while the drawn circle symbolized communal unity and solidarity. When the initiate arrives at the threshold, he sets his feet at the edge outside of the circle, meaning that he is seeking entry into the community as a man. During the operation, blood spills inside the circle as an atonement for the initiate's past childish misdemeanor. The severed foreskin is put down between the initiate's feet inside the circle by the senior circumciser to ratify the fulfillment of the laid down tradition by the ancestors.

In many African communities that practice circumcision, circles have been used to signify different things. In his *Introduction to African Religion*, Mbiti (1975) adds his voice to this discourse by saying that circles are "used in rituals, in art, in rock paintings, as decorations on stools and domestic utensils and so on" (p. 35). In his understanding, circles symbolize what he calls, "unending", or "continuity of the universe" (p. 35). Mbiti further points out that the same sentiments are heralded in rituals such as in the celebration of birth of a child, death, and rebirth to signify the power of life after death. After the circumcision spot at the threshold had been prepared, a team of four red-uniformed circumcisers strategically positioned themselves on the opposite side of the building to conceal their immediate sight from the initiate who would soon

be arriving. A senior among the four circumcisers motioned the eagerly awaiting and tension filled crowd and put out an announcement:

Nomanya oli ewe oli omumaina namba, yekhinga lubeka omusinde ali simbi khukhwola khuluya, If you know you are in the age-set of *Omumaina* number 2, please step aside when the initiate arrives on the threshold.

This announcement was cautioning all men standing in the crowd who were circumcised in the same year with the circumciser who was going to perform the operation on the initiate to step aside. The circumciser informed the researcher later in an interview with him that according to the Bukusu circumcision tradition, violation of this caution often caused mishaps during the circumcision operation. Even though, no further explanation was given beyond this point.

4.6.8 Grand transition to manhood: The operation stage

The final leg of the circumcision process is when the initiate comes from the river after smearing. The transition into manhood basically is crowned at this stage. For the case of Wanyonyi, he was escorted by the crowd that chanted *sioyaye*, ritual song with renewed vigor. To avoid his feet from stepping into water the second time, the initiate was a shoulder-lifted across the river. Somewhere at a distance while the singing could be heard by the waiting crowds at home, Wanyonyi the initiate was met by the circumciser's aide locally known as *omubingilisi*. The delegation made halted their singing the circumciser's aide bent to check on the initiate's condition of the penile in readiness for the surgical operation. To check the penile condition, the circumciser's aide retracted the initiate's foreskin until the entire glans was exposed beyond the sulcus. If the foreskin failed to retract beyond the sulcus, this meant that the initiate was a victim of a condition called *phimosis* in medical terms (Hodges, 1994: 19). And if the retracted foreskin

refused to cover the entire glans when it was released, the initiate would be characterized as one with a condition locally known as *engitole*, or *paraphimosis* (Hodges, 1994: 18).

According to the journal of Medical International Scientific Association (MISA), *Phimosis* is a physical condition that is generally associated with the narrowing of the foreskin which causes difficulties in retraction of the foreskin over the glans (www.circinfo.net; NOHARMM, 1994). Based on Their research findings, both the MISA and NOHARMM group asserts that *phimosis* is a normal condition in very young boys which often disappears with the progression of their ages. According to MISA's argument, *phimosis* would be considered as problem if it remains present in boys beyond the age of six (www.circiinf.net). *Phimosis*, locally known as *khuanda* is a condition which does not only affect the Bukusu boys, but a universal problem. According to the 1999 survey, MISA presents 8% of Danish and 9% of the German boys of ages eight and above as having had *phimosis* condition. In what they describe as a more recent study, 77% of boys of ages 11 to 15 years worldwide had retractable foreskins (www.circiinf.net). The MISA survey introduces another condition that is called pathological *phimosis*, which is a narrow foreskin opening that causes either partial or complete urinary obstruction. The condition eventually causes backward pressure to increase with the normal functioning of the kidney. This may cause higher blood pressure and risks of heart attack and stroke (www.circiinf.net). The MISA survey persistently asserts that *pathological phimosis* also increases risks of penile cancer; and therefore, it cites circumcision as a lifetime prescription for preventive mitigation.

Paraphimosis is described as a very painful condition whereby the retraction of the foreskin fusils to be brought back over the glans. According to MISA, this pain can only be permanently relieved by circumcision (www.circiinf.net). *Frenuar Chordee* is cited as a medical condition that causes *phimosis* in most boys and even adult males. This results from an unusually thick and

often tight *frenulum*, locally known as *lurandasi*, and prevents the foreskin from fully retracting (www.circinfo.net; NOHARMM, 1994). Due to its fragility and less elastic in nature than normal muscle tissues, the frenulum often tears and causes excruciating pain among adult uncircumcised males during masturbation or intercourse. Gain, the MISA survey cites circumcision as remedial preventive prescription to this problem. However, they also recommend a procedure known as *frenoplasty* as a possible mitigation (www.circinfo.net).

After carefully examining Wanyonyi's penile condition, the circumciser's aide rushed back to the ceremonial home to unveil the initiate's condition to the anxiously awaiting crowd. The circumciser's aide report was in simple statement: "*Omwana ali busa bulayi*", "The boy is alright". This report was a form of relieve particular's to the initiate's parents, an indication that the operation was going to be swift and free from complications. Normally, if the initiate had a condition of *phimosis*, the circumciser's aide would arrive back home and report the contrary.

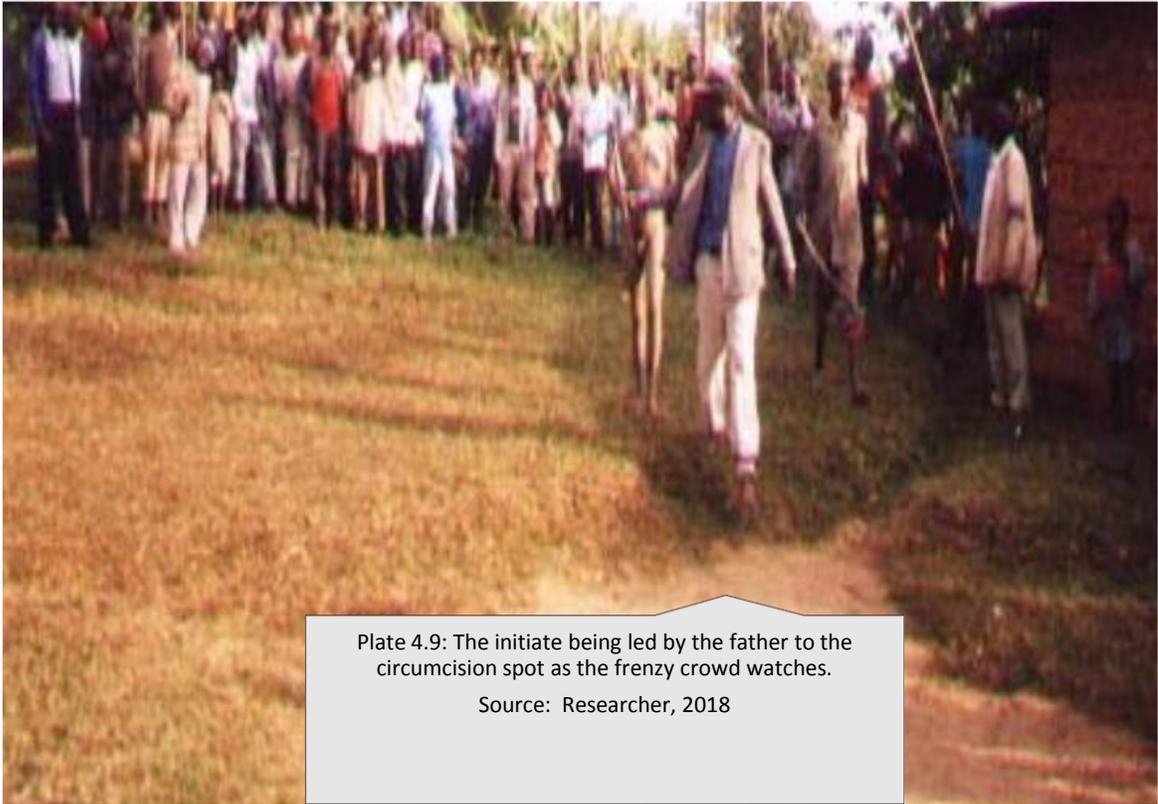
Reports of this nature were to prepare the initiate's parents and the crowds of the potential complications that would be involved in the surgical procedure. Operations of this nature are exceedingly painful to the initiate and usually take a protracted time. According to Wakhungu, the senior circumciser, each of the two conditions had its own operational procedures. He said that a normal procedure two stages: First, is what he calls cutting of the foreskin, and secondly, the aide holds the tip of the exposed glans and moderately stretches the penis forward. The circumciser then reaches for the inner foreskin or inner membrane using his sharpened finger and thumb nails. With his same double edged six-inch knife, the circumciser slices off the inner membrane and sticks it around the initiate's belly button.

On the extreme, an initiate with *phimosis* condition would endure three stages in an operation. Cutting off the foreskin is preceded by an excruciating procedure that is forceful retraction of the

foreskin. This stage is subsequently followed by the last two, cutting and the severing of inner membrane. Although it involves only one stage, Wakhungu pointed out that the most complicated operation that has ever given him challenges was that of an initiate with *paraphimosis* condition. In his expertise as an accomplished senior circumciser, Wakhungu revealed that since there is hardly any foreskin to grab, normally combines both the outer and inner membranes to perform a procedure he calls collective excision. As a precautionary measure for future smooth operations, boys are normally advised by their grandfathers to begin gradual retracting of their foreskins early in their ages. Wakhungu, the senior circumciser views this as part of the African pedagogy passed on to the adolescents. He also asserts that grandfathers will always carry the shame of their initiate grandchildren who happen to be victims of *phimosis* conditions.

Wanyonyi's grand transition to manhood has reached a crucial stage. A few meters before he arrived at the home threshold to step at the designated circumcision spot, the initiate's paternal aunt emerged from the kitchen with a wooden spoon dipped in a local brew. With this wooden spoon, she smears the initiate's lips saying, "from now on, no more irresponsible talk should come from this mouth". This very act of smearing the local brew to the initiate's mouth is an oath act that is meant to inculcate discipline in the initiate. Symbolically, this act was to warn the initiate that there was danger was he was going, beginning with the excruciating bangs of the eminent operation. It meant that the initiate was now leaving his childish behavior and entering into a stage of responsibility and accountability. He will now be responsible for any utterances that preceded from his mouth. The wooden spoon was also used to warn the initiate for what he is about to encounter, "never should you open you mouth when the circumciser's knife sets on you". Bramwel Masinde, the initiate's father received him about ten meters away from the main

house. The father held Wanyonyi's hand and led to the circumcision spot as everybody stepped aside amid deafening silence and heightened tension (*see plate 4.9*).



Suddenly, the circumciser and his aides emerged from behind the house and bounced on the initiate. With no eye blinking and no leg moving, Wanyonyi bravely encountered the knife(*see plate 4.10*).

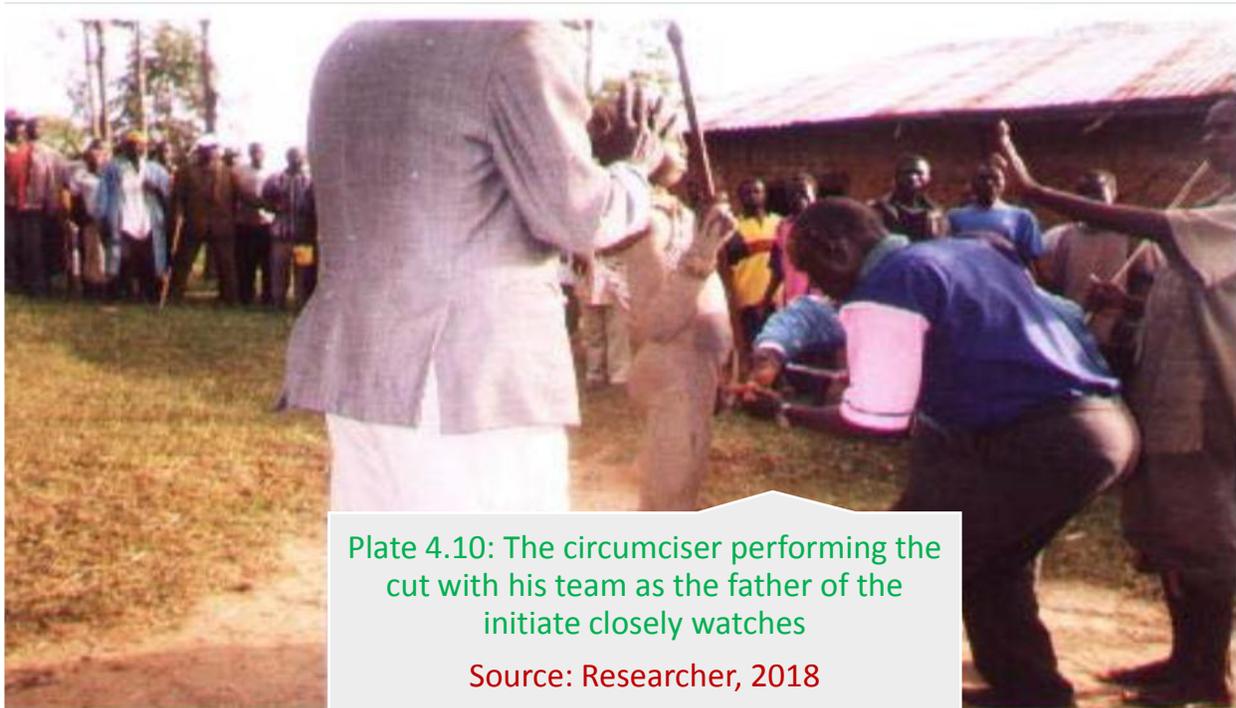


Plate 4.10: The circumciser performing the cut with his team as the father of the initiate closely watches

Source: Researcher, 2018

The entire circumcision procedure normally takes 30 seconds, but in some cases, it may last longer especially when the initiate's penis is too small for good grip or too mature with tough foreskin. Since the initiate was free or devoid of any complications, it took less than 20 seconds for the circumciser to blow the whistle to announce that the initiate had become a "total man". The blowing of the whistle was immediately followed by high-pitched ululation from Wanyonyi's aunt. This was to announce to the silent crowds with abated breath, and to a group of women inside the house who included the mother that the initiate had just become a man of the society.

Celebrations began at the very blow of the circumciser's whistle. Quite a number of songs were sung in varied styles from the previous. On such song that was sung immediately after the

circumcision operation was translated as, “we have overcome our perennial enemy”. The presents showered to the initiate included silver coins, a young bull, and many others. Such gestures were often done as symbolic representation of a celebration and a form of welcoming the neophyte into the world of abundance and generosity(*see plate 4.11*).



Plate 4.11: The crowd bursts into celebration following the successfully operation. Giving of gifts and other presents followed.
Source: Researcher, 2018

It was a show to Wanyonyi that he had to be generous in the society just as his parents are for their gesture to entertain the guests.

Caldwell (1997), “The initiates are usually circumcised before sunrise or while the morning is still cold. How they endure the procedure is seen as reflecting their upbringing. In order not to be a disgrace to the families, they are expected to act stoically and tolerate the excruciating pain of this anesthesia-free operation without having to flinch (p. 93)”. All through from the beginning of the process, the initiate is prepared for the big day both emotionally and psychologically. “Set

phrases may be used shortly before or during the circumcision, which presumably help to reduce the tension between the circumciser and the initiate, as well as helping the boy to know when to expect pain. For the Serer in Senegal, the circumciser asks for forgiveness from the boy, who answers *I forgive you*” (Niang, 2007:56)”. And commenting about the Xhosa in South Africa, Ogubanjo (2004) observes, “Xhosa in South Africa have to shout, ‘I am a man’ at the time of the operation” (p. 62). From the Biblical point of view, Hughes (2006) opines, “Circumcision was a sign of the covenant between Yahweh and Abraham. Abraham was to circumcise himself, his sons, and his slaves and his servants. For Abraham this resulted to the removal of the very tip of skin that extended beyond the glans of the penis. The circumcision theory was enforced by the Jewish priests. According to Exodus 4:25, Moses and his progeny were circumcised (p. 16)”.

4.6.9 Formal entry into seclusion

Seclusion is considered as the most serene stage in the life of the initiate. This is when informal education will be passed on to the initiates. It is a stage that is intended to turn around the status of the initiates. Niang (2007) observes,

The seclusion period constitutes the most significant part of the ritual, in terms of time which varies from a few weeks to three months duration, for example in Zambia, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, and South Africa. This is with regard to the Social-Cultural meanings and practices attached to the procedure. Seclusion as an “incubation period” for new attitudes, practices and behaviors of the initiates. It is critical for the transmission of cultural knowledge. Practically, this is a school of hard knocks than a period of joy; the boy’s often experiencing privation, bullying and humiliation. This is likely to be a remnant of traditional practices when circumcision was closely linked to “toughening, training and initiation of male adolescents into warrior status with challenges during the time of retreat reflecting ones that boys would have to face in their future lives, the purpose of the retreat being to them emotionally to be able to cope (p. 9).

Apparently, before an initiate is formally taken into seclusion upon his circumcision operation, several tasks were performed. After circumcision, the initiate remained standing for a little while to acknowledge congratulatory accolades from the people present. Namwenya, the young sister

to Wanyonyi, stood behind him and grasped her hands around the waist to support the initiate from falling due the pain exhaustion. Meanwhile, after standing for fifteen minutes, a short stool was put right behind his feet. With laces of blood around the penile wound, the initiate was gently supported by the sister to sit down. The initiate's shivering body was covered by a new sheet and a blanket bought by his mother a few days prior to the ceremony.

Among the presents that were also given by his mother included the traditional offering of cereals contained in a straw tray locally known as *lutelu*. A few silver coins of money both in coins and notes were stuck in the lump of soil on the initiate's head by his aunts and uncles. All the monies were also put on a plate on the right hand of the initiate's feet. One of the conspicuous presents that were given included a blue long-sleeved shirt and trouser with Manhattan labels. Each of these gifts carried certain significance. Money represented an economic world; cereals represented agriculture and prosperity; while *lutelu*, the round and open straw tray which contained different kinds of cereals such as sorghum, maize, millet and fruits symbolized the openness and generosity of the community into which the initiate was being ushered. The teenage girl, Namwenya symbolized the initiate's maturity and future association with the opposite sex, meaning that the initiate had become a man and therefore ready to marry at his own will.

In rear cases, some initiates decline to assume the seat after the circumcision operation in demand for a major present from the parents. For example, Godwin Khisa, one of the initiates whose circumcision the researcher witnessed on August 5, 2018, demanded to be offered a bull, which represented wealth, as a gift before he could sit down. Since the parents did not have the bull, negotiation was conducted among the relatives and a 12 year old girl was given to Khisa a gift on credit. He eventually accepted and sat down. This literally meant that when the girl is

grown up and gets married, Khisa would be entitled to receive a bull from the pride-price that would be given her bride's kin without negotiation.

When the singing and dance began to settled down, Namwenya was instructed to perform the task of cleaning Wanyonyi before he was taken into the house. She first removed the soil that was heaped on his head, and gently removed the rumen from around his neck. Together with a piece of the foreskin and the inner membrane, Namwenya wrapped all these items into blood-soaked used papers, which served as a spot at which Wanyonyi stood to be cut. Places where these tissues were disposed used to be the family's top secret, but for Wanyonyi's family, it was not because his were tossed into the family's pit latrine by his father immediately after the circumcision operation.

Samuel Onyango maintained a different opinion over the question of disposing the penile tissues. In an interview with him on 4th August, 2018 at Godwin Khisa's initiation ceremony, Onyango strongly opposed the use of toilets as a dumping place for the penile tissues. He was in favor of the anthill bushes as the traditional dumping sites although severed from the human body and commonly referred to as dead and useless. Samuel Onyango said that the penile tissues were still linked to the living flesh for their former bearers. Therefore disposing them off should be done with same respect as with the disposing of the female placenta upon the delivery of a baby. The placenta, which is a vascular organ that sustains a larger part of the umbilical cord from the uterus, was traditionally buried in a secret place mostly in a banana grove.

Similarly, according to Samuel Onyango, severed penile tissues were secretly taken and buried in an anthill in the morning immediately after the operation. The father or guardian designated for burying the penile tissues subsequently informed the initiate and the site remained a top secret between the two. This site would remain revered and out of bounds for the concerned

initiate throughout his life. According to the customary laws, stepping in, harvesting thatch, or cutting trees from such site by the concerned initiate was avoided by all means. Any circumcised man who violated this rule was threatened with a regrowth of the foreskin to his circumcised penis and other forms of calamities.

Alfred Wakuta and James Wasike also argued that disposing of the penile tissues to pit latrines was an invitation of calamity over the heads of the concerned initiates. In their views the elders consider human waste not only as pollution, but also as physical curses that emanate from human bodies; hence, to bury the penile tissues into human excrement in pit latrine was a direct damnation to the concerned initiates. And this, from Samuel Onyango's perspective "has caused misfortunes and degradation of character among the new generation in our community". Despite the acquisition of modern education, Wakuta added, "In comparison with our days when we were young, the current young generation is a battalion of non-critical thinkers".

When the researcher asked Wakuta what he meant by the statement, "battalion of non-critical thinkers," he replied by saying that "the role of modern education has played in our society has been to incite the young generation against – our beliefs and ways of doing things. In the researcher's analysis of this statement, Wakuta was simply saying that a part of modern education has been used as a weapon of destruction against African beliefs and customs in a myriad ways. We revisited the issue of penile disposal and it was unanimous that it would be very authentic to humanely dispose the penile tissues.

For Philemon Khaemba and Eric Wandabwa who represented the young generation on the same forum, the question of disposing of the initiates' penile tissues in anthills was an indirect way of teaching the initiates methods of how to preserve their natural resources. They argued that, "now that we no longer have the shrines especially at the water catchment areas, the populace have no

respect for the environment, especially the tropical rain forests. People have resorted to random cutting down of trees for the construction of houses, firewood, charcoal and timber.” According to the above argument, drought and starvation are the alleged misfortune (as mentioned by Wakuta and Onyango) which has fallen upon the present generation. These have often struck our land due to deforestation, overgrazing, and poor methods of agriculture.

Besides keeping the penile tissues away from being reached by the witches or persons with evil intentions in the community, the hypotheses behind the burial of the penile tissues in the anthill environs was also an indirect indigenous way of teaching the young people how to preserve the environment as they matured into adulthood. After ensuring the safety of the penile tissues and the initiate, Wanyonyi was gently assisted to get up from the small stool. He was walked slowly to the main house, and was put in a bed room away from the living room. Again owing to parents’ Christian faith, Wanyonyi was not led to perform a “backward walk” ritual around the house as it is normally done by other initiates.

Usually after circumcision, before the initiate enters the house, he has to go around the house walking backwards. This tradition is which eventually turned into a ritual that depicts a display of high-level sensitivity to the wounded warrior. From Samuel Onyango’s point of view, an initiate who has successfully stood the vagaries of the knife is considered a warrior. Although wounded a “warrior” is supposed to be cautious and steady in mind and aware of everything in the environment. In other words by performing this ritual, the initiates are taught never to give their backs to the world where they are coming from. It is a lesson never to succumb to what appears to be against them.

Marck (1997) seem to concur with the above as follows, “Instructions for life and education on adolescent sexual and reproductive health can also be part of learning during the seclusion. But

this is not necessarily part of the ritual in all communities practicing circumcision. In Zambia, for example, where the essence of traditional male circumcision is said to be the development of the boys' character, sexual education is not included in the teaching following circumcision" (p. 17). And, "In Malawi, however, counseling on sexuality, genital hygiene and good behavior take place during the period of seclusion after circumcision (Kapondo, 2006:10)".

Various places are identified as seclusion homes. They include caves, forests, groves, riverine forests, and mountains. Mbiti (1991) observes, "In the African Traditional Religion, a forest is regarded to be the home of the spirits, and it is believed that spirits have a transforming power in the lives of the Africa people". Van Vuuren (1999),

Apparently, acts of purification are performed at the initiation camp in the forest whereby the initiates are instructed on matters of sexuality and general moral behavior in the outside world. During the retreat into seclusion, the initiates are first bound by several dietary taboos for at least few days. For instance, the Xhosa people of South Africa are not supposed to eat fresh produce or warm foods for at least the first eight days, not to touch any of the food fed to them until their wounds begin to heal. They are barred from smoking, and walking about singing as it is believed that such acts would attract malevolent spirits against them. The Xhosa initiates are also restrained from wandering about while unpainted with white clay. But at the same time they are forbidden to wash their bodies in water, except their hands during meals. White clay is a substitute for water bath. The boys in seclusion are strictly instructed to avoid any form of argument, and not to let any uncircumcised boys watch while their wounds are being dressed. On other restriction is looking at woman whose head is not veiled. This is meant to curb any form of sexual arousal, which may cause breakage of the healing wounds. As a remedy, the initiates are instructed to carry sticks to hit the ground to distract any disturbing thought that might cross their minds (p. 118).

Circumcision ritual is an integration of values that ha impetus on social – economic, political and religious lives of the people. Van Vuuren (1999) suggests, "The perceived curriculum of the African traditional circumcision school is predicated on the principles of justice, intelligence and communal responsibility. In one of the studies of urban life in Duncan Village, East London of South Africa, it is apparent that ritual circumcision provides youths with recognized status,

marriage privilege, independence from parents, new responsibilities in one's home and in the community, and ethnic identity (p. 121)".

According to Emile Durkheim (1995), "Initiation is a long series of rites that aim to introduce young men into religious life. Before the initiation, the young man is described as having lived in a purely profane world where he has done things as a child. A circumcised man is perceived or at least is expected to be trustworthy, desirable, and respected in the public square as opposed to the uncircumcised (p. 59)". As observed earlier, circumcision is a transition to a higher status. Pauw (1999),

Ritual is a ladder to superior status. The terminology, *Bubuntu*, is commonly used to refer to ethos of the individual in the community. Theologically the term is translated as humanness of the African person. While the operation itself puts a permanent mark on one's physical makeup, its manifest is a reminder that such a person is a well-balanced citizen. As opposed to this, uncircumcised man is an object of ridicule and scorn in his community. Such is perceived as unclean whom no good can be expected of. In the event of marriage, such a marriage will always remain stigmatized. In most cases, uncircumcised men adults hibernate into private life and they marry from outside their communities. Even in cities, there have been cases where adult men have been ambushed and circumcised (p. 13).

4.6.10 The symbolism and Messages transmitted during the period of seclusion

First, "sexual reserve and control are encouraged in some settings; for example, initiates in Senegal are told that if they engage sexual activities before waiting a long time, their foreskins will grow back again, and they will have to undergo a new and even a more painful circumcision (Niang, 2007: 108)". Secondly, "sexual education and guidance concerning marriage and relationships with women used to form part of the education in the bush in the Eastern Cape Region in South Africa. Promiscuity is taught as something that boys do in contrast to men and initiates are tutored by elders on sexual hygiene and the ways of manhood (Vincent, 2007:11)". And thirdly, "different messages are transmitted by peer education in other ethnic groups for example, among the Kikuyu in central Kenya, newly circumcised are advised to prove to prove

their manhood by having sex after the procedure. According to myths, early post-circumcision sex, *kwiwura mbiro*, literally translated as *cleaning the soot*, enhances wound healing and prevents illness and death, and boys are encouraged by older males to have sexual intercourse within the months after circumcision (Silverman, 2004:19)".

4.6.10.1 The Neophyte's first meal

Since Wanyonyi ate lunch at his maternal uncle's place and dinner at his parents' home, he was exhausted and starving. It was time for him to have his first meal now in the capacity of a neophyte. In the Bukusu traditional customs, such a meal was prepared by the initiate's mother and fed to the initiate by the circumciser, locally known as *omukhebi*. The circumciser came back to the ceremonial home later before lunch hour to perform this ritual of feeding the initiate. The initiate's mother had prepared a portion of flour meal made from millet with tender roast meat to go with. The circumciser scooped a fist-full of millet flour meal, dipped in a bowl beef stew and literally put it on Wanyonyi's lips. Before the initiate took his first bite, the circumciser then uttered the following statement:

I am the one who circumcised you! This is our old tradition from the time of our ancestors. This first meal I am feeding you is to reconcile us: between you and men, and our ancestors. From now onwards, you are going to be eating with the people (The Circumciser).

Without uttering a word, the initiate took the first bite and began to eat by himself as well as the circumciser. In the researcher's analysis, this ritual provides complex symbolic meaning: First, it is an occasion where the circumciser is openly introduced to the initiate. Secondly, it serves as a peace meal, that is, a time in which the circumciser makes peace with the initiate. It sent a message to the initiate that the pain inflicted on him was not the circumciser's making, but rather, it was to maintain the traditions and customs laid down by their ancestors.

4.6.10.2 Nursing procedures

Besides the pain of the circumciser's knife, more lay ahead in the initiate's four to six weeks of healing process. The traditional into which the initiate, hereafter referred to as a neophyte, spent all his nursing period was made from a bundle of banana leaves spread on the floor for a mattress. The initiate was instructed by his local nurse to strictly lie on his back during the first three weeks. This was to prevent incidents of his fragile penile wound from sticking on his thighs. Right above the right-hand of the initiate's bed hung on a string one of the two bells, the initiate used during the summoning period prior to his circumcision. This bell served as a safety tool from thunder. From time immemorial, heavenly forces and bodies have drawn the African people's attention in a variety of ways (Mbiti, 1975). For instance, "based on the data collected in this research study", the Bukusu people maintain a strong belief up to today that thunder often struck people who lay on their backs. Therefore to prevent this from happening, the initiate was instructed to shake the bell every time a flash of lightening appeared. This was to notify the ancestors of his vulnerability, hence summoning their power for protection.

Traditionally, treatment of the initiate by the use of herbal medicine began on the third day after the circumcision operation. But with the advent of modern remedies, it now begins immediately as soon as the initiate leaves the circumcision spot. Each of the circumcision the researcher observed received first treatment on the same day. Wanyonyi was attended to by a medical practitioner who operated a clinic around Nzoia Sugar Company Ltd. Wanyonyi was administered an anti-tetanus injection about four hours after his circumcision operation. The same nurse scheduled a visit three days in a week for the first two weeks and two days in a week until he was completely healed.

4.6.10.3 Herbal medical care treatment

According to the respondents' views on herbal medication, forest should be conserved in order for the people to draw herb medicine from them. Apart from using traditional medicine to heal the circumcision wound, these medicines can also come in handy to cure other ailments. For a protracted period of time until the advent of modern biomedical drugs, the Bukusu used a traditional herb locally known as *enguu*, a botanical species of *conyza pyrifolia* and *Bimeselo*, a botanical species of *helichyrum setosum* (Duke, 1985). The herbal concoction was applied in the penile wound as Band-Aid. Peter Wechuli, one of the researcher's senior informants who undertook this kind of medication during his time in 1954 explained that its pain goes far beyond the pain of the actual circumcision. The process of turning *conyza pyrifolia* herb into smooth paste takes the following course: First, the harvested leaves on a twig are dried by smoking them at a fire place and then ground into smooth dark brown powder that resembles snuff tobacco. A small measure is put on a soft thin two-inch leaf from the botanical *helichyrum setosum* species plant. Unlike *conyza pyrifolia*, *helichyrum setosum*, which acted as the present-day Band-Aid were harvested without much complications. While *conyza pyrifolia* can be found mostly in dry areas around anthill thickets as well as flat grounds, *helichyrum setosum* thrive well in the meadows.

Besides the immediate remedial values, according to Mwangi (2015: 12), "multipurpose medicinal plants are also known to have important ecological, economic, cultural, social, and religious roles in many African communities. A recent study carried out by the World Bank officials John; Lambert, Per Ryden, and Enos Eskuri" (in Mwangi, 2015: 13) does indicate that, "like other species, medicinal trees, shrubs, and herbs can help prevent soil erosion, control flooding, purify water, and protect against strong winds". In their study, which was commissioned by the, "World

Bank with a focus on bio-economic value of multipurpose medicinal plants for the rehabilitation of dry lands in Sub-Saharan Africa”, Lambert and his research team report, “The 2014 global market for herbal medicines including herbal products and raw materials, was estimated \$ 75 billion (Mwangi, 2015: 13). Similarly, recent studies in South Africa and Burkina Faso shows an annual value of medicinal products standing at \$ 23 million and \$17 million respectively. He same report shows that more than 500 species are marketed within Kwazulu-Natal. About 48 million (80% of the population) of Ethiopian inhabitants use more than 800 plants with an annual worth of \$74 million (Mwangi, 2015: 19)”.

Focusing on the Kenyan population, the 2012 Ministry of Health budget for modern medicine was estimated at Ksh. 1.8 billion, which catered for only 55 percent of the entire population. The 45 percent who could not afford the purchase of the conventional drugs had no option but to rely on herbal medicine. Moreover, the World Bank’s Report also points out that the Kenyan Government lacks sufficient information on the role of traditional medicine for the enhancement of healthcare (Mwangi, 2015: 25). The World Bank’s report urged the Kenyan Government to fully involve the communities in policy-making processes in the cultivation, care, and marketing of traditional medicine for sustainable livelihood. This would encourage and broaden the communities’ knowledge as well as boost their interest in taking care of the environment. As the initiates set out into seclusion, they were taught and exposed to a variety of medicinal plants. Peter Wechuli, one of the researcher’s senior informants revealed that *Kumukombela*, of the botanical name *mondia whytei*, was one of the very first herbal plants the initiates were introduced to. It is widely used among the Abaluhya ethnic groups because it is believed to enhance blood circulation, control depression, and boost memory. This herb was “listed in the World Bank’s study as a critical and money-making herbal to be promoted to the global market. (Mwangi, 2015: 47)”.

Out of the thousands of herbalists, also known in Kiswahili as *waganga* (Swantz, 1990), in Kenya's rural and urban areas, more than 800 experts have so far been trained in alternative medicine by the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) in conjunction with the “International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE – retrieved from St. Paul's University library Newspaper archives on May 16th, 2018 – Nation Correspondent, December 20, 2015)”. It was the observation of most respondents that there should be a move to preserve forests because they provide medicine using for healing the penile wounds. In the event that the forests are exploited and finished, there could be no place to get traditional medicine. In Siaka area and most parts of Bungoma County where the research took place, there is still patches of forest which if preserved can be a source of herbal medicines (*see plates 4.12, 4.13, and 4.14*).





Plate 4.13: A section Siaka where makeshift houses are build for the initiates to stay during the period of seclusion of forest

Source: Researcher, 2018



Plate 4.14: This photo shows a section of a forest in mount Elgon where herbs are obtained for the treatment penile wounds and other diseases.

Source: Researcher, 2018

4.6.10.4 Neophyte's vocational engagements in seclusion

In Janice Boddy (1989), circumcision marks the start of sexual segregation of the child. After their operation, boys longer sleep with their mothers and sisters, but accompany their older brothers (p.59). Throughout his healing period, Wanyonyi's room will exclusively be out of bounds. In the Bukusu understanding, the neophyte befits a genderless description, meaning that the initiate can neither be addressed as a boy because he has just crossed that line, nor a man because he is yet to perform a ritual called *khukhwalikha*, the coming out of seclusion. According to Peter Wechuli, the Buklusu circumcision history was characteristic with myths surrounding the initiates and their severed foreskin. One of the myths was that a newly circumcised boy was found to have redeveloped foreskin during the seclusion period. Arnold Van Gennep (in Bowie, 2000: 27) describes this stage as the liminal period.

During the period of seclusion, and using Van Gennep's description, a Bukusu initiate is defined with no structure. He wears a uniform of a pair of wraparound sheets to resemble neither male nor female. He paints himself with special white ochre and keeps himself away from people especially the female gender. He must not shower until certified as completely healed. The white earth is believed to wash away dirt from his body (*see plate 4.15*).



Plate 4.15: Trio hanging out clad in sheets and smeared with white earth
Source: Researcher, 2018

Apparently, the period of seclusion for the Bukusu initiate can also be defined in Van Gennep's terms, as a stage of marginalization (in Bowie, 200: 23). It is a stage that is punctuated by lots of tutoring on matters of Bukusu cultural traditions. Talking about his experience, Peter Wechuli gave the following testimony:

When I went through the rite of circumcision myself at the age of 13 years, I was taught things that have always remained with me and guided me throughout my years of adulthood. Among other virtues, I was taught to respect people of all ages regardless of gender, especially the elderly (Peter Wechuli).

These lifelong lessons are passed on to the initiates through a ritual known as oathing. In the researcher's observation of the two circumcision seasons (2016 & 2018), the initiates whom the researcher may classify as representing the new generation would be identified with one stereotype vocation: bird hunting. Many of the neophytes walked with what the researcher saw as two passive weapons in their hands. One, a three-foot colorfully decorated stick with black rubber band tips resemble a small club commonly referred as *kumwasi* (see plate 4.16). These sticks are used as implements of conveying greetings between the initiates and people from the open society.



**Plate 4.16: Photo showing a stick that is used for conveying greetings.
Source: Researcher, 2018**

In accordance with the Bukusu tradition, there were laws and statutes that governed and protected the welfare of the initiates, who were considered the most vulnerable members of the

society. Besides their withdrawal from open society, the initiates were instructed never to approach female of all ages. It was believed that the female's presence would either enhance the initiate's libido for arousal or cast spell to the initiates with their evil eyes. It is spelt out informally that adult women were by all means to avoid meeting or getting in contact with the presence of the initiate. Any adult woman who violated this statute was charged with a fine of a goat or a cow. In case of an abrupt meeting of the initiate and a young girl, the initiate would then use his stick to give a gentle knock on a girl's ankle in form of greeting. However, in order to avoid and keep the girls away from the initiate's way, this form of greeting often changed from a gentle touch to a more serious and painful stroke on the ankle.

A similar of greeting is also done in a case where an adult ritually circumcised man met an initiate on the way. The man would take the stick from the initiate's hand and use it to administer a gentle greeting on the ankle of the initiate. Again, as a means to keep the initiates from the way of adult men from the open society, such greetings often turned into serious strokes. The second passive weapon that has become a trademark for today's initiates is their use of catapults(*see plate 4.17*). With this and small stones, they use to hunt and kill birds in the woods. Some initiates go fishing, but due to the nature of their vulnerability, fear of being attacked by snakes, and bruised by wild thicket and other unanticipated dangers, this practice has since subsided.

Plate 4.17: Catapults one of the passive weapons that the initiates carry around.

Source: Researcher, 2018



4.6.10.5 Neophyte's shower

Neophyte's shower, which the researcher may literally translate as circumcision shower which is a reminiscent of the present-day baby shower is a practice that is fading away among the Bukusu circumcision practices. It is a practice characterized by the initiate's relatives buying foodstuff and other presents and took to the neophyte's home. In an interview with Beatrice Nasimiyu on this subject, she informed the researcher that neophyte's shower was one of the most important occasions especially among the female relatives of the initiate. She pointed out that it served several purposes between those who gave and those who received. First, it served to remind the initiate that although he was subjected to seclusion, his kin and the relatives in general love him and they care about him. Secondly, food and other presents served to replenish the already

depleted stock of the initiate's family after the circumcision ritual ceremonies. Third, this served as a uniting element. That is, the feast brought the families and immediate neighbors together, and enhanced their relationships.

Beatrice Nasimiyu added by saying that the neophyte's shower was done especially in honor of the first-born initiate in the family. Nasimiyu gave an example that out of the four sons who now grown with their own families, she only showered the first one. The other three completed their seclusion without it. Beatrice Nasimiyu regretted that the fading away of this practice has immensely contributed to the diminishing of strong relationships within the nucleus and extended family units.

4.6.11 Administration of oath and Reintegration back to the society

At this point, the initiate is deemed to be vulnerable. It a point when the are handled carefully and avert them from any impending dangers. Mellitus (2007) observes; "After the act of circumcising the boy, the circumciser has the obligation of feeding the initiate and making sure that he follows up on the healing process of the initiate. He also advises the initiate on various societal norms. In fact he is a key player in the life of the initiate. The reason why the initiate strips naked implies that he is being seen naked for the last time; and ones he becomes mature, he will not carelessly expose his nakedness. It also means that the initiate is graduating from childhood that is characterized by nakedness and nudity (*childish behaviour*). As far as circumcision procedure was concerned, the initiate was taken care of by the entire community to ensure that there is quick healing. While in the healing process the initiate stay in an enclosure called *mwikombe* (a house where the initiates stay up to the time they are graduated). They are given instructions on how they should live as responsible people of the community upon graduation. It was observed that before the day of graduation, the initiates stay outside in the

banana plantation prior to the day of graduation. This was meant to instil courage. Moreover, before they are graduated, they fight using hot cooked bananas; this is meant to teach the initiates that in the long life that they are being wished, they are also hard experiences which should be learned the hard way (p. 66)”.

Plates 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.21 show the whole process towards the ultimate graduation of the initiate!



Plate 4.18: In this photo, the young boys share a meal of hot bananas with the initiate in a black suit and then eventually the fight begins

Source: Researcher, 2018

Banana fight is one aspect of the ritual that could be considered to be dropped because it can cause accidents. The significance of it should be replicated in something else that is considered not harmful. The symbolism that comes with the banana fight is a preparation on the side of the initiate that life is not easy for those who lazy and are not committed to hard work. The inherent purpose of it is to explain the fact that challenges may come, but as an adult, one must put on

theye courage and boldness to face them. From the views gathered, this is one way of making the ritual memorable to the initiate to his old age. The purpose of having a memory of it is staying in cognizance to the fact that circumcision, “ is a turning point in the life of individuals involved. The bottomline of all this discussion is embracing the idea that Bukusu male ritual circumcision should be preserved because of its inherent values (Mellitus, 2000: 70)”.



Plate 4.19: The initiate and other boys engage in a fight of hot bananas as the invited guests watch from a distance lest they become a target of a hot banana
Source: Researcher, 2018



Plate 4.20: The father of the initiate officially stops the fight in order to settle down to business of giving instructions
Source: Researcher, 2018



Plate 4.21: Finally, the father presents the initiate to the eagerly awaiting congregation presided by the circumciser who will give instructions for ethical living and blessings. The new clothes signify the beginning of a new life.

In his thesis, Mukimba (2013) responds on the process of graduating the initiate from the home of seclusion:

After the whole process of graduating the initiate is finished, the initiate will now be seen as a new being of the society. The newness is symbolized by the new clothes and new house that he is given by the father. He will also be allowed to initiate the projects that will generate income for him so that he does not entirely depend on his parents. This instills responsibility. As it was in the Old Testament, circumcision came along with change from one level to another. Abraham's name changed and the wellbeing of his household changed. In the same way, in the Bukusu community, circumcision marked the beginning of new life (p. 67).

Oath administration or inauguration of the oath is a ritual that is performed to an initiate by a man who circumcised. This ritual precedes the ritual of coming out of seclusion. While still experiencing the shackles of seclusion, the initiate's mother prepared brew as the father took charge of the preparation of other foods that would be served during the feast. According to Mukimba (2013: 68), "the circumciser who operated on the neophyte was informed of the day on which he would come to the initiate's home with all his tools to administer the oath. On the material day of oath administration, the initiate would be instructed to stay in his house or room as the rest of the people remained outside or in other houses making merry". A small measure of beer is served in a calabash or in other similar functions; beer is served in a small clay pot with two siphons stuck in it. One siphon was meant for the circumciser and the other for the initiate. The siphons in one clay pot represent as rise in the ranks and change of status of the initiate. They serve to remind the initiate that while he was still a young boy, he was considered a child and culturally not permitted to sit or intermingle with the elders or even drink together.

After everything has been set in place, the circumciser would enter into the house of seclusion and sit face to face with the neophyte ready for the oath administration. At Khisa and Wanjala's inauguration, the circumciser introduced himself and said, "I have come to you for the second time to engage a conversation with you in accordance with our Bukusu customs." The first time was during the moment when they were fed the first meal after they got circumcised. "As I instructed you in our first meeting or encounter after I operated you, in this meeting I talk to you

as prospective fellow men of the society. The circumciser went ahead and interpreted the symbolic meaning and significance of brew in the clay pot and the two siphons. He handed each of the initiates siphon and took another one for himself. The brew pot represented kindness and generosity of spirit placed at the center of the community. The siphons symbolized the cooperation and the solidarity among the members of the society. However, the circumciser emphasized that as they partook of their share in that ritual, they were required to keep their hearts open.

The symbolic language that was involved in this ritual went like this: “The door that is open is yours; but that which is closed is not yours.” Although this statement is commonly fathomed as warning the initiate against adultery and immoral behavior towards married women, the researcher found it replete with a variety of other moral and ethical teachings. It strongly served to raise the consciousness of the initiates in relation to the “new world” into which they were entering. Before they started to take the meal in a ritualized manner, the circumciser would take the knife that was used in circumcising and hold it horizontally upwards. While still in a sitting position, the initiate would proceed to bite the edge of the knife as the circumciser the following statement:

This is the knife that operated you during circumcision

From today henceforth, you have also become a total man

You must guard your tongue and conduct yourself with decorum

Any words that will proceed from this mouth

Must be those that build, unite, make peace, and not those that destroy

Neophyte's homecoming from seclusion

The coming out of seclusion is the ultimate stage in the Bukusu initiation rites. As Van Gennep (in Bowie, 2000: 45) describes, “this is a stage of incorporation, re-aggregation, implying that the

initiate is finally re-integrated into the society as a transformed man. During the time the initiate underwent this rite, in the company of uncircumcised boys, Wanyonyi was assisted by his father to bring out all of his old clothes and beddings and threw them into a bonfire set up in an open place in the homestead. This was symbolic of cleansing with fire, which normally takes place at sunset". It also symbolized the random destruction of the old nature. Wanyonyi spent the whole night in a banana grove in the company of those young uncircumcised boys, and went to the river to bathe the following day before he was escorted back home. New clothes were taken to him at the riverside. At around noon, Wanyonyi came back home as a new man amid shouts of singing, dancing, and great feasting.

A mock banana fight which is characteristic of hurling of hot cooked green bananas at each other. This was a stage to signify the neophyte's muscular reintegration into a "world of the fittest". The taking of a bath at the riverside symbolized the washing away of the old nature, that is, the childlike nature while the new clothing symbolized the change of status from the old self to the new self. The song that was sung during Wanyonyi's homecoming from the riverside went like this:

Mother, sister, who laugh at me, ridicule, and scorn me;

Today I am in a new clothing (of course referring to the physical circumcision mark).

After a mock banana fighting, great feasting and celebration, Wanyonyi finally completed the process of making his public cultural statement. He had now become a total man whose voice would be heard among the Bukusu male circles. For the first time Wanyonyi was addressed by his parents as *omusani*, meaning total man or literally, "our son" and not "our child" as they used to. Wanyonyi will now spend a whole month making rounds among his relatives collecting presents to begin the reconstruction of his own new life in the community. While still in seclusion, the initiate is subjected to a lot of informal schooling, which includes receiving

instructions on how to be responsible in the community he is graduating into. Some of the virtues and values that are inculcated into the initiate include hard work, respect, integrity and honesty, kindness, trust, tolerance, social cohesion and reconciliation. On the eve of the day of coming out of seclusion, every activity is geared towards realizing a celebratory mood because the initiate is assuming a new life. The research observes that, “if rituals like male ritual circumcision can be mobilized to tap the embedded values, then we can be able to shape society in a appositive way.

4.6.12 Circumcisers and their views on the traditional values of the rite

After circumcision Ezra Mukasa and Emanuel, both sons of Ngurete Mukimba in the chili morning of August 11, 2016, the researcher had an opportunity to interview three local circumcisers: Philip Wekesa, Dismus Mang’oli and Christopher Wafubwa. The three circumcisers live in the same place neighborhood around Nzoia Sugar Company Ltd, and the host of the ceremony granted consent to the use of theirreal names in the final analysis of this study. Born in 1947, Philip Wekesa is the senior most circumciser in the location. He began as the circumciser’s aide.

Ironically, as the researcher learned through these interviews, Philip Wekesa’s first initiate to handle as a circumciser’s aide was Dismas Mang’oli, who later on became his circumcision comrade. As the discussion in this forum progressed to a higher level, the three circumcisers were in agreement that there are a number of factors that have compromised the values of the circumcision rite. The first is modernity and freedom of movement; and the second one is the diminishing of life expectancy. With modernity and freedom of movement, people have the freedom to settle anywhere and to live a lifestyle of their choice with minimal interference. With diminishing life expectancy, the would be elders of the community versed in invaluable indigenous knowledge are alarmingly passing at a very young age. This has resulted into

imbalanced educated in matters members of the community, meaning that the society is increasingly educated in matters of modern knowledge, but ignorantly lacking in the knowledge of who they are as a people.

The essence of this practice of circumcision is not only vested in perfection and speed, be more so in the ritual of oath administration to the neophytes. In this particular ritual, which comes at the final stage aft several weeks after the surgical operation. The knowledge that the circumciser and other designated people passes on the neophyte is what completes the process of man-making for the Bukusu society. This therefore is the reason why it was important for a circumciser to be of mature age, and astute in indigenous knowledge. The circumcisers use the ritual as a means to renew and keep their contact alive between God and themselves, and also them and the invisible world. This confirms Mbiti's (1975) claim especially when he says that the "African people are much aware of the existence of the invisible world, which they see as a real part of the universe" (p.54). Therefore, for the Bukusu ritual circumcisers, the act of oath administration is at the same time an act of worship which links the physical world to the spiritual one. Through this ritual, the circumcisers became, again in Mbiti's words, "the intelligent bridge" (p. 55) in "between the living and the living dead members of the" Bukusu community.

4.6.1.3 Arising opposition against the Bukusu Male ritual circumcision

Despite the values embeded in the Bukusu male circumcision rituals, the Bukusu traditional men-making process is experiencing immense criticism and opposition from different sectors. Based on the information the researcher gathered from the participants through a variety of interviews, most of the critcism emanated from among middle aged men and women. When

interviewed they were opposed to the traditional methods in which these practice took place. But they were opposed to the traditional methods in which these practises are being conducted in rural areas. While many of the rural folks regard the circumcision ritual as a practise that has outlived its usefulness, the urban dwellers view it as a serious health hazard to the entire community.

As the researcher took observation and participation in the ceremonies and other activities in the community to another level, he realized that a lot of these rural and urban critics were products of heavy external influences. The immanence of new religious movements is one of the major influences that have weighted heavily on the Bukusu community ritual of circumcision. The new religious movements compel adherents to shun the African traditional practices such as male rituals circumscion. Devout Christian parents prefer the use of modern medicine over traditonal herbs for the treatment of their clinically circumcised boys. Despite the stigmatization and marginalization from the secular community, clinically circumcied boys from Christian families experience what i can describe as unlimited freedom of association with their own family members. Their parents discourage them from associating themslves with their own family ritually circumcised neophytes in their day to day activities, for fear of being “contaminated with sin” .The ritually circumcised neophytes are viewed by the devout Christian members of the community as agents of ancesstral worship. Likewise, the non-Christian groups considered the devout Christian memebbers as the lost servants of a foreign religion.

However, there are some christian parents that choose to have their boys circumcised in their homes without having to observe all traditional rituals. While still in my field research, I had an interview on the subject with Moses Nato, a senior pastor for one of the Seven Christian Churches in Siaka village of East Bukusu location. Pastor Nato shared with me a brief narrative

of what was involved in the process he called, *sikhebo sia kristo*, "Christians circumcision" of the initiates whose parents did not wish to observe the traditional rituals or clinical circumcision. He said that such initiates normally go through all preliminary stages of *khulunga*, summoning the relatives who would congregate at the ceremonial home in the eve of the circumcision day. The congregation would sing religious songs and worship throughout the night in an elaborate feast. To dawn, after the arrival of the traditional circumciser, the initiate was taken outside behind a building by a devout male member of the congregation to be given cold bath. While still dripping with water, the initiate was then handed over to his father who led him by the right hand to stand at a consecrated spot to be circumcised. Immediately after the operation, according to Nato, a pastor, or a selected member of the congregation led people in a prayer of thanksgiving for a successful occasion. This was followed by elaborate moments of celebration which included presentation of gifts to the initiate amid more singing of Christian songs and clapping of hands. The ceremony was concluded by the initiate's un-ritualized entry into the house or a regular room where he has been sleeping in before he got circumcised. Here, as Pastor Nato summarized his brief narrative, the neophyte will lead an ordinary life like any other member of the family as he undertakes bio-medical treatment.

However, it is not only Bungoma County that experiences conflicts between the communities' practice of the cultural rites. Other Counties such as Kiambu, Embu, and Meru, and the few others in the Rift Valley have had to struggle with issues of circumcision versus the antagonists. This sets a stage for the enhancement of a dialogue on the way forward by stakeholders (Oral interview, 4th April, 2018). Contrary though, "To the commonly held notion that young boys feel less pain at circumcision than older boys, a group of researchers – "*The National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males (NOHARMM)*" maintains, "unlike older boys or adult men, circumcision is more painful to younger boys because the gradual separation of the

prepuce from the glans had not yet occurred” (NOHARMM, 1994: 112). This therefore involves forceful separation, which is often excruciatingly painful. The data collected in this study does point to the fact that surgical complications often occur on younger initiates with extremely small penis. As Wekesa Mutama, Oral interview on 3rd April, 2018 observes, “one of the Bukusu senior circumcisers pointed out, the larger the penis the smoother and quicker the operation. Therefore, to avoid complications, it advantageous of the adolescents if their parents allowed them enough time to develop into maturity before they got circumcised.”

The coming out, the day of reintegration, or *Khukhwaluka*, as is known within the Bukusu indigenous male ritual circumcision practice, is celebrated in a different way of the “Christian circumcision” observers. According to Pastor Nato, this day is regarded as “a special day of consecration”. It is the day when members from the same faith community re-assemble at the neophyte’s parents house to offer prayers by laying hands on the neophyte, and lavishing him with more presents. Significant among these presents are new clothing and beddings. This Christian feast marks the beginning of new life for the neophyte. He may decide to build his own new house or continue to live in the same house where he has been living before he got circumcised. The researcher participated in this day by being allowed to pray for the initiate after a series of instruction from the Bible. All that were present were neighbours, friends of the home, and church members (*see plate 4.22*).

Plate 4.22: The photo below shows the researcher having been invited to pray and give blessings to the initiate who was coming out of seclusion on 27th December, 2018. This is a reminiscent of oath taking.



In my analysis, as the researcher found out from Pastor Nato's account "Christian circumcision" narrative replete with elements of syncretism, irony and unanswered questions. Among the elements that I regard as ironic include the engagement of a ritual circumciser who at the same time performs similar tasks within what the Christians despise as "secular society". It may be obvious that the Christian faith convicts Christian parents to avoid traditional rituals during the "Christian circumcision" of their boys at home. But among the questions that many Christians whom I interviewed on this subject are reluctant to discuss include: one, if the traditional ritual is "satanic and old fashioned" as many of them claimed, then why do devout Christians wait to engage the services of local ritual circumciser instead of medically certified surgeons from hospitals or clinics to operate on their boys?

While it is true that it is in the Christian churches that the message about the dangers of HIV/AIDS is disseminated most (Agot, Ndinya-Achola, Kreiss, Weiss, 2004), it is also ironic for the Christian parents to override these messages to choose local ritual circumcisers over medically certified surgeons to circumcise their adolescent boys. Secondly, based on the devout Christian participants' views that the traditional ritual ceremonies are unnecessary extravagance, it is also ironic for them to hold elaborate feasts in the initiates home for prayers and worship from dusk to dawn? These feasts involve heavy spending. Since hosts cannot slaughter an animal or even chicken, many have had to spend lots of money to buy meat, bread, soft drinks and other necessary requirements for the feast.

In the continued interview on the above subject Consul Wanyonyi, one of the parents who observed "Christian circumcision," confided in me by saying that he was motivated by three main reasons to have his boy circumcised at home in a Christian manner. First, he wanted to keep his faith as a good Christian, second, he wanted to maintain good fellowship with the members of his congregation. The third major reason was that he wanted to maintain good fellowship with the members of his congregation. The fourth major reason was that he wanted to save his son's face from humiliation, marginalization, and stigmatization among his peers in the community as having undergone clinical circumcision. Despite his whole family being Christian, Consul concluded by saying that his son will not lead a life in the community on the account of his (parent's) faith, but rather on his (son) own account.

4.6.14 Other opposing factors: The threat of infectious diseases

Besides Christian convictions, there are other factors that motivate Bukusu parents to take their boys to clinics for circumcision. Economic constraints and communicable blood borne diseases such as HIV/AIDS are prime factors. With the prevailing economic setbacks, which are exacerbated

by diminishing heads of cattle that formed a bulk of family income, decrease in land acreage and exhaustion of land due to increased populations, parents have had to choose their priorities. Despite the stigma, their boys have to face throughout their lives in the community, many parents opt to take their boys to clinics for circumcision.

The threat of dreaded disease, more especially HIV/AIDS has put many parents within the Bukusu community on alert. In the present days, the male circumcision practice is being challenged with the moral dilemma of HIV/AIDS, which can be transmitted by the use of one circumciser's knife on several initiates. In an interview with Dr. Lemmy Nyongesa, a resident doctor at Lugulu Friends Mission Hospital, he was emphatic that in the recent past, for many people in this region (Bungoma County), HIV/AIDS was viewed as a mythical disease in foreign lands, but now it has become a reality. It has struck in their midst, and people must find ways on how to fight and prevent it. For this reason, many parents have defied the prestigious honour that comes along with the observation of traditional customs by not subjecting their sons to such health risks.

According to a 1998 study in the western region of Kenya by a research group from Indiana University (www.indiana.edu/~okdev/hivaids.html), findings pointed to "a lack of information, a high level of stigma and silence" as contributing factors that surrounded the HIV/AIDS disease. These factors, as the report continues to indicate, are exacerbated by certain cultural practices such as male ritual circumcision in the western Province of Kenya". Unless action is taken, the study warns, "this disease will continue to ravage the district." It will overpower and render the health care system ineffective, disintegrate family structures, and as a result multiply the number of orphaned and abandoned children. The disease's augmented attack on the youth is an automatic weakness rendered to the labor force, which ultimately spells a drastic drainage of community's resources and paralysis of the economic growth. On the contrary, despite all these

threatening factors, in my observation I noticed that a majority of the members of the Bukusu community still insist on circumcising their boys in the traditional way and treating them with both, the traditional (herbal) and modern medicine.

4.6.15 Clinical circumcision

The researcher's interview with hospital practitioners and administrators revealed that the elements of inclination of ritual circumcisions are reflected in all aspects of this practice. In both, Bungoma County Referral and Lugulu Mission Hospitals, records showed that the most surgical operations on boys took place between 5a.m to 8a.m. This timeframe in which traditional circumcisions take place in the village. Both hospitals had records of casualties that came as a result of traditional circumcision malpractices. Initiates who were taken to hospital for clinical circumcision were referred to as clients, and not patients. Therefore in this section of the study, the term client will be used throughout particularly when referring to clinically circumcised initiates.

When the researcher visited Bungoma County Hospital, he interviewed Francis Makana, the hospital administrator charged with overseeing theatre activities. Normal clinical circumcisions for 2018 began partially as early as July, while full surgical operations occurred from August 4th. By the time the researcher had this interview on August 10, 2018, frequent circumcisions had subsided and the doctors and nurses were concentrating on the treatment and corrections of anomalies brought about as a result of traditional circumcision malpractices in the villages. Although he did not have a complete record with him during the time of this interview, Francis Makana mentioned that the surgical department at the Bungoma County Hospital recorded an average of seven circumcisions on a daily basis in the first two weeks of the month of August. Most of these circumcisions were done in the out-patient wing, meaning that the initiates went

back home in the same day after the surgical operation. In-patient services were however extended to those with cases of complications that resulted from traditional circumcision malpractice.

In his response to the researcher's question as to whether he had any recommendations, Francis Makana said, it was not his prerogative to criticize a cultural practice that has been in existence for a long period. However, speaking in his capacity as administrator of a health facility, as far as the Bukusu male circumcision rituals were concerned, he did not rule out ritual performance. He recommended that people can perform all rituals that pertain to this practice, but send the initiates to the hospital for surgical operation. This way in Francis Makana opinion, the initiates could be handled professionally and released back to the community the same day after the operation for the fulfillment of any other necessary ritual that may be required. This, Makana argued would minimize serious complications that sometimes result in death in the villages due to the initiate's excessive bleeding. Makana observes that hospital or clinical circumcisions would also minimize cases of contracting diseases to the initiates, the circumcisers, and other members of the community.

In this research, Lugulu Friends Mission Hospital represented other private clinics that offered circumcision services. According to the report given by Dr. Felix Wesonga, like Bungoma County Referral Hospital, Lugulu Hospital performed an average of five to ten circumcisions a day for the first two weeks in the month of August. But unlike Bungoma Hospital where the circumcision fee per surgical operation was ksh. 300.00, charges at Lugulu were ksh. 1,500. Despite the higher charges, Lugulu Hospital continued to receive more clients. From Nathan Sakari's point of view, the reason lies in the performance. Sakari pointed out that what makes the

difference is that people like the services offered at private medical facilities more than the government facilities.

Before they were taken to the theatre, Dr. Felix Wesonga said clients received proper counseling by the hospital chaplain, and good medication, food and general care after the operation. Unlike Bungoma County Hospital where they were sent home on the same day after the operation, clients at Lugulu the Mission Hospital were retained for two to four days for proper medical care and also make sure they were out of any danger. After they were released, the clients were required to visit the hospital at least once a week until they completely healed. Dr. Francis Makana pointed out that among the main objectives for the clinical circumcision was to minimize the “spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases” among the communities.

Summary

Bukusu male ritual circumcision is here to stay! This chapter presented the findings and discussions on the Bukusu male ritual circumcision based on the first objective and question one of this study. The discussions surrounding this section of chapter four were to underscore the philosophy, attitude, and perception about Bukusu male ritual circumcision; hence the nature, and structure of the anthropological background in which the male ritual circumcision is deeply rooted and assess the views of the participants about this very important ritual. The key areas discussed were the Bukusu people, mythical origins of the Bukusu circumcision ritual, the presentation and introduction of the forum of discussions. Through the forum of discussion, the participants shared about their views concerning the ritual and why the Bukusu people are still holding on to it. The forum of discussions handled various themes pertaining Bukusu ritual circumcision which included the need to registration of practitioners so as to avoid incidences of accidents and diseases infections. The chapter provides a systematic process of male ritual

circumcision. This stages include preparation, formal request, public pronouncement which culminates into the operation stage. Every stage of the circumcision ritual is so significant both to the initiate, the parents and relatives that are invited into the ceremony. Significance of major phases of the ceremony, the roles of parents, close relatives and the circumciser, the significance of taboos, beliefs, symbols, and an evaluation of changes in the Bukusu circumcision ritual is emphasized.

The focal point of this chapter was to provide the necessary background information that is crucial for the clear understanding of this important ritual of circumcision as a source of social capital. The ritual won't be complete without the crucial stage of formal entry into seclusion. As discussed in the chapter, various messages and symbolism are transmitted to the initiates while in seclusion that would shape their future lives. This is followed by coming out of seclusion and reintegration back to society as a people who will be of great value. This is strengthened by the administration of the oath. The oath makes the boys declare their commitment to live as committed and responsible citizens. Even though, the effect and ramifications of modernity and opposition on the organization of the rite and its performance has also been expounded. The study identified the opposing factors against male ritual circumcision as coming from those who were opposed to traditional forms. Another opposing factor is the rise of New Religious movements and the dominance of Christian ideology. Despite the oppositions, the majority of the participants and respondents were of the view for the continuation of male ritual circumcision but with modifications in tandem with the emerging modern realities. In the subsequent chapter five, there was discussions about the elements and meaning of social capital in reference to Bukusu male ritual circumcision.

CHAPTER FIVE

ELEMENTS AND MEANING OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN REFERENCE TO BUKUSU MALE RITUAL CIRCUMCISION

This chapter presents the elements and meaning of social capital in reference to Bukusu male ritual circumcision. This is in response to *Objective Two* and answer to *Question Two!* The main themes discussed in this chapter entails the concept of social capital and its meaning. This is further emphasized by the social capital theory which states the significance and value of social capital to humanity and society. The compositional thought of social capital in reference to male ritual circumcision is also emphasized in detail. Social capital is a social phenomenon which is invaluable for the growth, development and stability of the society. Therefore it has to be built through organization of rituals such as Bukusu male ritual circumcision. This is done with a focus on the social values embedded in the ritual. The combination of male ritual circumcision and social capital in generating value and meaning. The continued survival of this ritual informed by the tenacity it manifests, hence, the need to conceptualize through African voices with a view to defend it. On the basis that this ritual is fundamental in the society, the study concluded that it is not just about the spilling of blood. This is so because of the niche of social capital as it is celebrated as a festival. The above themes were generated based on the research questions to respondents below:

1. What is social capital?
2. What are elements and meaning of social capital?
3. What is your understanding of the relationship between male ritual circumcision and social capital?
4. How does these values that are generated from the ritual in the form of social capital bear positive impact in the contemporary society?

5. Should the government consider litigating matters to do with ritual be officially recognized?
6. How best can clinical circumcision benefit from the structured traditional circumcision so that valuable aspects of ritual won't get lost?

5.1 The Concept of Social Capital: Definition and origin

In this current study, social capital is perceived as a very vital variable because it is going to be studied alongside the main variable being male ritual circumcision. According to Haralambos and Horlborn (2007) opines, "the concept of social capital first arose in the literature during the 1960s" (P. 863). To date, numerous scholars have written about its importance. Bourdieu (1986) argue, "Social capital is composed of a variety of accumulated resources, which can be transmitted to the next generation and which require deliberate economic and cultural investments (p. 60)". And according to Coleman (1988: 94 - 95), "Social capital is a feature of the structure of society, a kind of social good that emerges from reciprocal obligations and expectations, and expands to the group at large".

Most scholars have come up with definitions of social capital. The researcher is going to use these definitions to determine the extent to which social capital can influence male ritual circumcision or vice versa. Putnam (2000: 67) observes, "Social capital is the connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. The features of social organization, such as networks, norms and social trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit". It is all about connections and social networking in the community. Silver (2008: 68) opines, "Hence, social capital is an inherent collective attribute of social life that enables people to co-operate. This is strategy meant to improve the efficiency of the collective community or organizational actions".

Because we have various definitions for social capital, there is need to settle on particular that would articulate the relational dynamics with male ritual circumcision. Laor & Shapiro (2007: 151) argue, “In the absence of these features, the individual’s qualities cannot be translated into the collective added value of social capital. The various definitions share three common components: The structural factor of organizations and social networks, the behavioral aspect of the amount of participation and involvement members invest in these networks, and the emotional or cognitive factor of the level of solidarity and reciprocal social trust among members of the networks, as well as the level of trust between them and social institutions”. The current research concentrates on social capital as it pertains to individuals, focusing on the ways in which, “Social capital is converted into other forms of capital especially economic or cultural capital. Individuals who have similar material capital but differ in terms of their social and cultural capital can use the latter in various ways for their own benefit (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2003:32; Pichler & Wallace, 2009: 25)”.

Woolcock (1998) observes, “Social capital is a broad term, with scholars interpreting and developing the concept in various ways. Social capital stresses the importance of concentrating on the sources rather than the outcome of social elements. He however tries to draw together the main features from the various interpretations within the fields of sociology, politics and economics into a helpful overarching definition of social capital as encompassing the norms and networks facilitating collective action for mutual benefit (p. 155)”. The protagonists of this concept of social capital recommends, “A concentration on the sources of social capital, that is, the nature of relationships, rather than its supposed consequences. He warns against confusing the consequences, which are said to indicate the presence of social capital and social capital itself (p. 155)”.

Bourdieu (2002) opines that, “Social capital is related to membership in a group, whether family, school or class. It refers to the role of occasions, places and practices as attempts by members of the group to control the introduction of new members. Mutually recognizable signs, controlled for legitimacy by the existing members of the group, aid institution into a group (p. 86)”. Foley (1999) analyses Bourdieu’s sentiments about social capital as follows: “Links of cultural capital theories are evident within Bourdieu’s conception of social capital. The mention by Bourdieu about the role of occasions, places and practices, suggests that a role of rituals such as male circumcision could find a place within this conceptualization of social capital. Contrary to cultural capital, social capital is constrained within a field, with social groups and sub-groups being organized within the field under study: in this research’s case, that of Male ritual circumcision and social capital. Bourdieu’s approach to social capital has met with approval from other scholars (p. 172)”.

Having analyzed the contributions of various scholars, they seem to agree with Bourdieu on the concept of social capital. Adkins (2005) observes, “Praises the clarity of Bourdieu’s approach (p. 211). And for Portes (1998), “Bourdieu’s analysis of the concept is the most theoretically refined amongst those of the recent scholars. Bourdieu’s critical perspective is useful. Other renowned scholars like Wallis and Dollery (2004) also consider Bourdieu’s and Coleman’s sociological approaches are promising, that Putman’s work on associations has been valued by economists (p. 18)”. On the contrary, “Fine (2001) criticizes Bourdieu for his emphasis on the cultural goods often associated with the class which Bourdieu recognizes as being used to promote access to resources, as tainting the purity of the social capital concept” (p. 38).

Critique of the understanding of this concept of social capital continues to elicit much reactions; Critique is focused towards the three major protagonists of social capital: Coleman, Bourdieu, and Putman. Field (2003) argue, “Although showing divergent opinion to Bourdieu’s conception of social capital in its focus on the individual and their networks, Coleman’s approach to the concept shows some contrasts. While Bourdieu sees differential access to social capital as being shaped by historical-cultural transference, a factor over which he sees the individuals as having little control (p. 19)”. There is a suggestion to employ various approaches towards understating this concept of social capital. Coleman (1990: 56) holds that “Approaches bring in the conception of rational action, albeit with social and institutional considerations superimposed”. When defining social capital, “Coleman places emphasis on the structure of relations between actors and among actors and on the facilitation of certain actions of actors within the structures” (p. 98). He sees “social capital as being lodged within the structure, or network, rather than the individual. Echoing Bourdieu’s conception, Coleman sees social capital as productive, with the potential for the provision of economic and non-economic resources that allow the achievement of interest (p. 87)”.

According to Putman (2000) observes, “Features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital are self-reinforcing and cumulative. It is mutuality at an individual level, with collaborations building connections and trust and then facilitating the consequence of further collaboration (p. 67)”. However, in Halpern (2009) critiques Putman’s position on social capital,

Despite this mention of the individual level of social capital, Putman’s approach concentrates primarily on the public good aspect of social capital: that is, the macro level. His social capital approach focuses on enabling community development through the encouragement of the indirect benefits that membership of civic, leisure and religious organizations could have. He sees these organizations as encouraging the growth of societal virtue, tolerance, reciprocity,

and trustworthiness, as well as lessening shirking and lying and improving health. Putman asserts that, life is easier in a community endowed with substantial stock of social capital. Much of Putman's approaches to social capital is not directly relevant to this study of male ritual circumcision, being focused on macro impacts rather than the individual's experience (p. 35).

However, Putman (2000) view division of social capital into two types: bridging social capital and bonding social capital (p. 19), is potentially useful for framing the examination of social activities in a ritual (p. 103).

5.2 Compositional thought of the social capital in reference to male ritual circumcision

This section of the study has attempted to analyze the meaning and significance of social capital developed through male ritual circumcision. Bungoma County has been chosen for the case study because of the existence of the Bukusu ritual circumcision which is celebrated every even year as a major ritual event. As observed during the interview, "The male ritual circumcision contributes to the development of Endurance, Patience, Unity, Hard work, Respect for authority and peers, loyalty, faithfulness, value for family and community, Honesty, Reconciliation and restoration (Wesonga and Wanami, Oral nterview 23rd July, 2018)".

Further analysis as in Table 5.1 reveals, "That male ritual circumcision functions as a social platform that regularly activates people for collective actions in the society. However, it is much prudent to begin this discourse by looking at the meaning, significance and elements of social capital in reference to male ritual circumcision. The discourse of this objective is geared towards analyzing Male ritual circumcision as the basic source of social capital; and social capital the generator of the characteristic elements". Analysis in this study is based on a theoretical analysis framework, designed by the researcher. The framework is based on Social- Cultural Theory. Below Table 5.1 demonstrates the use of theoretical analysis framework in this study:

Table no. 5.1 Use of Multi-Theoretical Analysis Framework

Objective	Theoretical Framework	Theoretical Assumption
To examine the general philosophy, attitudes and perceptions about male ritual circumcision.	Social- Cultural Theory	Human behavior (social capital- values, roles, sense of self, others and community) is shaped by social cultural factors (circumcision ritual)
“Explore the elements and meaning of social capital about male ritual circumcision”.	Social- Cultural Theory	Human behavior (social capital- values, roles, sense of self, others and community) is shaped by social cultural factors (circumcision ritual)
“To investigate the role of male ritual circumcision in the generation of social capital in the context of social economy”.	Social - Cultural Theory	Society exists in a context with needs. It must meet these needs to survive. Therefore, society uses culture and social institutions as instruments for meeting these needs.

Theoretical Analysis Framework used in this study is informed by the following: First, Society exists in a context. Second, In this context, there are needs that threaten the survival of the society. Third, to survive, society uses culture and social institutions (circumcision ritual) to shape human behavior. Fourth, Positive human behavior (resulting from and shaped by circumcision ritual) for instance values, roles, sense of self, sense of others and sense of community generate social capital that is used to meet the needs of society.

Figure no. 5.1 A cyclic influence of cultural rites such as male ritual circumcision on society

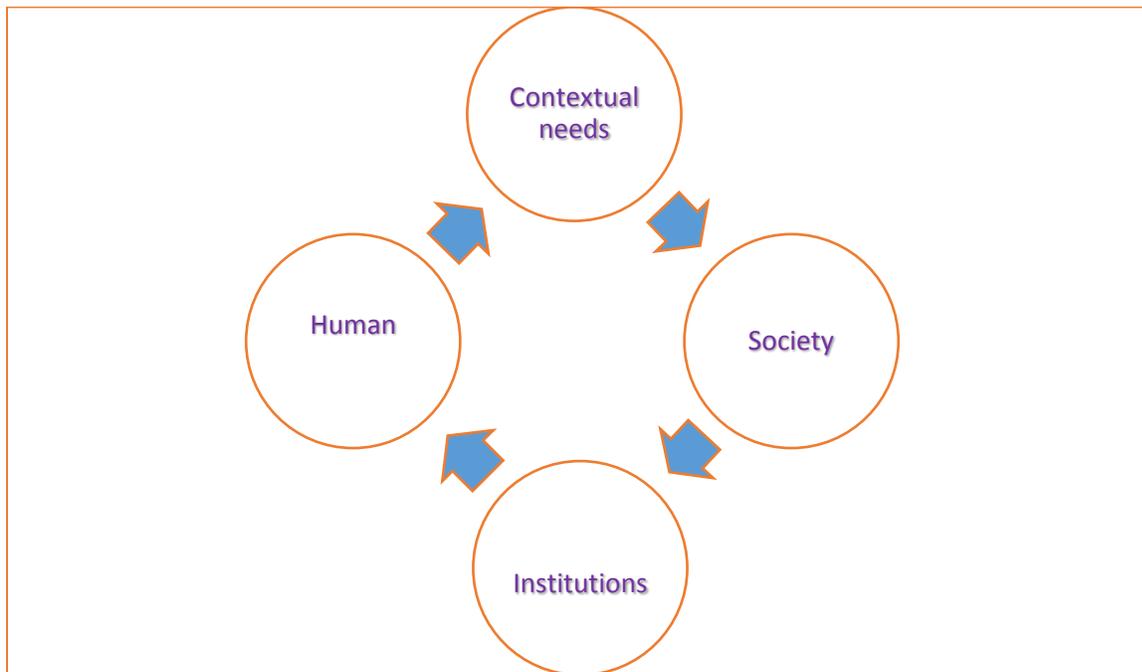


Figure 5.1 is a cyclic influence of cultural rites such as male ritual circumcision on society, institutions available in the society, humanity as the main factor, and the contextual needs manifested in the society for human need. The figure basically means the interdependence between institutions.

5.3 Manifestation of Social capital elements through Bukusu Male Ritual Circumcision

In Kenya, studies on how social capital can be tapped from rituals and used for national development are scarce. By learning from the Bukusu circumcision ritual, particularly the lived experiences of those who have undergone the ritual, this study will contribute to this perspective. The study therefore expected to bring to light the rationale for which Kenya can identify, preserve its socio-cultural resources and utilize them for development. The study intends to add voice to the discourse on socio-cultural innovations that local communities can advance in order to build peaceful and sustainable communities in the post-2015 era. By extension some of the

aspects of the ritual may gain resonance with other rituals applied in other parts of the world. This would contribute to the global discourse on preservation and use of indigenous knowledge and sociocultural resources – social capital for sustainable development.

It should be clearer on what entails social capital that is generated in the process of Bukusu male ritual circumcision. As it has been extensively defined from various perspectives, Robert Putman (1995) opines as follows:

Social networks, Social cohesion, Shared norms, values and behavior (Respect for authority & peers, Loyalty/faithfulness, Value for family/community, Honesty, Trust - Reciprocity and mutuality), Endurance, Patience, Hard work). Therefore, social capital is that intangible thing that exists in rituals, manifests through individuals and organizations within a community. Most people recognize social capital as being the connections and trusting contacts that people make while going about their daily duties. These contacts can be used on a mutual and reciprocal basis to further the development of the community (p. 32).

In this section, the researcher discusses the meaning and purpose of some of the phenomenal elements of social capital as product of Bukusu male circumcision ritual. As shown in *Figure 5.2*, male ritual circumcision has the capacity to generate immense social capital in form of trust, integrity, honesty, social cohesion, tolerance and so on. Meyer (2011) observes “social capital is not something unique other than it is essentially relational, not something owned by any individual but rather something shared in common (p. 1)”. Bayat (2005) provides a more specific definition of trust in which he defines it as “the understanding that a person or a member of the society or social group will act in a manner that is mutually beneficial...(p. 16)”. What this definition has in common with the one offered by Wepener (2005) is, “a focus on the relations between people and the networks created as a result of these relationships (p. 12)”. However, the question is: “Why delve into the study discourse of social capital in reference to Bukusu male ritual circumcision?” Bayat (2005) observes, “Social capital holds out the promise of improving access to resources amongst and across different groups and people. So we are

interested in social capital because we consider it a new way of thinking about how resources can be mobilized and distributed within society. Presumably this explains why disciplines like economy, sociology, and political science can engage with this concept. Seemingly, social capital is taken as a given, the main question debated is the role of ritual in the creation of social capital (p. 2)".

FIGURE NO 5.2: THE MODEL ON THE FORMATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL FROM MALE CIRCUMCISION IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIETY

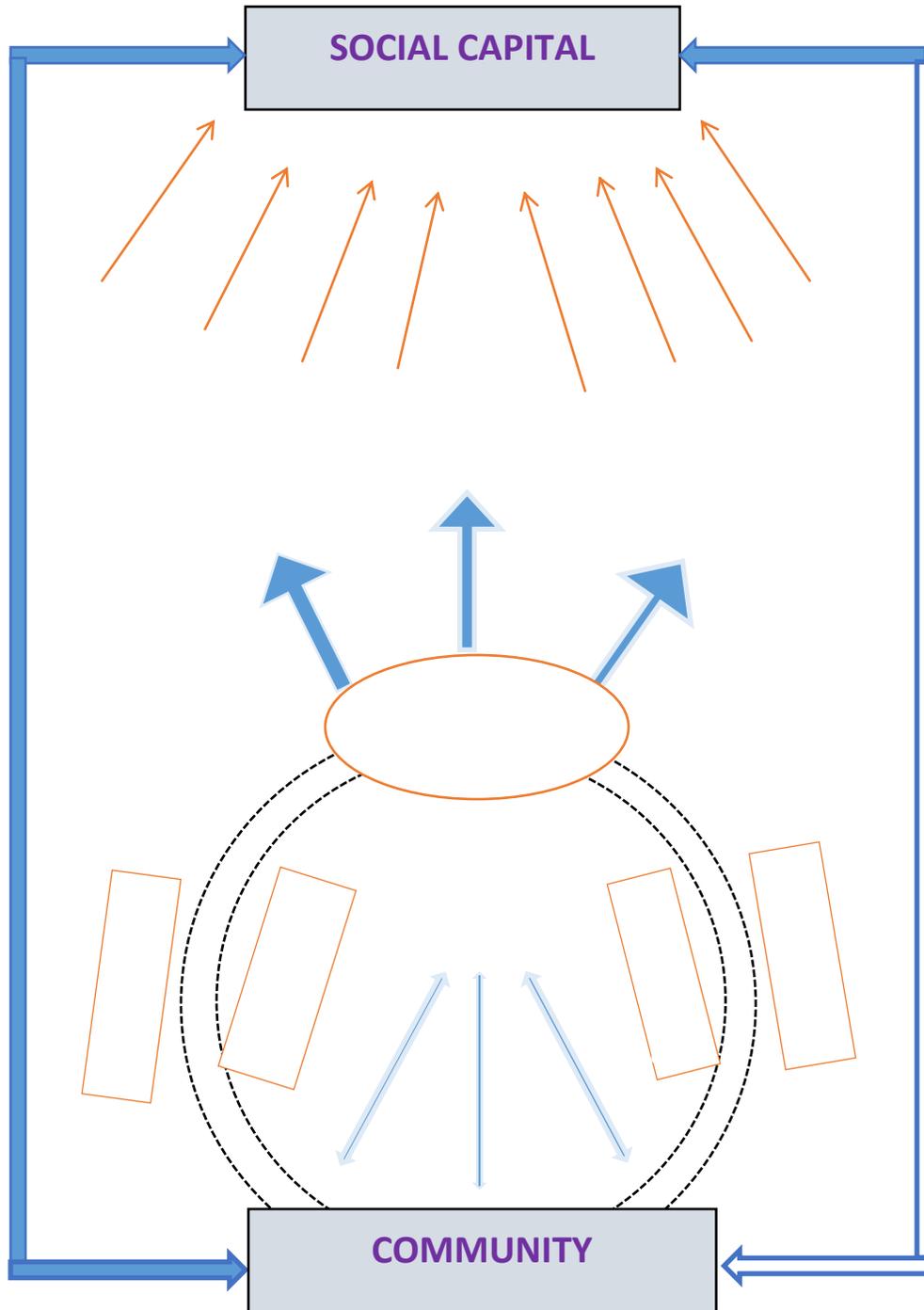


Figure 5.2 is a model of the variables – Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital. Circumcision is at the center of effecting social capital and affecting society or community.

Upon realizing its full functionality, male ritual circumcision would be in a position to influence the social, economic, and political standing of the society. This can happen through:

5.4 Building Social Capital Through Male Ritual Circumcision

Mbiti (1991), “There are innumerable rituals and ceremonies in Africa Religion...a lot of visible demonstration of African Religion occurs through rituals and festivals. These embody what people believe, what they value, and they wish to apply in daily life. Through rituals, people not only act their religion but communicate it to the younger generation” (p. 131). In Drane (2004) “Mbiti provides a niche into the purpose of this study: To examine how Male ritual circumcision is the source of social capital; which if fully mobilized can contribute the development of social enterprises in the social economy. Through the ritual action and word, people feel able to exercise a certain amount of control over the invisible world and the forces of nature. In this way, man feels himself to be not just a passive creature in the universe, but a creative agent” (p. 90).

Rituals and festival build social capital through community resources. When people congregate together for celebrating, it becomes the basis for the formation of social capital. Arcodia (2008), “Rituals and festivals attendance builds social capital by developing community resources. The organizers who are responsible for administrative aspects of the ritual and festival, whether they are paid workers or not, must interact with the local business and general community to make arrangements about the ritual ceremony. This interaction over the period of the ritual and festival’s organization raises awareness of community resources and expertise, produces social links between previously unrelated groups and individuals, identifies possibilities for the development of the community’s resources, and generally encourages a stronger interaction between existing community organizations” (p.11).

Arcodia (2008) continues to observe:

Festival and rituals encourage a more effective use of community resources by giving organizers and participants the opportunity to explore local resources that previously may have remained anonymous, perhaps protected by individual gatekeepers or ethnic social boundaries or otherwise lost within the complex social web of community structures and not generally available for everyone's use. The social networks that can develop through the organization of rituals and festival have the potential of being maintained far beyond the short life of the festival or ritual. In the case where festivals and rituals are regular events, this can have a far greater long-term benefit (p. 12).

In Friedland and Sirianni, (2000), "Festivals and rituals" associated with the Bukusu male ritual circumcision, "may not only be a catalyst for revitalizing existing partnerships, but also for developing new ones. Those festivals and rituals which involve volunteers provide opportunities for training and development in a variety of ways and skills and encourage more effective use of local educational, business, and community spaces. These community networks ensure a high-level of social connectivity by reintroducing a healthy relational dimension to societies" (p. 23).

Alomes (1985), "Rituals and the social capital play a key social role in different societies and cultures. While the role may vary in significance according to the socio-cultural environment" (p. 78) In connection to this, "Bukusu community celebration on coming together is a common denominator. When the Bukusu people community converges together for the purpose of fulfilling ritual and festival, the interaction serves the dual purpose of increasing the awareness of community resources while engendering social cohesiveness through cooperation brought about by common goals" (p. 97). As observed during the forum of discussion, "upon achieving a common goal, such as staging of festival, the community celebration serves to further increase the development of social capital via the generation of community spirit and a general sense of good will. Alongside the provision for a community to celebrate, ritual and festivals can provide to the society a host of values and benefits as articulated below" (August, 2018):

5.4.1 Social networks

The entire process of Bukusu male ritual circumcision orchestrates the assembling of people from different social settings with a view to celebrate. Oxoby (2009) reiterates as follows: By bringing together people of diverse backgrounds promotes well-being by allowing the production of mutually beneficial norms of reciprocity, generalized trust and co-operation. All the theorists of social capital, Coleman, Bourdieu, and Putman see social networks as conduits of social capital (p. 45). Putman (2000) specifically mentions, “the role of social networks in relation to culture. Cultural practices including rituals, can bring together diverse groups of people and thus promote value for development. Alternatively, rather than sharing values, cultural events could be used to transcend social barriers: people may make new connections with others whom they perceive to have different, though equally rigid set of values. This view shows synergies with the cultural policies (p. 118)”.

5.4.2 Social cohesion

The culmination of the process of Bukusu male ritual circumcision is the operation; thus the cutting of the foreskin of the penis. This day is highly anticipated by parents of the initiate, relatives and friends that are all invited to the ceremony. According to Falassi (1987), “When people come to attend the festival and rituals; they do not do that in a vacuum or it does not just happen in vain. Festival and ritual attendance can also develop social capital by promoting social cohesiveness given that a festival is often a recurring social occasion which all members of a community have opportunity to unite and share a worldview through ethnic, linguistic, religious, and historical bonds” (p. 18). Apparently, Galt (1973) “while festival and rituals have the capacity to bring and bind society together, much of the world’s social, political, and economic structures and processes have emanated from the philosophies, ideologies, conceptual

frameworks, and experiences constructed by dominant culture in the particular area. Social networks are developed when people come together; new relationships are build that establish structures for the development of the social economy” (p. 86). Similarly, in Bukusu community, people from diverse places come together to participate in the ritual circumcision. By so doing, there are high chances of developing relationships.

As Inglis (1999) observes, “In response to the challenges of cultural diversity, Australia adopted a comprehensive policy of multiculturalism, and the Australian community is often viewed as a successful model of multiculturalism” (p. 45). Bringing this in to the Kenyan communities, we can see that a lot is lacking. For example, “Australians attend festival and rituals until one could imagine that it is a preserve of the Australia’s populace. This may be the result of a multicultural society, which encourages greater participation in festivals that celebrate the character and richness of cultural diversity” (Ibid, 48). According to “The Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Report, 1999:67;

It is important to note, that the potential for growth for social capital is complicated by the heterogeneity of some communities. For example it is most likely possible that social capital develops within a particular subgroup and doing so, alienates another within the same community. Consequently, one of the key problems that the Australian government is increasingly facing is its inability to not only negotiate the cultural diversity that exists in society, but to develop and nurture a more common purpose.

Mard Gras (2000), argues, “The development of common social purpose may conceivably be achieved through festival and rituals. Importantly, attendance of such celebrations is a socially valuable process because it gives a voice to the various subgroups whose difference is not caused by ethnicity but lifestyle preferences (p.23)”. Mardi Gras continue to observe as follows:

To explore, express and promote the life of our combined community through a cultural focus. We affirm the pride, joy, dignity and identity of our community and its people through events of celebration. We are committed to serving our community. We seek to enable individuals and groups within our community to

discover, express and develop their artistic, cultural and political skills and potential (p. 26).

According Janmaat (2011), “Social cohesion is simply referred as the glue that holds society together (P. 61)”. Chan (2006) observes, “Social cohesion is a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and horizontal interactions among the members of the society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that include trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioral manifestations (p. 290)”. Apparently, social cohesion is the element that advances the ideology of bringing and binding people together for mutual reasons. Putman (2000:112) identifies two styles of social cohesion which may characterize; “social capital: These are bridging and bonding. He explains that bonding social capital is inward looking, that reinforces exclusive identities and promoting homogeneity; whereas bridging social capital is outward looking promoting links between diverse individuals”. Putman suggests, “Many groups simultaneously bond across some social dimensions and bridge across others. Bonding social capital as increases solidarity with people who are already similar, bolstering the narrower self and creating strong in-group loyalty. Bridging social capital, however, links people to others who move in different circles” (p. 113). Granovetter’s (1973:46), “Weak ties and strong ties also shows parallels to Putman’s distinctions between bridging and bonding social capital. According to him, strong ties lead to others who are similar to themselves, while weak ties are valuable in promoting connections to people outside the usual social circle. Weak ties are suggested therefore, as key to the provision of new opportunities for individuals as well as key to their integration into new communities”. Bourdieu’s (1977) opines, “Social and cultural capital align closely with the element of social cohesion and with the formation of strong ties. The benefits arising from membership of a select group to be made possible by its solidarity. These profits may be material gained via useful relationships, as well as the symbolic profit gained

from being a member of a prestigious group of people. In this case therefore, mutuality is strengthened.

5.4.3 Shared norms, values and behavior

The sharing of norms of behavior and of values through networks is a key feature of social capital theories. Coleman (1988:87) identifies the family, “As a reinforcer of norms and values thus is a source of social capital. He qualifies this however, by suggesting that the level of social capital a child gains from the parents will vary depending on how much attention the parent gives the child. Relations of the child’s parents with other members of the parent’s community are important in the development of a child’s social capital”. On the other hand, Halpern (2005:57) suggests “Higher educational qualification levels result in higher levels of social capital”. This in line with Coleman suggests, “Higher levels of social capital tend to result in a child being more likely to gain a higher educational qualification. Thus as it was noted earlier that Bourdieu associates higher education levels to higher cultural capital levels, it could be concluded that higher social capital could result through schooling in higher cultural capital characteristic of social – cultural resources. This suggested association provides further justification for considering the role of both capitals in the ritual festival experience” (p. 89).

Coleman (1988) explains, “Norms and values exist at a macro-social level, but determine the behavior of individuals at the micro level by discouraging or encouraging an action (p. 69)”.

Coleman (1990) also suggests;

Norms are facilitated by regular communication and will become weaker over time without social relationships to reinforce them. This suggests the potential importance of a festival which brings people together socially as a setting for the auctioning of social capital. Individuals may actually attend events with the aim of sharing and intensifying their own values with others whom they perceive as like-minded - thus sharing the same group dynamics. Issues of elitism may be ties to this perspective (p. 118).

Bukusu “Ritual circumcision manifests quite an array of elements of social capital which will wholly be discussed alongside the aspects of the ritual later in this chapter. For example, trust is closely aligned to the components of norms and values. A closely knit community with strong norms and homogenous interests is likely to have higher levels of trust” (Otiende: 1978: 45). Although Coleman focuses on the exchanges between individuals, he also identifies situations where an activity of common interest may bind together a number of actors. Again, a ritual festival could perhaps be a site of exchange. He explains that this macro-level system of mutual trust occurs: “through a number of actors...are all engaged in an activity that produces an outcome in which all have similar interest (p. 188)”.

Putman (2000), “Trust is seen by Putman to be an outcome of, as well as a contributor to, social capital (P. 91)”. Granovetter (1973) observes;

Trust is generated through frequent interaction and lubricates social life. Putman and other social capital theorists see higher levels of trust within a community as being likely to increase the levels of cooperation and thus build further trust. Thick trust is embedded in strong and frequent inter-personal relationships, whereas thin trust is more generalized, being extended community-wide: that is, beyond personal acquaintances. Both thin and thick trust may be implicated in the role of social capital in the ritual operation and experience (p. 13).

Trust as a virtue of life is highly cherished by the Bukusu people. This does not mean that we don't have incidences of mistrust. Bukusu ritual circumcision aims at instilling this vital value in the lives of the initiates so that they live with them and pass them to posterity.

5.4.4 Celebration

The ultimate desire of the Bukusu people is to celebrate the victory of overcoming the circumciser's knife by the initiate. The celebration signifies the radical transition from child hood

to adulthood. Pardy (1991) opines, “Obviously, in the manifestation of ritual and festival procedures; it always culminates in celebration. Participation male ritual celebrations enhances social capital by giving communities the opportunity for public celebration” (p. 47). But on the other hand, Salamone (2000) points out, “Celebration is identified by four essential characteristics: First, performance of cultural symbols, second, entertainment, third, undertaken in public place, and fourth, community participation. On the other hand, however, one of the defining characteristics of festival and ritual is the potential to facilitate community celebration” (p. 78). From the viewpoint of the theorists and economists, ritual celebration has got immense value. Schuster (1995), “Economist and other theorists may suggest that it is through celebration that one can achieve stronger economic success, there is an inherent value in celebration in itself when citizens are encouraged to participate in the creation and maintenance of the activities as a part of the shared life of the community” (p. 90). Earls (1993) argues;

The phenomena of celebration itself is found in all cultures. Consequently, festivals and rituals that have a celebratory theme allow people to participate in an occasion that generates a feeling of goodwill and community. Thus celebrations and festivals have the potential for strengthening communal ties and uniting people. These community celebrations, often developed as arts, or folk festivals are representative of the many aspects of the social and cultural fabric of the community in which they are celebrated. Furthermore, they facilitate the development of contemporary cultural identity, but enhance the wellbeing of the community by, among other things, providing an “opportunity to break away daily commitments and allowing us to socialize with family and friends within the larger community (p. 32).

5.5 The context of male ritual circumcision and social capital

We have various historiographies concerning male ritual circumcision in Africa and the world as a whole. People have formed worldviews about this important ritual. It is generally believed that circumcision is a transition tool that transforms young people into adulthood. Bailey (2006) observes:

In the context of the removal of the foreskin for either religious or culturally reasons, there is an entire compendium of meanings attached to the procedure. However, religion is the major determinant of male circumcision worldwide. In as far as the operation is concerned, male circumcision among adolescents is much more likely to be performed a coming –of-age ritual. This is experienced in many African societies and other ethnic groups. Globally, it is estimated that 30% of male above the age of 15 years are circumcised. Male circumcision for religious and cultural reasons is a relatively common practice in sub-Saharan African countries, where 28 of 45 Nations have circumcision prevalence exceeding 80%. Traditional male circumcision as a rite of passage is performed in pre-pubertal boys, adolescents or adults. The age of circumcision varies from country to country and ethnicity, ranging from six years (p. 172).

Boiro (2007) argues, “The majority of boys in East and Southern Africa are circumcised between 12 and 22 years of age” (p. 32). From the various literature reviewed, circumcision is highly ritualized because of its significant contribution to the life of the individual. Marck (1997) observes as follows “Being a strong cultural practice among traditionally circumcising groups, traditional male circumcision is usually not an optional practice to be decided about on an individual basis. The timing of male circumcision on the other hand is a matter for individual decision. In communities where the fabric of society has become increasingly fragile and intergenerational support mechanisms are for various reasons, no longer sustained, adolescent boys may face ritual circumcision without any encouragement or social support (P. 60)”.

Ogubanjo (2004), “Conversely, there are reports of *uku baleka* which means to escape into – the initiates run away from home to be circumcised at the circumcision school against the will or at least without the consent of the parents, who are aware of the potential dangers of traditional circumcision would not agree to having their sons circumcised traditionally” (p. 45). Vincent (2007) argues, “There is some anecdotal evidence from South Africa that homosexual orientation may have negative effect on a young person’s willingness to be circumcised in the context of initiation schools, and there has been anecdotal reporting of suicide in some cases. South African legislation has attempted to address these problems through the Application of Health Standards

in Traditional Circumcision Act 2001, which makes parental consent obligatory in respect a prospective initiate who is under 21 years or who has not acquired adulthood” (p. 18). Vincent further argues, “A framework aiming to support specific provisional measures to enforce requirements for issues of consent (among others) was added through National Health Act No. 16 in 2004” (p. 14).

The Bukusu Male circumcision is given a ritual identification because of what it strives to realize. According to Frizer Karr (2004) while commenting on Emile Durkheim,s view on ritual;

Emile Durkheim posited a relationship between ritual behavior and the adherence to social order, putting collective veneration of the sacred at the heart of his theory of social solidarity. Ritual organized around sacred objects as its focal point and organized into cultic practice, was for Durkheim a fundamental source of collective conscience that provides individuals with meaning and binds them together into a community. From Durkheim’s observation it becomes apparent that, participation in rites integrates the individual into a social order both in one’s day-to-day relationships of life. And in those celebrations of the collective which bind one to the social entity as a whole. Veneration of an object held to be sacred by a community is a powerful affirmation of collective conscience and a call to obey communally defined morality (p. 189).

Stark and Finke (2000), opines, “Functionalism of Durkheim and focuses exclusively on religious rituals, rather than all repeated social interactions, arguing that confidence in religious explanations increases with ritual participation. Ritual generally follow customs or traditions, but they are deliberate ceremonies in which the object is exchanged with a god or gods and the outcome is the reinforcement of the central ideas and ideals of the group. Rituals are thus intentional features of religious life and can shift with alterations in either the demand or supply of religious goods” (p. 135).

Emile Durkheim (1995), “a religious group is not simply a religious group with ritual precautions which a man is held to take in certain circumstances; it is a system of diverse rites, festivals and ceremonies which al have the characteristic that they reappear periodically. They

fulfill the need which the believer feels of strengthening and affirming, at regular intervals of time, bond which unites him or her to the sacred beings to whom he depends (p. 67)". Just like Bukusu male ritual circumcision, "Rituals often venerate heroic forbearers and those that brought salvation. The hero is a symbol of a society, the society's model in many cases and a sort of ideal summing in one mythic individual of the chief characteristics of the various empirical members of the group(Hertz, 2009:12)". Rituals and in this particular case male ritual circumcision are very powerful. They have a greater influence on the lives of those who partake of it. Collins (2004) contends, "Rituals are powerful because they instill social interaction based on bodily co-presence as mutual emotional attunement. When engaged in rituals, individuals feel a sense of solidarity with one another and imagine of themselves as members of a similar undertaking; they infused with emotional energy; and they establish and reinforce collective symbols, moral representations of the group that ought to be defended and reinforced; and they react angrily to insults toward or the profanation of these symbols (p. 56)".

Giessen (2006) observes, "Ritual participation does not always perpetuate social order. For instance, growing self-consciousness is deadly to ritual participation and it is fundamentally spontaneous, emotional character (p. 191)". Collins (2004) observes;

Formal rituals sometimes die or fail, or decay with time, such that they produce little or no feeling of group solidarity; no sense of one's identity affirmed or changed; no respect for the group's symbols; no heightened emotional energy. The decay of rituals provokes a sense of stale ceremonialism, inappropriateness, or even strong abhorrence. When ritual are imposed, rather than spontaneously joined, they usually provoke resentment and disgust. Apparently, the rejection of imposed rituals and the destruction of symbols associated with them seem to be typical elements in the collapse of the social orders so established, hence a violent reaction to a kind of formality that one wishes to never to be associated with or to go through (p. 16).

From the above statement, it becomes apparent that ritual should be handled carefully by the communities involved. This brings about the understanding of the possibilities of the

functionalism and dysfunctionality of ritual in the society. During the circumcision season in Bukusu community various factors that paint the ritual badly emerge. As much as it is a celebrated ritual, we have retrogressive aspects such as witchcraft, economic exploitation, and poor operation that leads to mutilating the genitalia.

5.6 Experiencing social capital through Male ritual circumcision as a rite of passage

Indubitably, male ritual circumcision is among the many African cultures that are cherished. Despite the enormous resistance and opposition, circumcision has continued to thrive. Kratz (2003) observes, “Circumcision falls into the inventory of the innumerable cultures that Africans, as in many other communities of the world embrace and cherish. Male ritual circumcision has been one of the rites demarcating the stage of development in which the boy child passes into mature hood. Perhaps it is good to point out that in most African societies, one is born, lives, and dies within the appropriate rites of passage. That can take the form of circumcision, piercing of the nose, ears, lips, teeth extraction, cutting of certain fingers, and tattooing (p. 189)”. Prazak (2000:45) observes that, “the painful process that is usually associated with the practice, or the marks that are left behind after going through the rite may denote, among others, age group, social status, increase in sexual attraction, and a man’s chastity before marriage. Male ritual circumcision, therefore, has immense social capital that societies practicing it cherish and find bliss in”. Every ritual including male ritual circumcision have very fundamental significance to the individual and the society as a whole. Boiro (2007) argues, “Circumcision has significance at the individual and sociocultural levels. It is associated with cleanliness, as reflected in common metaphors for circumcision, for example, to wash the hand in the Wolof culture in Senegal (p. 32)”. According to Taljard (2003), “Improved genital hygiene is something that is almost globally equated with male circumcision in both traditionally circumcising and uncircumcising

ethnic groups in Africa. The word 'Ritual' is defined as an adjective that derives from the noun 'Rite', meaning a ceremonial or formal solemn act, observance, or procedure with the prescribed custom. Ritual therefore is a set form of systems of rites, or the observance of a set form of system of rites (p. 67)''..

An in-depth analysis, the above description best suits this current study. This is a focal point where both, the ritual and the inherent social capital meet. Their practice and procedures may differ but the concept is the same. According to Kusimba (2004), "In the Bukusu male circumcision ceremonies, an initiate is made to carry special meat locally known as *luliki* from a lower under-section of a slaughtered bull as an act of honor from both the matriarchal and patriarchal lineages (p. 89)". At every stage of the circumcision process, caution is observed not to subject the initiate to any risks. Corbitt (1998), observes, "And early in the morning of the eventful day of circumcision, the initiate of is taken to the river to be smeared with mad all over his body, which is known as *khumana*. This and many other ritualistic acts serve to demonstrate the fact that the initiate has fulfilled the requirements that appertain to his change of status and he is on his final journey to cross the '*river*' of childhood into adulthood (p. 112)".

Circumcision has a significant position in circumcising societies. It is not in vain that such communities have hang on this ritual for quite a long time despite the opposition. Several literature review reveal reasons why they have continued to hang on this ritual. Mwenda (2001) observes as follows:

The social status accorded to male circumcision is of crucial significance in traditionally circumcising communities, because being circumcised is the only way of attaining manhood. In Xhosa culture, male development starts during the first six to seven years of life, when a boy is not able to distinguish right from wrong, and is thus not held responsible for wrong that he might commit. Older boys are considered more capable of making informed judgments, although they are still not held fully responsible for their actions. It is only once they are

circumcised that they are entitled to businesses, property or marriage, or to participate in other features of community life, such feasts and beer drinking ceremonies. Uncircumcised boys can have sexual relations with women, but are often rejected for being uncircumcised (p. 12).

During this whole period of circumcision, the young boys are vulnerable in many ways. Marck (1997) argues, “The social pressure to undergo circumcision puts uncircumcised boys at risk of ostracism. They are discriminated against in various ways, for example, they are given menial tasks and being called names. Similar societal structures are reported from Maasai groups and the Bukusu in Kenya where males become warrior once they are circumcised, and men are referred to as elders when their children have been circumcised (p. 7)”. But for Michen (2004), “Male circumcision is considered essential for becoming a full member of the society among the Meru people of Kenya just like in Bendel State of Nigeria, and in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal (p. 189)”.

Niang (2007) opines, “The male circumcision is a way of reinforcing masculinity, as the prepuce is considered to represent the womanhood. In addition, male circumcision is seen as a means of balancing the life cycles of men and women, male circumcision being considered equivalent to the loss of virginity in women (pp. 22-32)”. In a broader perspective, circumcision ritual is seen as a uniting factor in community. Largade (2003) observes,

Most notably, however, male circumcision is perceived as the source of new social relations, among ethnic groups in Guinea Bissau and Senegal, the bonds between men circumcised in the same group being considered closer than those to their parents. Male circumcision is also of high social importance in relationships with women, who are reported as actively influencing men’s decisions as to whether or not to be circumcised. In South Africa, 13% of traditionally circumcised men reported partner request as a reason for circumcision (p. 89).

In other words we can say that circumcision is an agent of social change; because young boys are influenced to adapt to new ways of lifestyle. In reference to the Xhosa people of South Africa, Crowley (1990) observes, “For the traditionally circumcising Xhosa people, Crowley state that

no self-respecting Xhosa girl would marry a Xhosa male unless he had submitted to the circumcision ritual” (pp. 18-21).

Niang et al (2007) observe that, “religious dimensions are indicated when circumcising male adolescents and young men is done to show commitment to God and to offer a blood sacrifice to the ancestors and the earth (P.32)”. Various studies have been generated with regard to the nature and functionality of circumcision ritual. In his book Taljaard (2003) observes, “A study from South Africa discusses a report on beliefs that not being circumcised is a cause of misfortune. On philosophical point of view, male circumcision involves a symbolic relationship to dying, initiation rites representing symbolic death, through pain and isolation from society, from which springs new life and rebirth as a new being – a man” (p. 16).

Male ritual circumcision such as of the Bukusu people in Bungoma County is manifested in various stages. In connection to this, various theories concerning circumcision have emerged in history. Gordon (1999),

Different theories regarding the origins of circumcision have been proposed by anthropologists. Some see its roots in the beginnings of the cultivation and settlements around 15,000 years ago, gradually spreading to other communities. Others believe that there were independent origins in different cultures. Apparently, why the practice evolved is not clear. The fact that most tribal cultures assign circumcision seasons to the ritual could be interpreted as male circumcision originating from fertility rite, developed as a sacrifice to the gods in exchange for good harvest (p.83).

In various communities, circumcision has been given several characterizations. Niang (2007), “Among the Balante in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, circumcision ceremonies are held every four to six years; where by circumcision is performed in the rice fields symbolizing reverence to their ancestors and the earth (p. 15)”. Other theories include “Male circumcision as being a religious rite of personal sacrifice and as a way of marking God’s children from ungodly nations (or, in different contexts, marking slaves and defeated warriors after warfare (Saucier, 1991: 16)”.

As Sussane K. Langer (2002:18), ritual circumcision performance is an occasion where the less important comes to be declared important as boys evolve into men. Just a few moments before the initiate gets circumcised, he is held with no regard. And as seen in the literature review, he is described with no gender (Bowie, 2000), and as such he is referred to as “the child of so and so”. But after circumcision, everything changes beginning with the initiate’s own demeanor. The blow of the circumciser’s whistle and the sound of the mother and aunt’s ululation are signals to a sudden change of the initiate’s status. In the researcher’s own analysis from the African theological perspective, the researcher would say that male ritual circumcision among the Bukusu people is a reminiscent of the “Eucharistic” act. That is, an act that involves the giving of a special part of one’s human flesh and spilling of blood as a binding between the living and the dead (Mbiti, 1975), and is purchase of communally recognized status.

For some unconscious or mystical reasons, the male elders of the Bukusu community ordain that boys must get circumcised. In this respect, the boys are traditionally required to sacrifice their flesh to the will of their ethnic community (Mbiti, 1975). The most apparent message that is passed on to the initiates at the performance of the ritual is that their bodies belong to the community and not to themselves as individuals (Mbiti, 1975). It is common knowledge that people who don’t practice see these rituals with Mesmer and on the other hand, those who practice them like the Bukusu experience difficulties, but rather, it has its roots deeply entrenched in the beliefs and the social customs, which in many cases would defy the rational and humane comprehension. The Bukusu circumcision ritual practice is principally done not for medical reasons as is the case in the western communities (Bigelow, 1995).

5.7 Tenacity of male ritual circumcision in generating social capital

There are apparent reasons why Bukusu ritual circumcision has continued survive despite the opposition. This is because of the inherent tenacity – power to withstand resistance. Commenting on ritual, Kang’ethe (2014) observes, “Perhaps the litmus test of a cultural strength is its continued existence and legacy despite efforts to annihilate it altogether. It is clear that the culture of male ritual circumcision has been under huge siege, socially and policy wise, especially with the wind of modernization, human rights activism, and the current globalization. At the time when Africa and Africans are feeling that these rites defined what an African was, there is then the urgent need for the resuscitation of these cultural rites. However, it would be unrealistic to expect these cultural rites to be revived in the same state they were practiced before their proscription. Admittedly, some of the rites may have had aspects that could be incompatible with the current environment but it is argued that they still have some invaluable aspects that could be harnessed and incorporated into the existing culture. Perhaps it is admissible that the readers, or the adherents accept the given dynamic nature of any culture, some of the goal posts as well as the social capital embedded therein may have to shift. The succinct value and social capital embedded in the cultural rite of male ritual circumcision cannot be clear if its meaning and what it stands for is not adequately conceptualized. Succinct conceptualization will help change the minds of the detractors who see the practice as one with perfidious ramifications. Largely, male ritual circumcision is not an exclusive African cultural practice. Regrettably and unfortunately, most scholars of the male circumcision practice tend to wink at the origin and portray it as an African cultural practice.

5.8 Conceptualizing male ritual circumcision and social capital through African voices

The purpose of conceptualizing is to acknowledge the fact that circumcision is a very important ritual that cannot be wished away. Shweder (2000) observes, “The succinct voices of the insiders, living in Africa or elsewhere, own and understand the practice of male ritual circumcision can help clear the minds of many people whose minds have been polluted with the result of only knowing and reflecting only what the outsiders have presented, whether in print or electronic media, or in any other forums of discourses” (p. 116). By all means ritual circumcision should be protected Frank (2005), “Those who adhere and therefore own the practice and are therefore reliable voices pertaining to the practice understand that the concept of male ritual circumcision form a rite of passage that encapsulates the attainment, enhancement, and maintenance of many cultural roles. The circumcision or operation on the genitalia is symbolic of the more detailed processes that form the rite of passage (p. 34)”.

Ntombela (2009:13) argues, Talking of male ritual circumcision as a mere removal of the foreskin is a misnomer. Revealingly, the structure of male ritual circumcision is more elaborate than most of the existing literature has been able to capture. It is succinctly certain that the discourse on African circumcision badly requires re-examination, reflection and possibly introspection in view of the fact that most of the current discourses tend to overlook the more important processes that embeds this rite of passage. The state of the immense social capital inherent within the rite has unfortunately been obscured. . In her book, “The niche of the African Circumcision”, Ntombela observes that, “social capital is structural and cognitive”. It can be concluded that social capital is unlike other forms of capital but also not sufficiently dissimilar to warrant a different term. Certainly it is the use of the term capital that makes the concept attractive to such a wide range of people given the bringing together of sociology and economics. , ritualistic

activity has a niche. On close scrutiny of her work, she doesn't come up with the specifics of social capital which this study seeks to unearth. Probably, when she talks of the obscurity of social capital in the rites, she doesn't open up to the exact elements that have been obscured. This study seeks to delve deeper to get the elements that characterize social capital.

According to Obermeyer (1999:87), "this is because of the fact that the world has been fed by the outsider voices, with insider voices given a raw deal. This is because of the inadequate engagement of patriotic and culturally pragmatic scholars to salvage the African cultures from decadence and extinction, if not for total annihilation (p. 25)". Even though, some Western scholars have risen to the challenge of defending the culture and its invaluability. To this end, many Africans who stay in diaspora have had to come home to go through the circumcision process. Most notably, Fuambai Ahmadu (2000) observed:

It is difficult for me considering the number of ceremonies I have observed, including my own, to accept that what appear to be expressions of joy and ecstatic celebrations of womanhood in actuality disguise hidden experiences of coercion and subjugation. Indeed, I offer that the bulk of kono women who uphold these rituals do so because they want to – they relish the supernatural powers of their ritual leaders over against men in society, and they brace the legitimacy of female authority and, particularly, the authority of their mothers and grandmothers (Ahmadu, 2000:24).

Reacting on some of the views raised by Ahmadu, Mukim (2013) observes, arguably, the experience and views of Ahmadu are applicable to her ethnic belonging in Sierra Leone and may be equally applicable in other settings in Africa such as Kenya and Sudan where similar rite of passage is practiced. The statement, however, underscores some very fundamental facts on ownership, niche and meaning grounded in male circumcision in Africa as well (p. 18)". Mukim further argues, "Circumcision is full of immeasurable social capital that can only be communicated to the world or rather tapped by those who experience the practice. The cultural architects would wish that those who share the same opinion, knowledge and insights such as

Ahmadu above could grab any opportunity either in print or electronic media to dispel the skewed and frivolous information surrounding male ritual circumcision (p. 23)".

5.9 Male ritual circumcision goes beyond spilling of blood: A niche of the social capital

Prazak (2000:97) argues, "in many settings where male circumcision is practiced, the rite is more than just spilling the boy's blood as the human rights activists and other agencies claim. There are more elaborate activities and learning sessions in the course of the rite". Vincent (2006) agrees with Ahmadu in several ways:

An equally important point from Ahmadu's observation is the ownership of the process of male ritual circumcision. To this end, most of the literature on rite of passage tends to fallaciously concentrate on the cutting part, hence obscuring, or ignoring other important meanings grounded in the rite. Such information also disregards ethical consideration in that it is more often passed to the world without the consent of the boys and the next of kin involved. Indubitably, the anthropologists believe that the sanctity, truths and insights surrounding cultures can only be told by the insiders. The outsiders may mimic but they may not communicate the real issues. Most of the current discourse of male ritual circumcision in Africa suffers immensely from the lack of constructive opinion on the structure and significance of this rite of passage. This misplaced handling of the culture of male circumcision could largely explain why some scholars, mostly from the west loudly and unashamedly indicate that the culture needs to be driven to state of extinction and that those who continue the practice need to face the full wrath of the law (p. 169).

Fallaciously, the owners of the culture have been assumed to be passive to accept the "verdict, without any resistance or any form of appeal. This explains battles that have been going on between the law enforcement agencies and the cultural adherents in countries where the norms have persisted though clandestinely (Fredrich (2014:33)". Perhaps it is this premise of the the outsider perspective that has brought in different perfidious notions of the practice. First and foremost, it has been branded as barbaric and not attuned to the culture of any developed world (Kidd, 2006: 13)". According to Fredrich and Kang'ethe (2014:87), "the cultural architects use this forum to ask for appropriate questions and titles of the practice if at all it requires any name

branding. They are of the view that the male ritual circumcision should be referred to as surgery or an operation. This argument should not be viewed as a new war by a few Afrocentric scholars, but a rather a discourse aimed at attaining cultural identity, cultural autonomy, independence and emancipation, cultural realism, cultural renaissance, and repositioning to take its rightful niche”. Debate has continued over the validity of male ritual circumcision in this time and age. The bone of contention is going against the grain of modernity and what it comes with. Afolayan (2004” observes, “The discourse has become a bone of contention between universalities, human rights activists and cultural relativists (p. 34)”.

Gruebaum (2005) observes, “During the colonial administration, theme for many social change efforts was enlightenment, drawing the subject of people out of the traditions that Europeans deemed harmful, beliefs considered non-Western, and practices that obstructed the smooth of the colonial political and economic control. Campaigns against indigenous rituals, for example, circumcision as a rite of passage into manhood were common during the colonial power (p. 433)”. In view of the above points, Mukim (2013) clearly reiterates, “Destruction of the African cultures was not because there was something wrong with the cultures, but African cultures fell victim of a larger capitalistic scheme by the West to achieve colonial leadership, hegemony and imperialism (p. 76)”. However, in regard to secondary sources, besides (Makila.1978), and wipper,1977), literature that address historical and religious aspects of the Bukusu culture respectively, there was no other study that specifically addresses issues of practice of male ritual circumcision and education among the Bukusu as an ethnic community. But there is a substantial amount of literature that has been written on different aspects of the Bukusu culture. Information on Bukusu culture exists in form of articles published in newspapers and magazines, many of which are in hard cover while some exist electronically. While Makila’s (1978) works covers a wider spectrum of the migratory movement and fundamental dimensions of the history of the

Bukusu people, Wipper's (1977) study was focused on the two protestant religious movements: the *Dini ya Mswamba* in Bungoma and the *cult of Mumbo* among the Kisii of Nyanza Province. No other study has been done specifically on the subject of Bukusu ritual circumcision in relation to its impacts on social, psychological and economic aspects in the region. While this study adds a voice to the covered literature on a variety of Bukusu cultural beliefs and customs, its principle objective has been to investigate, examine, and inform the public about the role ritual circumcision has played in relations to the social, economic, moral and intellectual development of adolescents among the Bukusu of Western Kenya.

In the English language, a variety of terms are used to define different forms of the severing of the parts of human sexual organs. The term circumcision has been generally applied to the surgical operations done on both male and female. However, as seen in the literature review, some scholars maintain that *circumcision* is a misplaced terminology. They prefer excision as the correct term. In the recent past, the term FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) has been employed, especially by the World Health Organization (WHO), and a variety of Human Rights agencies (Wangila, 2004) Abu –Sahlieh, 1994).

Unlike the controversies among the world's NGO clashing with local ethnic groups over the female circumcision with the former calling for its eradication (McLean & Graham, 1980); Mugo M. 1997), Murray, 1973), according to the findings based on interviews and observations, many voices in my study have been to advocate for adaptation of the modern hygienic ways of circumcising the male adolescents. However, in comparison with the FGM, the dialogues on male circumcision does not seem to stimulate heated debate. But, as demonstrated in this study, the dissenting voices such as those of health administrators, middle aged groups, devout

christian members, and the educated elites that have gained prominence against male ritual circumcision, have been focused more on the rite's modification other than its eradication.

5.10 Generation of social capital through Male ritual circumcision as a festival

In the Bukusu context in Bungoma County, "Male ritual circumcision culminates into festival because it brings people together. For the case of circumcision the climax is usually informed by celebrations and merry making" (Otiende, 2004: 13). Before understanding circumcision as a ritual, the researcher would like to define the word festival and its underlying significance. Rippon, (2008) observes, "Festivals have been a feature of human life for hundreds of years. Many originated in the form of celebrations of solar or lunar cycles, or of the seasons. Others are rooted in the religious or pan ritual (p. 23)". Falassi (1987) defines festival as, "The Latin origins of the term festival are *feſta* and *feriare*, which emphasizes the features of public merriment, abstinence from work and religious worship" (p. 7). Falassi's own definition of the term, which he suggests is more suitable within a social science context, than is general dictionary definition, states that, festival commonly means:

A periodically re-occurring, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series or subsequent coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degree, all members of a community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds and sharing similar worldview (Falassi, 1987:2).

Based on the above definition of festival, Kerry (2006) gives a critique of this definition,

Male ritual circumcision fits in that category because in its final stages it achieves the purpose of bringing people together. However, it is not clear in this definition whether the proponent of it sees festivals as socially divisive or socially cohesive. Alternatively his definition portrays festivals as a coming together of a community of people of single ethnicity or religion, thus implying the exclusion of people of other ethnic standing or religions. If the former interpretation is taken, an emphasis on festival as a vehicle of social cohesion is implied. Many festivals are now not attached to seasonal or solar cycles, nor do many include a

religious component. In the contemporary setting, in addition to seeking to entertain, festivals endeavor to regenerate, promote creativity, increase tourism, perpetuate the local tradition, or the building of community cohesion (p. 114).

Falassi (1987) suggests, “It is probable to classify festivals using a methodology which focuses on a range of ritual acts, or rites, which happen within the festival time and space. These include, for example, rites of display and rites of consumption, rites of exchange and rites of reversal: that is, symbolic inversion of normal life of a culture. He sees a festival as being bounded by the framing rituals which open and close, the festival, allowing the modification of time and space” (p. 112). Van Gennep (1960:138) discusses as follows, “This concept is useful to the study of festivals, for its emphasis is on the special features of the middle stage of the ritual, the period that is between the opening and closing framing of rituals. In a broader sense, nature and suspension of everyday life within this middle stage, shows or implies similarities to the features of carnival (p. 138)”. While Bakhtin (1968) argues “ritual evokes the concept of festival period as being a time which offers participants the chance to relook at the patterns of daily life (p. 17)”. On the same, Turner (1969:274) opines, “ritual is engendered by a sense of being in a phase which is different from everyday life” (p. 274). The emphasis on community aligns with the theory of social capital framing this study. Van Gennep (1960) theorizes,

The liminal phase of the rite of passage, local social cohesion may be reinforced following the arrival of strangers in large numbers preparing to enact a ritual. Local inhabitants are quite likely to leave the village and take refuge somewhere else just in the same way the Edinburg residents were reputed to depart on holiday when tourist arrive for the festivals. The coming of strangers may encourage local resident to close their doors and gather together, excluding strangers. Now it becomes apparent that when people of different backgrounds and affiliations gather together, there is likelihood of sharing of information which can be beneficial to the society. The potential for the integration of strangers is of relevance because new ideas and ideals are manifested (p. 36).

In agreement with the above sentiments, Mbiti (1991) observes, “Circumcision is a form of initiation that brings people together. It is an important stage, through which young people in

many parts of Africa have to go. This stage shuts the door to childhood, and opens another to adulthood. It makes the young people active members of the community, and no longer simply passive children (p. 102)”.

Based on the objectives of this study, Arcodia (2000) observes, “The festival of circumcision orchestrates the spirit of the community being renewed. It is done through this periodic initiation with all the feasting that goes with it. The entire people are brought together: the departed, the living and those yet to be born, because now the gate for marriage and family life is opened for the initiates. Festivals are celebrations of something the local community wishes to share (p. 13)”. Bukusu maale ritual circumcision is just one such celebration because it is a discourse which involves the public as participants in the experience. Based on the foregoing view, Gertz (1997) opines, “A key characteristic of a festival is the sense of community and celebration engendered by an occasion, which is public and freely accessed gathering involving a variety modes such as arts, craft, performances and demonstrations. Festivals are a sacred and profane time of celebration marked by special observances. Undoubtedly, such observances can be like male ritual circumcision. Historically, the way festivals were celebrated during special occasions were through art, ritual circumcision, and related festivity (p. 209)”. Similarly, the Bukusu male ritual circumcision is characteristic of various art such as singing and many other ritualistic activities.

Summary

In this chapter, the focus has been on understanding the essence, meaning, and origin of this fundamental phenomena of “Social Capital”, thus addressing the question of the elements and meaning of social capital in reference to Bukusu male ritual circumcision. Being a dependent variable in this study, the analysis concerning its meaning and composition generated a discourse

upon which to anchor the study in reference to male ritual circumcision. The baseline was to underscore the concept and meaning of social capital. According to the findings, the Bukusu male ritual circumcision is not empty! This is confirmed by some of the lived examples of people who went through this ritual. They attest of the positive impacts the ritual had on their lives. From the literature reviewed, little is articulated concerning social capital as a composition of elements, which can only be generated when cultural aspects that bring people together are practiced. The study seeks to fill that gap. Holistic meaning of social capital is actualized whenever rituals and festivals take place. It is only through such environments that people come together when norms like trust, generosity, reciprocity, social cohesiveness, and mutuality are attained.

The discussions and findings thereof revealed that, the Bukusu male ritual circumcision is a platform upon which social capital is generated. This is realized when the ritual brings together people; and in the process of celebration, the dynamics of relationships, trust, honest, integrity, social cohesiveness and so on are strengthened. The failure on the constant acknowledgement of rituals particularly Bukusu male ritual circumcision as fundamental sources of social capital is a misnomer. This is indeed another gap which would be filled through cautious recognition of Bukusu male ritual circumcision and the subsequent building of social capital. This would be made possible through leveraging on conceptualization of ritual through African voices. The government should come up with proper legislation on the recognition of cultural rituals, festivals and rites as avenues within which knowledge can be drawn to facilitate social, economic, and political development. Going by the sentiments of Haralambos & Horlborn (2007), “Social capital as manifested is such a phenomena as taking part in clubs and organizations, socializing with people outside one’s immediate family, taking part in politics, doing voluntary work, and playing sports, particularly team sports” (p.863). Hence, in the

subsequent chapter, the researcher focused much on the obligation of Bukusu male ritual circumcision towards the generation of social capital in the context of social economy. The anticipation is that by having elaborate recognition of cultural rites like male ritual circumcision, the society can benefit from the invaluable social capital inherent in them. Hence, the subsequent chapter of this study sought to understand the role of Bukusu male ritual circumcision to social capital in the context of the social economy.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ROLE OF MALE RITUAL CIRCUMCISION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

This chapter is focused on the role of Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital in the social economy. This is through exploring ways that can be explored purposely to generate social capital in order to grow the social economy. Thus, the Chapter deals with Bukusu male ritual circumcision and social capital with a focus on how both can grow and build the social economy environment. This therefore does not negate the fact that cultural rituals such as circumcision highly influence the social and economic entrepreneurship. For any democratically stable countries, building integrity for development is given prominence; while trust becomes a virtue that epitomizes the urge for both social and economic development. The researcher articulates the importance of embracing the culture of tolerance. Tolerance is one virtue that is taught as a virtue to the boys while they are seclusion.

The significance, role and functional dynamics of Bukusu male ritual circumcision in the social economy is brought to glance in the context of ritualistic activity. The functional element of Bukusu male ritual circumcision is made manifest through the virtues of sense of community, respect to authority, sanctity to life and so on. Societies that manifest such virtues are characteristic of development, peace, social cohesion and stability. Implications for the neophyte's vocational training while in seclusion is an indicator of what ritual would contribute to the society. This is to say that neophytes come out of seclusion having immense knowledge inculcated into them, believably, knowledge would not be in vain but productive. For purposes of bringing this ritual to recognition by the state and other jurisdictions, there is need for proper legislation in order to position it as a valuable ritual; hence this chapter also looked at the need of bringing ritual into law. The analysis of this chapter and generation of underlying themes were guided by the following questions:

1. What is social economy?
2. To what extent does Bukusu male ritual circumcision contribute to the building of the social economy?
3. What are the phenomenal elements of social capital generated by Bukusu male ritual circumcision that contribute to building the social economy and establishing social enterprises?
4. What is your opinion on Bukusu circumcision whether to continue as it is or to be modified to suit the current context?
5. What aspects of this ritual do you think should be changed?

6.1 Male ritual circumcision and Social Capital: Building social economy environment in general

This section begins by analyzing the meaning and essence of “social economy”. According to Noya (2007: 2), “social economy and social enterprises are a form of non-governmental economy outside the public and the business, which can be non-profit sharing among the members. It is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the businesses, or in the community rather than being driven by the need to maximize profit for shareholders and owners” (p.2). According to <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-economics>: “Social economy is a branch of economics that focuses on the relationship between social behavior and economics. It examines social norms, ethics and other social philosophies that influence consumer behavior and shape an economy, and uses history, politics and other social sciences to predict potential results from changes to society or the economy”. Neatmen (2010) observes;

Social economy, also referred to as social economics, is concerned with the relationship between social and economic factors within a society. These are

factors that influence how a particular group, or socio-economic class, behave within society including their actions as consumers. An individual's social economic status shapes the beliefs and attitudes a person holds. This can include perceptions of available opportunities and beliefs on life directions. For example, an individual from a more affluent social class will likely have more opportunity to achieve a higher education and may be expected to pursue such a goal by peers and other members of their class. Pursuing a higher education is likely to lead to a higher-paying job and that individual will interact with society and builds networks associated with their social status. Social economy and social enterprises include co-operatives, credit unions, non-profit organizations and other types of enterprises. By these definitions, wherever you have people gathering to pursue economic activities with a view to meeting social as well as economic needs, you have elements of social capital (p.21).

Sanders (2009: 78) argues, "One definition is that the social economy includes those organizations which are animated by the principle of reciprocity for the pursuit of mutual economic or social goals, often through social control of capital". Going by the above, Bourdieu (1990) observes, "The values of mutuality, self-help, caring people and the environment are given higher priority than maximizing profits as the economic principle that animates organizations is reciprocity (p. 23)". Based on the above definitions therefore, social economy is the context in which people gather together to pursue both social and economic activities with a view to meeting social, cultural and economic needs. This is evident in the Bukusu circumcision ritual especially when people come together to fulfill various social and economic needs. This study seeks to underscore the role of "Male ritual circumcision" in the generation of social capital in the context of social economy.

Social capital is often most noticeable when it is absent from local communities. When there are few social networks, lack of trust, little effective mutuality, no shared norms and commitment to the area, community cohesiveness declines and social underdevelopment is likely to occur. That shows itself in the increase in crime, a desire to leave the area, mutual suspicion, lack of information, few social facilities, lower health standards, a degraded physical environment – in short all the hallmarks of a disadvantaged neighborhood. By recognizing the existence of social

capital in rituals such as Bukusu male circumcision as a social economy, our understanding of the way communities operate and how they function is enhanced and directs community development strategies towards intervention that will help build social capital. In the light of male ritual circumcision being recognized as a social economy or social enterprise, it can be highlighted as an alternative mode of social capital production. In this case, Bukusu male ritual circumcision is a social enterprise that uses social capital in the pursuit of social aims.

Alan Kay (2005: 171) observes, “The recognition and the understanding of social capital has clear implications for governments and local authorities who wish to create policies to strengthen the social economy. At a local level, policies could be developed that encourage local people to get together to form social networks”. It becomes apparent that when people get together, it is for common mutual purpose that they gather together; and in this case, ritual and festivals like the Bukusu male circumcision bring people together and by so doing they realize the objectives of such a gathering. This is to imply that, “Institutions and programs that foster a sense of community and help articulate shared values can be encouraged” (Kay, 2005:171). Therefore, in the interest of this study, Bukusu male ritual circumcision and programs that manifest shared values by bringing people together should be given preference in making sense of the social capital.

By extension, rituals are social enterprises as it has been observed above; and for this reason, they are avenues or conduits for fostering development in the social economy. Weak social enterprises would generate blurred social economies which would orchestrate unstable societies. Bukusu male ritual circumcision and by extension rituals and festivals that bring people together tend to fulfill this goal. According to the Performance and Innovation Unit Report, 2002, “awareness of social capital and values could help unify and thus link the smallest neighborhood

enterprise to the largest mutual organization. Providing support to the national forums and networking organizations will improve networking and help build trust such that organizations, which at present emphasize their differences, can start to see the common ground that unites them”.

Going by the role of male ritual circumcision in the social economy, the concept of social capital is pivotal. By virtue of social capital being generated by ritual; social capital becomes the cistern of the social values that can contribute to social cohesion, growth, trust, and sustainability. Alan Kay observes;

A high level of social capital is used to create a healthy, balanced and equitable society. Social capital has to be used, by people working through their organizations and structures. Undoubtedly, social capital is – and always has been – an important concept. As our understanding of how things work and do not work within communities becomes much clearer that we recognize that society is made up of connections just as much as it is made up of money, material resources and human resources (P. 127).

Stable societies can attain social economies by strengthening the social enterprises which takes the form of rituals and festivals. Potter (2003: 45) questioned, “Whether or not social capital could be construed as capital in the traditional sense of increasing economic productivity. Social capital, however, is considered ‘social’ in that it involves social interactions and to the extent that the effect of these interactions might have some economic persistence, one can also think of social capital as capital”. Out of the social capital that rituals generate, the output would be enhanced levels of trust, social cohesion, respect, economic empowerment, and commitment to mutuality. Solow (1956: 86), “Solow-Swan growth model output is a function of technology, physical capital, human capital, and in more recent vintages, social capital. In such models, social capital may affect output through changing the manner in which technology is used. It

may lead to early adoption of new innovations and, therefore, an economy may experience faster and earlier technological progress if it has high levels of social capital” (p.86).

Furthermore, social capital may influence the other forms of capital that affect growth. Narayan, (2000) argues, “Social capital exerts a positive impact on human capital by increasing education. Within economics, there is also a growing recognition that social capital play a major role in explaining individual behavior at the microeconomic” (p.67). In as far as poverty control and management is concerned, the members of the society and the partakers of the rituals and festivals are exposed or taken through a pedagogy that grills them to understand the significance of being economically stable. Loury (1977) has examined social interactions within ethnic groups considering how differences in initial conditions have long-effects “There is a relationship between social capital and poverty traps as poverty among parents may be transmitted to children when children in neighborhoods with the absence of social capital which adversely affects their subsequent economic status – thus poverty and low social capital may persist in some locations more than in others” (p.116).

William (2005) opines, “Undeclared work may help to raise the level of social capital in some deprived areas. One can think of social capital as being important for growth for a number of reasons. First, at a macroeconomic level, greater social capital may lead to a higher economic growth, better human capital acquisition and more efficient governance. Second, at a microeconomic level depending upon the nature of the trust or the characteristics of the network, network externalities can have either a positive or a negative impact on any, or indeed all, of these outcomes” (p.23). The point to emphasize is that social capital may have a range of impacts that may vary across time and location and, as discussed above, it may be the cause of social change in line with the social economy. The Bukusu circumcision ritual is a platform through

which social capital is generated. The values embedded in this ritual are inculcated into the young people and they live by them. They are prepared in all dimensions of life, socially and economically. Reaching such conclusions is negating the fact that we have aspects of this ritual that are deemed irrelevant in this time and age.

The importance and impact of social capital in the community and more particularly in the social economy may change over time. Wicksteed (1985) suggests that, “in terms of social capital perspective, it could be argued that deep-bonding capital was an important impetus to the initial development of technology enterprises in the Cambridge Area with a few key entrepreneurs and others from the business community developing very strong relationships. As the knowledge expanded and reached the critical mass, the importance of this type of social capital has waned” (p.67). The generalizable issue is that the impact of different types of social capital vary across time and space – and there may be potential problem for areas if they are over-dependent on types of social capital that do not facilitate future growth (Grabher, 1993: 113). The overall analysis of the relationship between social capital, Bukusu male ritual circumcision and the social economy can be conceptualized as follow.

Figure no. 6.1: The harmonious interface between Bukusu male ritual circumcision, social capital, and social economy.

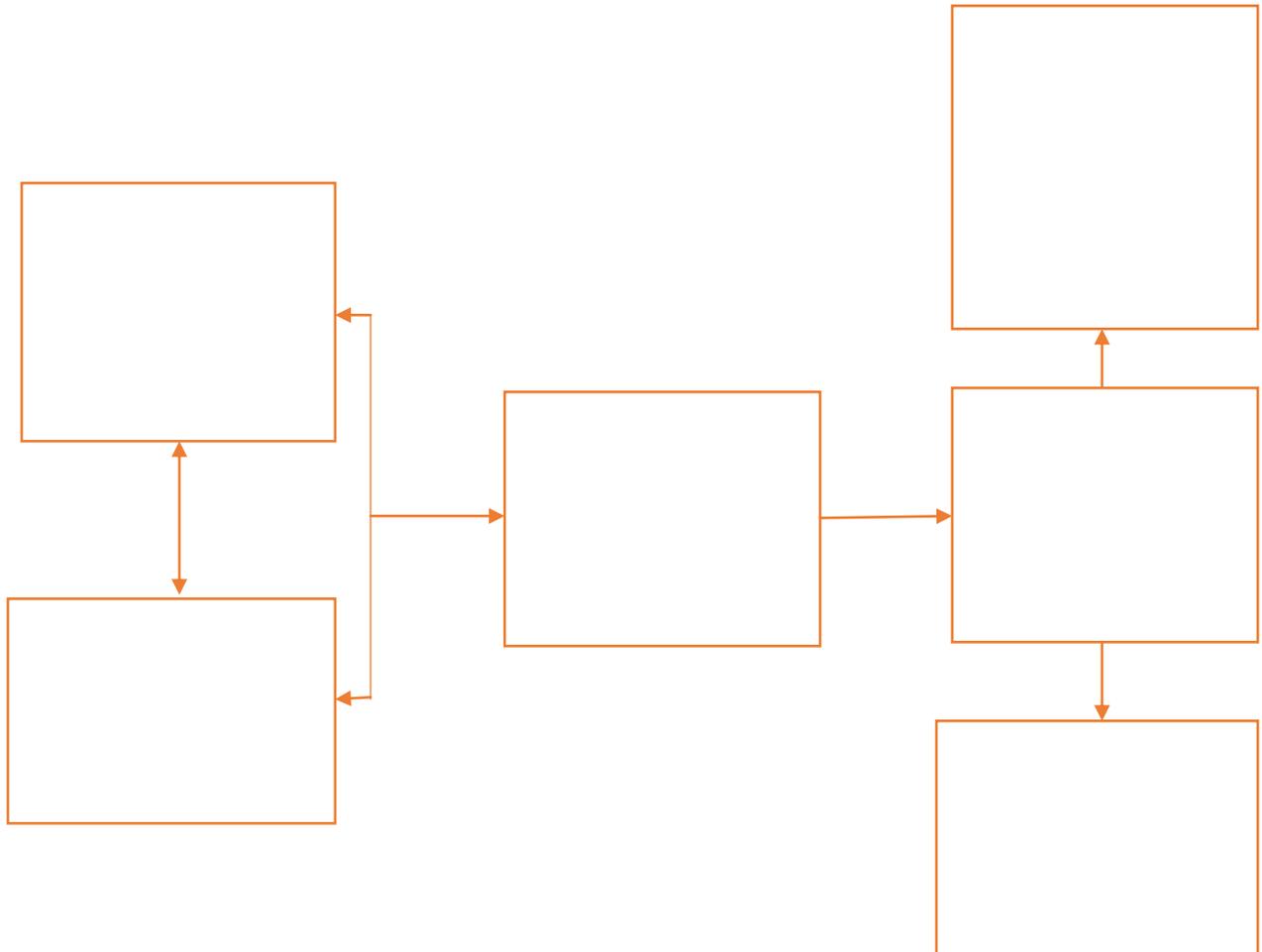


Figure 6.1 shows a harmonious interface between Bukusu male ritual circumcision, social capital, and social economy in the context of society. It is clearly illustrated that without community, there would be no ritualistic activity. From the illustration in figure 6.1, for social capital to be generated; it must be in the context of ritualistic activity such as the Bukusu male ritual circumcision. Upon the manifestation of social capital; there are various forms of values that are generated. In the presence of social capital elements, economies will grow and thrive and the social unit will remain homogenous.

6.2 Cultural rituals and social entrepreneurship

Bukusu male ritual circumcision is a rite of passage! Writing on culture and social entrepreneurship, Dacin (2010) observes, “Our observations of social entrepreneurial activity suggest the central importance of cultural phenomena such as ritual and narrative for the conveyance of social meaning and the creation of social value” (p. 128). This is true as in the context of this study, because Bukusu male ritual circumcision falls in the category of those rituals that draw people together for a common good. Cultural rituals are major conduits of social capital. They also appear to serve a much broader and deeper purpose: they convey what is actually means to be a social entrepreneur to a new generation of ‘change makers’ and crystalize the notion of success in the context of social entrepreneurship. In the light of the foregoing observations, Bukusu male ritual circumcision serves the role of value inculcation in the society and by extension the strengthening of the social economy.

Owen (2003) observes, “Ritual could be construed as skillfully controlled public relations exercise. Like rites of enhancement, they also serve to inculcate social entrepreneurs into particular practices, again reinforcing the expectations associated with social entrepreneurship” (p. 91). Bukusu circumcision ritual, “Has the potential to illuminate the process underlying the socialization of actors into particular social values and norms through exposure to stylized behavior and invented culture material. Studying the role of ritual in social value creation provides an interesting opportunity to enrich theories of organization and development, Kunda (2006:89)”.

From the perspective of the Bukusu Community, we have life examples of people who underwent circumcision ritual and lived successful lives because of the informal pedagogy that they received. Society has greatly benefited from their life experience of achievement. Such

stories of heroic individuals exhibit features of social entrepreneurship and development. The stories have overtime formed the “basis of media accounts of social entrepreneurship”. Indeed as Beyer (1993) observes, “A notable feature of presentations of social entrepreneurship and development is the role of sagas – narratives that evoke heroic exploits performed under conditions of adversity. Through their telling and retelling, these sagas appear to perpetuate and codify a particular set of beliefs about the nature of social entrepreneurship, and they support a particular ideology about its role in society” (P. 18). Because of the culture of rituals in the society, people have had to change their way of doing things and live in the society harmoniously. Bornstein (2004), “tells the stories of people who have both changed their lives and found ways to change the world” (p. 111).

The lived examples of the heroic individuals such as observed by the respondents, “illustrates the power to carry cultural messages that support the creation of social value” (April, 2018). Martens (2007:96) argues, “The creation of social value may require varied types of narratives that resonate with the basic notions of equity and social justice. Research on social entrepreneurship narratives might therefore shed light both on the process of social value creation”. A scrutiny of ritual practices such as Bukusu male ritual this chapter during the forum of discussion circumcision, “is relevant for understanding social capital, as such practices reveal processes of change and continuity, and the significance of social identities” (April, 2018). Mand (2004:23), “In the migratory context, the performance of rituals can be away through which migrants enhance social status and mobility for a family and or a community”. Edwards (2004), observes, “social practices, rituals and festive events are habitual activities that structure the lives of communities and groups that are shared by many of their members. They are significant because they reaffirm the identity of those who practice them as a group or a society and, whether performed in public or private, are closely linked to important events” (p. 52). In such a context,

people discuss various issues touching on development particularly the socio-economic and political areas. Bhachu (1999: 85), suggests, “they are closely linked to a community’s worldview and perception of its own history and memory. Ritual and festive events often take place at special times and places and remind a community of aspects of its worldview and history. In some cases, access to rituals may be restricted to certain members of the community; initiation rites and burial ceremonies are two such examples”. Indeed, some festive events and rituals like Bukusu male circumcision are a key part of public life and are open to all members of the community.

Webner (1986: 67), “Rituals like circumcision and other festive events serve as special occasions on which people return home to celebrate with their families and community, reaffirming their identity and link to the community’s traditions”. Gardner (2002: 38) opines, “Most of the time I have seen people even those who stay in the diaspora coming back home to participate in such special occasions. The coming of such folks is not empty; they bring with them resources in form finances and human capital which actually contributes to making the celebrations successful. The finance and human capital such adds to the final dissemination of social capital that is purposely aimed at inculcating value into the initiates and the society as a whole. From the data collected, in some occasions, the uniqueness the rituals and festive events attract the attention of the tourists”. For example, I witnessed a circumcision ceremony where among the participants were people from Germany and United Kingdom. It happened by coincidence that when they had come for holiday, circumcision was also taking place. Gardner (2002: 98) observes again, “Many communities find that tourists are increasingly participating in their festive events and while there may be positive aspects to tourist involvement, the festivals often suffer in the same way as traditional performing arts. The viability of social and cultural practices especially festive events may also depend quite heavily on general social-economic conditions. The preparations, the

production of costumes and masks and providing for the participants is often very expensive and may be sustainable in times of economic downturn”.

Apparently, cultural practices are marks of identity for varied communities; and therefore, there should be a clarion call to continue with them only but to improve in areas which are controversial. Gardner (2002: 16) observes, “ensuring the continuity of cultural and social practices often requires mobilization of large numbers of individuals and the social, political and legal institutions and mechanisms of a society”. On the other hand, Zontini (2004: 65) observes, “It may also be desirable to encourage the broadest public perception possible. In some cases, legal and formal measures need to be taken to guarantee the access rights of the community to its sacred places, crucial objects, or natural resources necessary for the performance of social and cultural practices such as rituals and festive events”.

According to Riggs (2011), “The main theorists of social capital like Coleman (1990), Bourdieu (1997) and Putman (2000: 65);

Explore in different ways communities, social change and social capital. Bourdieu’s analysis usefully demonstrates the role of practices and power in the generation, utilization and maintenance of social capital within and across generations. Coleman’s approach to social capital stresses traditional family structures and ‘stable’ environments as optimum for social capital and social economy. Coleman’s position on social capital and social economic development and its relationship to families makes particular assumptions. For example, he assumes that norms are given facts and not social constructs that reflect relations of power. Furthermore, while norms governing social networks can aid solidarity, they can exclude and sanction alternative realities. Secondly, since familial life is largely seen as a cost-benefit exercise (through obligation, investment and repayment) it is unsurprising that, for Coleman, social capital flourishes in stable situations.

It is particularly when the environment is conducive enough to allow the thriving of such social and cultural practices. The Bukusu people are traditionally known for upholding peace. With

such an environment, “people from other communities have migrated to come and live among the Bukusu community (Mukimba, 2013: 15)”. This also becomes a nexus for tourist who would want to learn the uniqueness of the Bukusu culture to come and witness. It is on this basis that this cultural rite has attracted the attention of media both local and international, human rights activists among others.

6.3 Building Integrity and Trust for development

As observed during interviews, circumcision is a vital tool for building development because young people are taught ways and skills of economic empowerment. Through these, they are warned against involving themselves in corruption and dishonest deals. According to Oxford Dictionary, “The quality of having strong moral principles, the state of being whole. The condition of being unified or sound in construction.” Going by “the quality of having strong moral principles” is the baseline for this study. When we talk about integrity, emphasis is on having a society devoid of corruption and dishonest. Heywood Rose observes, “Integrity is the absence of corruption or bribery. It is the beginning to see attention to sobriety” (pg. 49). Integrity is therefore is something that is cultivated, rather than simply a set of conditions under which corruption does not occur certainly in some cases, this may mean the absence of corrupt behaviour, thus it also means that an organization and its members strive to maintain a commitment to the societal rules and regulations.

Samuel Onyango (FGD, 20thJuly, 2018) said this about corruption, “*sibukulibwa sionakanga kumoyo*”, that which is taken without due permission is disturbing! A promising development in the society is highly anchored on well-established moral code. Fighting corruption, in fact, may imply something more than simply enforcing public relations. Lessig (2009), observes, “corruption is manifest when there is a systemic and strategic influence which is legal, or even

currently ethical, that undermines the institutions' effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose, including, to the extent relevant to its purpose, weakening either the public's trust in that institution's inherent trustworthiness (pg. 2)". The conceptualization of corruption moves away from simply the misuse of public resources for personal aggrandisement, towards a focus on how institutions diverge from their purpose. In the Bukusu community, vices such like theft, dishonest dealings and misappropriation resources is considered a breach of the moral code.

Alfred Wakuta (FGD, 12TH June, 2018) observed, "a building for instance may be designed for the best of intentions, and with the sole purpose of sheltering its occupants, but still lack integrity if it performs poorly under certain climatic conditions. Integrity and corruption are therefore asymmetric concepts, and thus distinct: failures of integrity need to not necessarily be predicated on strategic divergences from purpose". Institutions with integrity can be more than simply those that lack those with non-corrupt members. Coherence and consistency offer valuable insights into the concept of integrity. Coherence refers to the way in which one's values exist. In the context of integrity, these two concepts generate mechanisms of producing and maintaining trust.

Trust is one of the virtues that hold society together. The Oxford dictionary, "trust is firm belief in someone or something, acceptance of the truth of a statement without evidence or investigation. The state of being responsible for someone or something". During the forum of discussion, trust was mentioned as one tenet, which the initiates are told to embrace in life. When people confide in you it means they have trust in you! One member on the forum stated. Trust can be construed in either strategic or moralistic terms. Dunning, 2014 observes, "Trust is a relation between persons – as individuals, agents in an exchange, or leaders. If integrity is a precondition of trust, then it should be argued that the integrity of officials could create and

maintain public trust in organizations (pg. 23). Trust between members in the society leads to better cooperative action. According to Kousim (2010), “trust is transitively related to promoting effective governance through its effect on the public. This component of trust is certainly crucial, but as it is argued, it is not the only role integrity plays regarding institutional performance.” Trust is essentially a virtue in life. Halstead J.M. (1996) opines, “Trust is essential for human life and lies at the heart of relationships. It entails vulnerability, putting oneself in one others’ hands. Trust is central to civilized society, to living together in harmony, so it is to be valued and honoured. With wisdom and discernment, people can learn to trust. We can begin to rebuild trust in our mistrustful society by being reliable ourselves or by never letting people down. Similarly, by working with others, we are willing to let go of our control of ourselves and thereby trusting in the abilities, integrity, and honest of others, everyone can be enriched” (p. 13).

6.4 Towards a culture of Tolerance

We have various definitions of worldviews about tolerance. Richmond (2003) observes, “The notion of tolerance is used in a number of senses and as a philosophy. As such, it is a formula of civilized coexistence of all participants in social relations with their diverse opinions, convictions, beliefs, points of view, and other characteristics. This notion began to foster harmonious, stable, reliable, and lasting existence of social life in all its diversity” (p. 24). These views are similar to those of the respondents. Okhwatenge observed that, “interpersonal and inter-group disagreements and conflicts such as intolerance will lead to destruction of the society”.

According to the twenty-eight session of the General Conference of the UNESCO, 1995, “the declaration of principles on Tolerance was discussed and approved by member states. According to the declaration, tolerance is defined as “the respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the rich

diversity of the world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human in a humane society." With this definition, Samuel Onyango was quick to make this statement: "*Babukusu siyanja barende*, meaning the Bukusu people are accommodative to other cultures! Indeed this is true because Bungoma County is now cosmopolitan because people from other areas of Kenya and they have both land among the Bukusu people. There has been no incidences of animosity; and this is attributed to high-levels of moral instruction that is given during the period of seclusion". In reference to the above definition, "it is clearly indicated that mutual understanding and co-operation between groups with different ethnicities, religions, divergent political ideologies, and economic status is essential not only to communal and world peace, but also to the very survival of societies (Makila, 1978:128)". It is only in parts of Mt. Elgon where we have been having unrest over the land issue. This compromises the ethics of the Bukusu moral code.

During the period of seclusion, young boys are subjected to rigorous training as observed in the course of this current study. Tolerance among other values like endurance, patience, hard work, unity, reconciliation and restoration are taught to the initiates. Rea V. (1995) observes, "tolerance is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication and freedom of thought, conscience, and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty; but is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace (pg.45)." War culture is attributed to various factors, which include political animosity, tribal clashes and mistrust, and international dissension. In Kenya, cases of culture of war have been witnessed especially before, during, and after elections. Some tribes feel that they are marginalized and others think the ruling elites act unfairly to them. When a virtue like tolerance is cultivated in young people at an early stage, they will live with it and influence them to posterity.

Shaver, J.P and Strong W. (1976) observe that, “Tolerance is not to be confused with open-mindedness in the sense of the word that denotes being completely neutral or permissiveness about all beliefs and practices whatever they are. Open-mindedness of this kind may arise because one believes every belief or practice to be as good as any other: that all beliefs and practices are equal moral weight and value and that none is especially justified over another” (pg.17). In a broader perspective, Shaver and Strong (1976: 19) give a three-point evaluation of tolerance as follows:

Tolerance is a responsibility that contributes to the establishment of human rights, pluralism, democracy and the rule of law. Tolerance involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism and affirms the standards set out in international human rights instruments. Tolerance in practice is that which is equivalent to respecting the human rights. It does not mean to tolerate social injustice, to reject one’s own opinion or to yield to the opinions or to yield to the opinions of others. Therefore, tolerance means that every human being is free to have or access and to insist on his or her own convictions and recognizes that others have very same right. Fundamentally, tolerance means that human beings are naturally different in their appearance, posture, speech, behavior, and values, and that they have the right to live in peace and to preserve their individuality. It therefore means that the views of one person must not be forced upon other people.

Thus, “tolerance is the virtue that makes peace possible and highly contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace. Tolerance is broadly interpreted as the willingness of individuals to accept the right of everyone to be different. It means respect for all human beings and to encourage tolerant attitudes, because tolerance contributes to maintenance of peace and security (Marck, 2008: 19)”. All over the World, the majority have insurgencies, which have torn down the social, economic, and political fabric. Countries like Nigeria where we have the threat of the Boko Haram, Syria where we have the Isis, and Southern Sudan where we have sectional warfare has become a norm in the current setting. If we can have Nations preserving and capitalizing on rituals in order to tap the underlying values, we would help curb these problems.

On March 9, 2018, a phenomenal event happened in the Kenyan history! This was the handshake between Raila Odinga, the opposition leader and the President Uhuru Kenyatta. The handshake has changed the political landscape of the country, as two leaders professed that as citizens of this great Nation, selflessness triumphs over selfishness and personal ambitions. According Simiyu Okhwatenge, one of my key informants, informed the forum that, “it was wrong for one to shed blood; and incidences where people are engaging in crime, one should immediately leave”. This just points at the value and sacredness of life. In the Kenyan context, there has been tribal clashes and animosity whenever elections are held. Value-Based education a long side the informal indigenous knowledge should be offered strictly so that young people are educated in matters of peace and tolerance. Compassion and sympathy are related to tolerance. According to Kasozi (1981), compassion and sympathy leads to a desire to act, to do something. They require an act of imagination to tolerate someone else. It is humility to share in the lives of others” (pg 67). From the Biblical point of view, Ephesians 4:32, “*Be compassionate and kind to one another, forgiving each other, just as God forgave you*” is an emphasis of the virtue of tolerance. “It is about a community that knows that everyone’s well-being is bound up with that of everyone else”! Uhuru and Raila decided to throw behind their political antagonism and shook hands to symbolize unity and willingness to work together in moving Kenya forward (*see plate 6.1*).

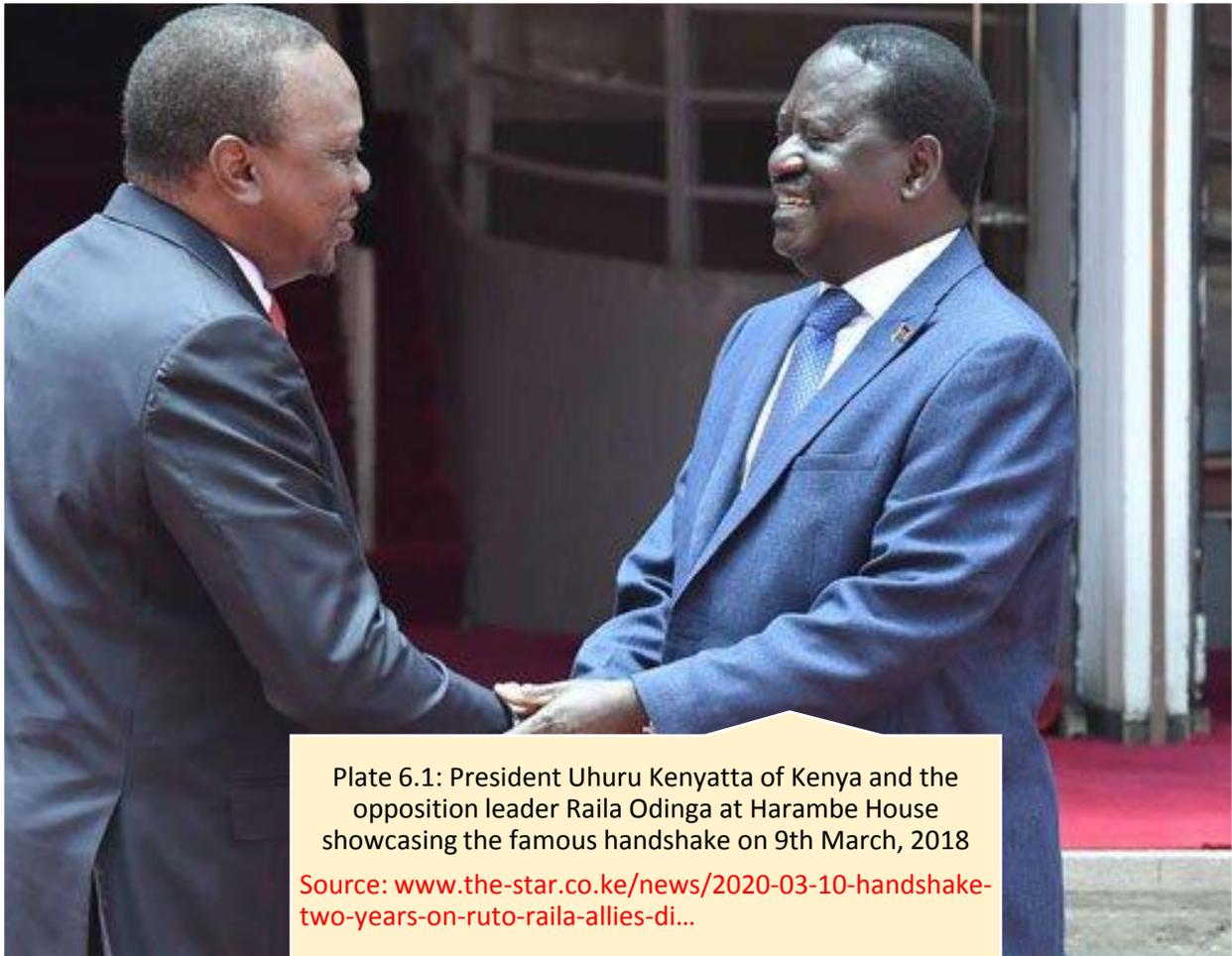


Plate 6.1: President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya and the opposition leader Raila Odinga at Harambe House showcasing the famous handshake on 9th March, 2018

Source: www.the-star.co.ke/news/2020-03-10-handshake-two-years-on-ruto-raila-allies-di...

The handshake was a momentous opportunity for the country as it set the country on the trajectory of national healing and reconciliation. The two leaders having tolerated each other is the basis of the good will that the country is witnessing. Upon this, there will be spirited fight against corruption by ensuring those tasked with public resources maintain fiscal discipline, stop wastage and misappropriation of public funds.

Cultural rituals such as male ritual circumcision can be conduits through which education on tolerance can be passed on to the young boys so that they too can be in a position to pacify warring communities. Agostino (2010), observes that cultural rituals are best peace advocacy forums (pg. 90)". By effectively instructing the young boys in seclusion on matters of social

cohesion, peace, and tolerance, it becomes an obligation of the society to embrace this trajectory of embracing rituals and explore ways and means sustaining them. Agostino (2010, 13) gives three points on the significant role of indigenous knowledge generated through cultural rituals: First, “To inform the young children with a sense of openness and comprehension towards other people, their diverse cultures and histories and their fundamental shared humanity”. Secondly, “To educate them about the importance of refusing violence and adopting peaceful means for mitigating disagreements and conflicts”. Thirdly, “To forge in the next generation’s feelings of openness and respect towards others, solidarity, cohesion, and sharing based on a sense of security in one’s own identity and a capacity to recognize the many dimensions of being human in different cultural and social contexts”.

In communities where there is peace, economic development is tenable. After the March, 9 handshake, there has been indications and projections of development projects across the country. A part from the projections, we have had the replication of the handshake in various quarters from national level to local levels. The political and administrative class have appealed to people to embrace the handshake in order to realize the National Agenda - 4 and Vision – 2030 blueprints.

6.5 Rituals and Value – Based Education

The Bukusu Male ritual circumcision is embedded with immense value based education. During Forum Discussion, respondents observed that if this knowledge embedded in rituals can be mobilized it could lead development, peace, social cohesion, unity and tolerance. According Ssozi K. (2007), “Value Based Education approach offers a new way of thinking about education and how young people can be supported to develop to become successful and happy members of the global society. It encourages reflective and inspirational attributes and attitudes. They can be

nurtured to help people, discover the very best of themselves which enables them to be good global citizens and prepare them for the working life” (pg. 23).

The value based framework that Bukusu circumcision ritual offers “consists of teaching tools and techniques. It involves creating environment for the development of skills that expresses and practices positive values. Young boys in the Bukusu ritual setup witness and engage with those values to guide and inform their behaviour. Value based education provides a successful environment for teaching and learning of the full range of the social and moral interpersonal skill While in Bukusu seclusion homes, “the initiates develop a secure sense of self. They become more empowered to take responsibility of their own learning. They take instructional diligence when they are involved with value-based education. They develop rational and objective trust and confidence. They become more articulate and able to talk freely and well through value-based framework” (Peter Mayeku, Oral interview on 4th April, 2018)”. Consul Wanyonyi and Philip Wekesa (Oral interview on 5th July, 2018) argue that, “education embedded in rituals such as circumcision is systematic and a planned process of the development of the potential of being to its maximum, by the harmonious growth of the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual qualities inherent in the initiates, thereby transforming them from being self-centred and egoistic people into integrated personalities and responsible global citizens”. s” (Crux, 2009: 14).

By learning from the Bukusu circumcision ritual, knowledge and values embedded therein can be mobilized in order to grow the economy. According to Geertz (1973), “young people can understand much more deeply their work and their lives. Value based education promotes effective learning and underpins continuous improvement of the personal, social, moral, and economic wellbeing. It is an investment in individual capability and self-responsibility and its

product” (pg. 118). For example as observed during the final day when boys come out of seclusion, they are given gifts ranging from goats, cows, chicken, bulls, and the sentry. This marks the beginning of economic independence and sustainability. *Plate 6.2* partly illustrate what happens during this glorious day for the initiate as he transits to a new status.



Plate 6.2: A gift of a bullock being given to the initiate by the grandparents on the eve of coming out of seclusion.

Source: Researcher, 2018

With such an establishment, the boys are put on a trajectory of development consciousness. What could happen if all communities could embrace this model of mobilizing social – cultural

resources to grow the economy? Because of value-based education, Gertz (2007) notes, “initiates become more diligent, the society acquire a more peaceful ambience; better child-parent relationships are forged. The initiate and members of the community relationship improves. Explicit teaching of the values provides a common ethical language for talking about interpersonal behaviour. It also provides a framework and mechanism for self-regulated behaviour” (p. 45).

6.6 Bukusu Male Ritual Circumcision and Social Capital: Towards an Inclusive Independence in Social –Economic Development

The boys in seclusion are subjected to a pedagogy that addresses all spheres life; thus the economic, social and religious dimensions”. What researcher witnessed during one of the sessions with regard to presents and gifts to the initiate, such a move is an indication that one has to become reliable, economically empowered, and responsible in the society (*see plate 6.3*). Matters of initiation are revered in a way that one would say is customarily an identity of a particular community. Ceremonies such as Bukusu male ritual circumcision do not go without celebration and empowering of the initiate involved. It becomes a forum when matters to do with development are wholly discussed. It is also a forum when people exchange ideas.



Plate 6.3: The initiate being given instructions by the grandfather on how to take care of the heifer

Source: Researcher, 2018

From the worldview of the Bukusu People, family and community are vital entities that contribute significantly to character formation of the initiates. It is the desire of all to participate in every stage of the process of circumcision until the candidate transits to adulthood. Samuel Onyango, Jamin Okwisia and Philemon Khaemba observed that, “the family and community are immediate witnesses to the endowment of the initiate; hence, they will encourage him never to relent on this discourse of becoming a responsible person of the community. According to Lukwata J. (2003), “the community is the custodian of the individual, hence, he must be subject to that particular community. There is tutelage in the community and is a center of communal religious worship, sacrifices, and festivities. In another sense, there community offers initiates the psychological and ultimate security as it gives its members both physical and ideological identity (P. 34)”. According to Biko Steve (1978) in his book “I write what I like”, observes, “By

living together, we jointly get involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life. Hence in all we do we always place man first and hence all our action is usually joint community oriented action rather than the individualism (pg. 42)". From this point of view ritual become uniting force of the community. Apparently, the Bukusu community knit is presumably knit together because of upholding the values advanced through ritual circumcision.

Apart from receiving gifts from the guest present during the eventful day of officially coming out of seclusion, the initiate will be making visits to whomever he summoned during the public pronounced to collect other gifts. Henry Kundu views that, this becomes a formidable base for the economic empowerment and development of the young man. What would happen if there is leverage on accommodating ritual so that resources are mobilized to grow the economy? A lot would be realized. From time immemorial, spirited efforts have been there to undermine circumcision in the African context. According to Regan (1996);

Before the coming of European missionaries and westernization, the social capital generated by the ritual circumcision prepared an African person for his or her responsibilities as an adult in the home, in the village, and the society. As mentioned earlier, the responsibility of educating and moulding the character of the African child lay not only in the hands of the parents and grandparents, but also in the hands of every adult in the community. That is to say that child rearing in most African societies, as opposed to western, was a collective responsibility. Indigenous African education took place right from childhood through initiation into adulthood. He cites Fafunwa's seven goals that are paramount in this framework. In Fafunwa's point of view, these goals aimed to develop the child's latent physical and intellectual skills; mold character and inculcate respect for elders and those in positions of authority. They also helped the youth to acquire specific vocational training and a healthy attitude toward honest labor; cultivate a sense of belonging by actively participating in family and community affairs. These goals are also aimed at helping the youth to understand, appreciate, and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large (pp. 23).

Erny (1981) observes, "Rituals are part of the basic data that links the African past to the present, and point to the African culture. Just as observed during the forum for discussion, the Bukusu male ritual circumcision brings about and creates an environment in which pedagogy is

developed which would impact the youth to adopt a character that would make them responsible in the community. It is not only at the preserve of the Bukusu community; but as literature has revealed, other communities operate on this trajectory” (p. 20).Erny again cites Thomas Aquina’s two different ways at which humankind arrives to knowledge. First, through what Aquinas calls invention, meaning, one’s own invention; and second, ‘disciplina’ which means, by discipline, or simply by teacher’s instruction. By their emphasis on juvenile participant observation, the indigenous participant observation, the indigenous African epistemology emanating from the social capital seems to be closely associated with Aquina’s first mode of learning, which is by invention or initiative” (p. 77).

In Kenya, we have a blueprint for socio-economic development commonly known as Vision 2030. This might not be fully fulfilled as intended because while major economic projects are currently being implemented; little is done to realize and utilize the social capital embedded in rituals such as Bukusu male ritual circumcision. This comes at a time when Kenya’s social fabric is broken down where various studies have indicated how this has been manifested. For example:

Kenya is ranked number 139 in the 2015 corruption index (Transparency International Report, 2015). Corruption entails vices such as abuse of power, bribery, and disrespect to the rule of law and so on. Kenya is the third most corrupt country in the world! This is according to a survey on prevalence of economic crimes released by audit firm Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC). According to the survey, Kenya only fared better than South Africa and France. This research was based on the prevalence of economic crimes in the country (<http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000193065/survey-kenya-ranked-third-most-corrupt-country-in-the-world/?pageNo=2>). This means that there is increase in the desire and intention to break the law for selfish gains; as well as the degradation for the ethics of care and concern for the society. It is one of the major threats to development sustainability.

There are limited studies that have attempted to address the social problems in Kenya. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission for instance conducted studies on addressing

challenges such as ethnicity and inequalities. According Dugg of the Transparency International Report, 2015;

While these studies are important, they are limited in scope hence they dominantly focus on ethnicity, inequality, and historical injustices. As a result they have not taken into account socio-cultural resources that exist in the community, which if realized and mobilized can enhance social stability and cohesion for development. Rituals for instance are major sources of social capital which nations can draw from to build social cohesion, or other set of values upon which development can be anchored. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the use of male ritual circumcision as an instrument of value inculcation by fully utilizing the embedded social capital.

In Kenya, studies on how social capital can be tapped from rituals and used for national development are scarce. Oscar Mmbali (2016) one of my respondents observed;

By learning from the Bukusu male circumcision ritual, particularly the lived experiences of those who have undergone the ritual; this study will contribute to this perspective. The study will therefore bring to light the rationale for which Kenya can identify, preserve its socio-cultural resources and utilize them for development. The study will add voice to the discourse on socio-cultural innovations that local communities can advance in order to build peaceful and sustainable communities in the post-2018 era. Some of the aspects of the ritual may gain resonance with other rituals applied in other parts of the world as indicated in the literature. This will contribute to the global discourse on preservation and use of indigenous knowledge and socio-cultural resources for sustainable development.

Fafunwa (1982) states that “every society, whether simple or complex, has its own system for training and educating its youth. And education for good life, has been one of the most persistent concerns of human kind. The method and approach for this education differs from place to place, nation to nation and people to people” (p. 9). Fafunwa (1982) again observes, “The Greek idea hails an educated man as one with sound physical and mental balance in the Old African society, a hunter, a warrior, a nobleman and good reputable skilled men were all evaluated as the most educated and well-intergrated citizens of the community” (p. 9). For the Bukusu community of Western Kenya, based on the researcher’s findings;

Ritual circumcision is one of the central features by which traditional education is passed on to the male youth. This kind of education is at every stage of the ritual administration, beginning with the initiate's formal entry into the house of seclusion (*Lubukusu, mwikombe*). Traditional or indigenous education continues throughout the time the initiate spends in seclusion. This includes how he should conduct himself while in a group of peers, never to quarrel, engage in a quarrel or seem to provoke a quarrel among his peers. This is an art of peace practice which the initiate will have to carry to the outside world at the time of his reintegration (*khukhwalukha*) into the wider society.

The researcher has chosen to use the term "initiation school" throughout this section when referring to the period of seclusion. Unlike other African communities who practice the circumcision of adolescents at makeshift lodges in the bush, Bukusu boys are circumcised at their home sites. Although they spend most of their time in the bush where they undertake lessons in indigenous education, all Bukusu initiates, locally referred to as *bafulu* are required to return and sleep in their lodges (*mwikombe*) at home by the end of each day. Some of these lodges would either be a special room in the parent's main building or a small hut newly constructed on the compound for this purpose. This is where the dressing of the penile wound is done. The researcher has chosen to use Turner's term, neophyte(s) (in Bowie, 2000), throughout this section in reference to the initiate(s). Neophyte is the term that rightly defines the Bukusu newly circumcised boy, *omufulu*, who stands between the two worlds. That is, the world behind him to which he cannot return and the world in front of him he is striving to reach. The world in front of him is the one to which he is headed but he cannot get there until a ritual known as *khukhwalukha*, which Van Gennep (in Bowie, 2000) refers to as going back into the society, is performed.

Makila (1978), "Unlike other cultures where circumcision has now become a matter of choice for male individuals, it is still an imperative adaptation among the Bukusu people" (p. 218). The practice is sealed in its genesis at *Esibakala* (Egypt) and revived in its Exodus from *Mwiala wa Mango*, Tororo hill of eastern Uganda (Makila, 1978; 87). Its practice and meaning is to identify

the Bukusu as a distinct community. A Bukusu boy is considered mature only after he has gone through ritual circumciasion. Ritual circumcision is therefore a pass that ushers the Bukusu boy into young adult status. It provides the boy with wider social contacts and experience in his home village and other villages within the the community and beyond. It is a symbol that explicitly identifies him with, as Ottenberg (1980) puts it “adult male culture and moves him on the road to economic independence from his father” (p. 298). The researcher sees this as an economic independence not as exclusive, but rather as an inclusive one that would eventually turn the record of dependency between the son and his parents the other way round. Inclusive independence here means that whereas the son was economically, socially and securely dependent on his parents before initiation, now it comes a time for parents to rely on his care as they advance in their ages.

One important feature in this final transition for a Bukusu young adult is marriage. Formerly, marriage used to follow immediately after the neophyte came home from seclusion, after having been circumcised. But with the prominence of formal schooling, as pointed out by Nathan Sakari and a few other participants in the interview in this study, formal education has now become standard and is the key that opens the doors to economic enhancememnt in the contemporary soceity. After marriage, a son was entitled to a piece of land (as part of inheritance from his father), on which he built a house and established his own family. The new house he built was no longer refered to as *esimba*, cottage, but a house that represented a respectable home within the community.

However, as ottenberg (1989: 90) observes, “Ritual circumcision does not automatically mark the beginning of an independent life of a young adult male, but rather, it empowers him to assist his parents in various home activities”. Based on the resercher’s observation, it could be argued

that for the Bukusu, the virtue of inclusive independence is a highly coveted phenomenon. Furthermore Ottenber (1989: 14) observes, “Again, it is important to note that the virtue of a son getting himself a wife or receiving a share of a piece of land from his father does not completely cut links between him and his parents. It is one of stages that mark the beginning of high responsibility for him to take care of his parents as he was strictly instructed while in seclusion”.

Mugambi (1979; 67) opines, “Despite his independence and close association to his parents, a Bukusu son is relatively more attached to his father than his mother. This mother-son exclusive association can only be defined in terms of what I would interpret as a manifestation of the African patriarchal syndrome. That is, a syndrome that eventually elevates the young man into being the head of his household”. The symbolic removal of a mother’s clothing (*Lubukusu, engubo ya maayi*) from the initiate, which is literally demonstrated by the severing of the foreskin during circumcision, as discussed in chapter four of this study, serves to enhance a new beginning. I therefore view the act of ritual circumcision among the Bukusu as a process of rebuilding or a reconstruction of a new relationship between the son and his parents. I also see it as a son’s public affirmation and a vow of undertaking pronounced responsibility to care for his parents to the end of their lives on earth. The care that a son renders is not only limited to his parents, but it also extended to his siblings and any relatives and sojourners who may happen to be living within the homestead.

A Bukusu boy’s circumcision in the open public square is a social-political, economic and ethical statement to the world within and the world without. Investigation into this scenario was done with the following questions at the background: What are the economic effects to the world within? What are the benefits of these rituals to the initiates? Do these benefits outweigh the

risks? What does it mean to be or not to be a ritually circumcised male in the Bukusu ethnic community? And how are the terms “boy” and “girl” defined within the Bukusu culture?

From the researcher’s stand point, the world within is applied to the initiate’s family unit or nucleus family, while the world without is the initiate’s life that extends beyond his local community and school. With regard to the initiate’s circumcision as a social-political statement to the inside and the outside world, this implies that after reintegration (*Lubukusu, khukhwulukha*) from the house of seclusion, the neophyte is ready to contest for or be appointed into any kind of responsibility within and/ or outside of his community. And from the economic perspective, a ritually circumcised man will be rated as fit to be entrusted with the community’s resources as a steward.

Bukusu ritual circumcision is elaborately defined. Makila (1978: 118) observes, “A ritually circumcised man is defined as one who has undergone through all the requirements that appertain to the Bukusu traditional way of circumcision”. In addition to the above qualities, such a man is addressed with full honor because he has acquired a pass that enables him to partake of and actively participate in all ritual functions staged in the community. In contrast, a man who got circumcised in hospital is treated with suspicion, contempt and is often marginalized in most ritual functions. Such a man is ranked with women in relation to the functions to this rite. However, this study seeks to dispel this notion because whether hospital circumcision or home circumcision, it is still ritual! The Bukusu as a community does not practice female circumcision like other ethnic groups of the Rift Valley, Central and parts of Eastern and Coastal provinces. The essence of the Bukusu male circumcision rite is not just in the cut, but also in what is involved in the process, more especially the oath-taking (*khubita*) and the vocational training in the seclusion. Therefore, despite the fact that an initiate has fulfilled the cultural requirement of

having his genitalia reconstructed to resemble a ritually circumcised man, since he did not fulfill all that appertains to this rite, he would still be rated as incomplete. As a result, his participation in many Bukusu circumcision ritual function will be limited to a higher degree. Again such should be dispelled because we are living in changing times that have been impacted by economic challenges where by not everyone will want have ritual done home.

The principle purpose of male initiation rite for the Bukusu community does not end with the reconstruction of the male adolescents' genitalia to resemble their fathers, but it is a means to transform boys from childhood to adulthood by inculcating crucial social values that would be basis for their socio-economic development. Besides a physical transformation into new roles of social adult responsibility, the community also transforms the male youth inwardly by molding their mental and moral character for the wider society. This physical, mental and moral transformation involves training and instruction throughout the periods of seclusion after the boys' circumcision. This is what the study is referring to as the immense social capital.

There are two major factors that seem to be taking priority in the modern Bukusu community. These are modern forms of education and medicare. With the decrease in land production, and in order to meet the family's domestic needs, "Male members of the community have had to go outside of the community in towns and cities to search for employment so as to vent for their families. Their salaries are subsidized with meager perennial income from their sugarcane harvests in order to meet the requirements of the family" (Oral interview, April, 2018).

6.7 Significance, Role and Functional Dynamics of Bukusu Male ritual Circumcision in the Social Economy

As far as this ritual is concerned (for the Bukusu) and in my analysis, it does not matter how much knowledge in arithmetic or physics a student acquires in formal schooling system for which teachers have to worry about, but it matters when the adolescent learns to master right from wrong, how to live rightly in the society. Right from wrong are positive values, which are matters of common decency for the Bukusu society. These are discussed in the chapter two on literature review under the section on the *character formation* (Reagan, 1996: 45). Moreover, Nathan Sakari's (one of my informants) views that certain values in life have changed should not be taken lightly. From his standpoint, Sakari argues that acquisition of higher education for the youth is taking precedence over traditional values embedded in male ritual circumcision. Teaching manifested at the initiation of the adolescent do ratify Sifuna and Otiende's (1992:16) argument that Western system of formal schooling is not the only competent conduit that constitutes education in the African societies. Based on the testimonies and sentiments gathered from the interviews and on my own observation, it was evident that African Indigenous pedagogy does provide core elements of preparation to the African child's real life situation. These concepts are discussed later in chapter four under the section on the neophytes' *vocational training in seclusion*. This manifestation also confirms Kaphagawani and Malherbe's (in Roux, 1998:83) that it is not just a preserve of the West, but a universal science whose application varies from one culture to the other.

6.7.1 Foundational thought

The Bukusu ritual circumcision is religiously characterized as one with cultic inclinations. There are quite a number of cultic symbols that are associated with it. The priests and other cultic

leaders are entirely involved in making sure that the spirits are not aggrieved. Mellitius Wanyama (2007), a recent scholar on matters of circumcision observed:

In the Bukusu religious cult, the rituals concentrated on cultic matters such as paying total allegiance to Moral code, and holistic submission to the will of the Supreme Being. Some of the rituals that took place in Israel cult are much similar to the Bukusu ritual and sacrificial system. It is quite apparent that in the Old Testament circumcision ritual is attributed to Abraham (Genesis 17). While in the Bukusu community, it is attributed to a man called Mango who circumcised by the *Kalenjini* as a tribute for his bravery of killing a huge snake that was a nuisance to the community because it killed people and animals. Elijah Walubengo and Jacton Namaswa (oral interview, 20th April, 2017) observed that, “this historical ritual took place in the late nineteenth century.” From there henceforth, the Bukusu people started circumcising their boys significantly to mean that they are graduating from childhood to adulthood. Any man not circumcised is likened to a little child and cannot be allowed to participate in decision making in the community (p. 113).

Mukakula Makhanu (Oral interview, 22nd May, 2018), “the Bukusu council of elders at the time when Mango was circumcised decided that circumcision ritual will be taking place in the month of August, the harvesting season in Bukusu land. This is to mean that there is plenty of food for visitors, the circumcised and the relatives. The council of elders believed that even numbers are associated with blessings; therefore, no circumcision takes place in odd years because such a year is associated with bad omen. More importantly also, during the month of August when the boys is scheduled to undergo the ritual of circumcision, his mother is not supposed to engage in sexual activity; because doing this will lead to the wound not healing quickly and it can also lead complications like bleeding profusely.”

According to Wekesi Mukimba, “the process of circumcision began by the candidate visiting the relatives to invite them to attend his circumcision ceremony.” The researcher sought to understand the reason as to why the initiate is in the wee hours of dawn: Steven Barasa and William Wamalwa (Oral interview, 12th March, 2018) observed, “going to the river contribute to making the body numb and reducing the pain. It was believed that women and children are allowed to accompany the candidate in all the stages of the ritual. However, they are not given

leading roles especially as song leaders. More especially on the circumcision day, they are not allowed to be too close to the candidate or even walk ahead of the processions.” On the other hand, “It is debatable that this is so because women in Bukusu community neither are circumcised and hence men take a central role because of the indelible effect of circumcision has on their priesthood!” Francis Waliaula observes this on the role of women in the whole of the circumcision process, “women and children are allowed to participate and watch all the events including watching the candidate when he is naked to symbolize the fact that at this stage he is a child and hence deserves no respect. It is only after he bravely undergoes the circumcision that he is respected and accepted as a full member of the community. This dimension inspires that candidate to be more eager to go through circumcision so that he does away with the constant embarrassment” (Oral interview, 22nd March, 2018).

6.7.2 Sense of Community

Communal bonding is one face for that characterizes the functionality of ritual. The bottom line is the coming together of people for the sake of celebrating. McLinne (2009) observes;

The inherent importance of communal bonding is also enhanced by this ritual of circumcision. The entire community is involved to give moral support to the initiate. In this respect the initiate is part and parcel of the larger community to which he belongs. It also symbolizes the philosophy of life in the society context where individuality is discouraged and communal spirit and interdependence is encouraged. The candidate’s parents, close relatives and neighbors usually do all they can to encourage and prepare him for the rite of passage. Prior to inviting the relatives, the candidate informs he parents. The involvement of the family and community in this ritual reinforces the importance of this initiation that serves the role of collectively admitting the initiate in to the community. It is anticipated that the initiate will take up significant participatory roles in the community. Having successfully gone through the process, the initiate will look forward to participating in the subsequent similar initiations for other community members and hence perpetuate the communal cultural identity bond. This qualifies the initiation as a social and humanistic phenomenon where the initiates are trained and mandated to be useful and responsible future leaders in their society (p. 101).

The involvement of the community in the whole process has high stakes. Caution is also observed when it comes to selection and identification of the circumciser to operate on the boy.

Based on the Bukusu moral code, the circumciser has to be a person of good moral standing.

According to Philp Wekesa;

It is always expected that the initiate becomes a good member of the community; and a lot of care is exercised in selecting the person who will circumcise the boys. He must be a person of good moral standing in the community. The circumciser (*Omukhebi*) is required to be a role model to the boy he will have to circumcise. There were consequences to the circumciser he failed to successfully circumcise the candidate. If the circumciser jobs of the whole of the genitalia, he was to be stoned to death. It is believed that some of the factors that contribute to the malfunction of the circumciser are; sleeping with his wife prior to the day of circumcision. During the circumcision season, all circumcisers live a secluded life whereby they are supposed to observe sanity and purity until the circumcision is over. Observed earlier the circumciser becomes the immediate life mentor of the initiate, hence the need to uphold high level integrity. In some instances, reputable circumcisers doubled up as village elders and headed a council of elders (Oral interview, 23rd March, 2018).

In the Bukusu community context, through public pronouncement procedures, the people are alerted about the coming circumcision celebration. Makona (1999). Observes, “In the process of Bukusu male ritual circumcision, the community is highly involved. As observed in the presentation, “different people including relatives and friends are invited during the public pronouncement by the initiate” (p. 78). According to Etuk, U.A. (2002), “The community is the custodian of the individual, hence he must go where the community goes” (pg. 118). That is to mean, “the community” has as established moral code and societal norms and structures which have to be inculcated into the young people. The community does all these in order to preserve its heritage other having young people engage in crime. Idiong (1994) observes, “The African idea of security and its values depends on personal identification with and within the society. Communalism in Africa is a system that is both supra sensible and material in terms of reference. Both are found in the society that is believed by Africans to be originally god made because it transcends the people who live in it now, and it is manmade because it cannot be culturally understood independent of those who live in it now” (pg. 113).

In similar opinion, the Bukusu people value sense of community very much. They don't entertain individualism by all means. Ogburn (1978) observes, "The genuine African is known and identified in, by and through his community. The walk to adulthood is one tough journey through circumcision. That is the reason the initiates are encouraged through song, satire, and support. To walk into the stage of adulthood requires patience, boldness, and courage; hence, the psychological aspect of the initiates should be prepared adequately. In another sense, the community provides the African with the ultimate security as it offers its members both physical and ideological identity. It must be noted that in the African mentality, the society rather community remains, while individuals, as persons, come and go (pg. 14)". Therefore, the African like in the case of the Bukusu people "emphasizes community life and communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is the community-identity". People come to get to show solidarity in this time when one of their own is transiting to another important stage (*see plate 6.4*). The purpose is to produce and present individuals as community culture bearers. According to the forum of discussion, circumcision process beginning with the public pronouncement, culminating to the material day of the operation is construed as a bonding season. Steve (1978), "We regard our living together not as an unfortunate eventuality warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the pursuit for a composite answer to the myriad problems of life. Thus, in all we do we always place man first and hence all our action is usually joint community oriented action rather than the individualism" (pg. 42). There is a common saying in Bukusu that says, "*njonjule kwe murwe khakhwonjule kwe bikele*, meaning ransom me today, I will ransom you tomorrow. There is always the principle of collectively rather than individualism. This is highly encouraged during circumcision ceremonies. According to Jomo Kenyatta his book, "Facing Mount Kenya (1953)", "The dances and the songs connected with

initiation ceremony are called *mambura*, thus, ritual or divine services. It is important to note that moral code of the tribe is bound up with this custom and that it symbolises the unification of the whole tribal organization. This the principle why the *irua* plays such an important part in the life of the Gikuyu people “(pg. 134). And this is the unification that the Bukusu male circumcision ritual also advances.



From the perspective of the Bukusu Community, young people are nurtured to be responsible citizens. While in seclusion and during the final day of coming out, they are taught virtues and values of life like sharing, being accommodative to one another, kindness and being good and responsible citizens. The process prepares the individual to grow up accepting his identity and accepting his society as well. In the contemporary setup, even young people grow and go out in search of jobs; they will always remember to come back to their mother community as they were taught. The purpose of coming back is to give back to society in terms of intellectual property or economic financial resources. Ezedike (2009: 45) argues, “The philosophy behind the African

communalism guaranteed individual responsibility within the societal ownership and relationship. The prosperity of one individual does not make a town rich. But the prosperity of the town makes people rich. Hence, a person will only be safe in a safe community”. From the economic level Steve (1978: 38) observes, “In African in an African society, poverty was a foreign concept. This could only be really brought about to the entire community by an adverse climate during a particular season. It never was considered repugnant to ask one’s neighbours for help if one was struggling. In almost all instances, there was help between people. This explains why the community would have poor people but not beggars”. Bukusu male ritual circumcision prepares the ground, thus draws people together to ensure that they are fulfilling their societal obligations: shaping young people to responsible citizens.

6.7.3 Sense of Good human relations

One of the dynamics that characterize Bukusu male ritual circumcision is that it emphasizes good human relations. The initiates and young people in general are taught to relate well with other people in the community. This will lead to harmony, peace and mutuality. Bello (1991: 74), “Relationship between individuals recognizes the worth as human beings and not only what they possess or what can they do for each other. However, these can come as secondary considerations, in terms of mutuality, reciprocity, and in terms in interpersonal relationship. People in the society help one another without demanding for immediate or an equivalent remuneration. Everyone is mindful of one another’s welfare”. This is exactly the purpose Bukusu male ritual circumcision endeavours to realize – to transform the whole person who would affect society positively. Steve (2000: 33) emphasizes, “A good relationship based on inter-personal communication has always been emphasized in the African society. Ours has always been a man-made community. In an African society, everyone is accommodated. The African sense of

accommodation accounts for the reason why in the traditional African culture, the weak and the aged; the incurable, the helpless, the sick were affectionately taken care of in the comforting family environment. The comforting family atmosphere is provided by the family system”.

Having good human relations just meant cordial and mutual coexistence. Good relations could keep at bay any incidences of breach of peace, violence and hatred. Idang (2007: 13), “The art of communication is a cherished value in African human relations. Persons freely discuss their misuses and problems and look for suggestions and solutions together. Failure to talk to people about either private or public affairs can be interpreted as bad manners or sign enmity. Above all the African believes that he who discusses his affairs with others hardly runs into difficulties or makes mistakes in the discharge of his duties. Anyone who seeks public opinion does not enter into trouble”. Similarly, the Bukusu people through the ritual of circumcision youth are educated to embrace the virtue of good human relationship. Offenses such as adultery, theft, murder, among others serve as contributors to destroying relationship. At an early stage in the life of the youth, they warned against them. Manyonge (2017), “They affect or disrupt the peace and harmony of a particular community. Of course this is where and how African sense of community and good human relations, when misplaced lead to nepotism”.

Good Human relations is a virtue of life! It is a pedagogical element that will not miss out in the curricula provided by circumcision ritual. According to Antia (2005: 90), “Having been brought in a culture that embraces human relations, the African person should therefore carry then ideals of his community into the wider society – another community”. Strong communities are build by the presence of values and virtues. Maor (1998: 18) observes, “The values and virtues cherished in his community should enable him to know that the other man is his brother as a

human being”. Nigerian proverb which says: “Don’t laugh at a distant boat being tossed by the waves, your brother may be in it” highly apply to this context.

6.7.4 Sense of the Sanctity of life

Sanctity of human life is a virtue that should be acknowledged by everyone. The Bukusu people have a cautious recognition of the fact that life should not be taken away or the shedding of innocent blood. Young men going through this ritual of circumcision in Bukusu community are thoroughly warned against engaging in any incidences that would lead to shedding of innocent blood. According to set moral code of the Bukusu community, one who sheds innocent blood, that is liable for facing stringent punishment. According to Taylor (2009):

The African does not like violence per se. This is because shedding of blood is discouraged people who were killed were those whose continued existence would jeopardise the lives of others and be a threat to the life of others and to the peace of the community. In such cases, the principle that is better for one man to die than for the whole community to perish, applied. War was only taken to as a last resort, that is when formal and normal courses of action to search for peace had failed. Murder was not encouraged, especially within the clan. If a man conscientiously killed another man within the community, he was killed himself. But if he killed the kinsman inadvertently, he was exiled for some period. However, murder is officially committed during war or in self-defence. In this case, the murderer is not expected to eat until he has ritually washed the blood of the slain man off his hands. This ritual helps to free the killer from the anger of God. After the murderer had been executed, his family would have to perform sacrifices and rites to remove the stain of evil and ward off the anger of the gods (pg. 118).

The significance of embracing the sanctity of life is an obligation of everyone in the society. Taylor (2009) opines again, “In this light, unborn children are protected and, abortion is discouraged. Sources of life are sacred” (p. 119). In the environment created by Bukusu male ritual circumcision, members of the community are warned against terminating a life. The extreme of such an act would lead one to be excommunicated from the community. Turner (1986) argues, “Sacredness associated with life goes to explain the rigidity with which the

Africans treat and regard the sexual intercourse and the sex organs. Members of the community should have the knowledge about the sanctity of life. This will be the basis for the respect towards human life. The sanctity of human reproduction derives from the sanctity of life in the African concept. This idea of sanctity of life makes it abomination for anyone, under any circumstances to take his own life. Suicide was never allowed” (pg. 34). For example in the Bukusu community, “Punishment for such was that the person was not buried since his corpse was believed to be abominable to mother nature. The Bukusu people prize life above every other thing. Any form of materialism that leads to the termination of life is alien and destructive of the Bukusu African cultural norms and concept of human life and should therefore be abhorred (Makila, 1978: 223)”.

6.7.5 Sense of hospitality

As noted earlier, Bukusu people are very hospitable. There are referred to as *siyanja barende*, meaning courteous to other people. African sense of hospitality is one of the African values that is still quite alive! Munduvilla (2008), “The Africans very easily incorporate strangers and give them lands to settle hoping that they would revert to the owner. For Africans, one cannot opt out of his original community completely. So they did not imagine that others could” (p. 24). We can’t depart from the fact that the Bukusu people have continued to embrace the culture of circumcision; and every “EVEN” year many boys undergo this ritual. This is quite opportune time when boys encounter the education offered in the seclusion schools. They are taught the importance of being hospitable; and this explains why in Bungoma County, it tapped a cosmopolitan County because many people have migrated and they are living among the Bukusu people. This is the result of intensive pedagogical tuition through the indigenous knowledge embedded in male ritual circumcision. According to Njogu, (2006), “Africans have symbolic

ways of expressing hospitality or welcome. This comes in various ways depending with community. When visitors come, they are welcomed by being given traditional gin, kola nuts, and coconuts depending with the community. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, the basis of hospitality is the generally accepted principle that a guest should not harm his host and that when the visitor departs, he should not develop a hunch back on the way back home” (p. 12).

According Bukusu traditions as observed during the Forum of Discussion, “In traditional Bukusu culture, whenever there is food to be taken, everyone present is invited to participate even if the food was prepared for far less number of people without anticipating the arrival of visitors. It would be a height of incredible poor mannerisms for anyone to eat anything however meagre, without sharing it with anyone else present, or at least expressing the intention to do so”.

6.7.6 Sense of the sacredness of Religion

The Bukusu held unto the believe in the Supreme Deity known as *Wele Khakaba*, meaning God the provider. In the process of Bukusu male ritual circumcision, the spirits and the gods of the ancestors are invoked in order to give the initiate the courage the face the knife and to ensure that the ceremony is successful. According to Idowu Bolaji, “With the Yoruba, morality is certainly the fruit of religion. They do not attempt to separate the two; and it is impossible, for them to do so without disastrous consequences” (1995: 17). People were taught to approach religious elements and matters with sheer respect. According to John Mbiti (1990), “It has been admitted by many authors that the African do not know how to live without religion. However, not every philosophy is a religion; every religion is a philosophy of a type. Hence, in traditional African there were no atheists” (pp 16-17).

The Bukusu believe in one God *Wele*, the “creator and giver of all things. He has no father, mother, or companion”. He is self-existent. While referring to other related tribe, Jomo Kenyatta

(1953) observes, “The common name used is speaking of the Supreme Being is Ngai; this name is used by the three neighbouring tribes, the Maasai, the Gikuyu, and Wakamba. In prayers and sacrifices, *Ngai* is addressed by the Gikuyu as Mwene Nyaga (possessor of brightness). This name is associated with *Kere-Nyaga* (the Gikuyu name for Mount Kenya), which means: That which possess brightness or mountain of brightness (pg. 234)”. From Gikuyu worldview, the mountain of brightness is, “God’s official resting place, and in their prayers they turn towards *Kere- Nyaga* and, with their hands raised towards it, they offer prayers and sacrifices, taking the mountain to be the holy earthly dwelling-place of God” (Kenya, 1953: 232). Similarly, the Bukusu people of Bungoma County venerate the Supreme Being whom they believe stays in Mount Elgon or any other sacred places like forests, caves, and riverine groves set aside for worshipping the Holy one. In the Bukusu community, people focus on the centrality of God in the society; even young going through the circumcision ritual are taught about the significance of embracing God in their lives. According to Kenya (1953), “No individual may directly supplicate the Almighty. The group which may do so is very clearly defined; it is the group of mother, father, and children, which thus receives supernatural sanction. The father is the key personality (pg. 234)”. From this perspective of Kenya, it becomes apparent that, God can worshipped by an individual or it can be a corporate thing. The centrality of God in the circumcision ceremony is the basis for the believe that the young undergoing the circumcision will get healed in good time.

6.7.7 Sense of Time in the African Understanding

Just as it applies in other areas of the globe, time factor is very significant. In the traditional setting, events were aligned with the cyclic seasons. For example, in the Bukusu community, they would tell time by looking at the sun, moon at night and the appearance of certain heavenly

bodies. In line with this study, time applied in various stages. For example, the initiate is not supposed to spent outside the seclusion until it is night. It is necessary that the circumcision operation should take place during morning hours. The issue “about African sense of time has arisen because of some complexities and conclusions some writers on Africa have drawn” (Sifuna, 2003: 18). Let us look at time according to Mbiti (1975), “African concept of time as a key to our understanding of the basic religious and philosophical concepts”. According him, “Time is of little or no academic concern to African people in their traditional life. For them, time is simply a composition of events which have occurred or which are immediately to take place. The most significant consequence of this is that, according to traditional concepts, time is two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long past, a present and virtually no future. The linear concept of time in Western thought, with an infinite future, is practically foreign to African thinking (pg. 17).” The concept of time is a platform upon which every aspect of life is determined.

Ekisaakate (2009), “In the African ontology, time is polychromous in the sense that a person can do three or more things within a given period simultaneously. Time is determined by reference to landmarks in the life of the community, to contemporaneous events or by recourse to genealogical chat” (pg. 19). I have seen people refer to historical events, distance notwithstanding. Expressions like “when there was a great famine or when there were many locusts in the land in 1922 for case of the Bukusu people. Africans especially the Bukusu people believe in the future...as Kato observes, “we absolutely believe in the future. We even believe in a future of regeneration and resurrection. This is demonstrated by burial rituals and the contact we maintain with the spirits of the dead. From the African perspective, the traditional African is a master of time and not otherwise” (p. 56). For example, “in the process carrying out the circumcision ritual, the Bukusu know when to perform a particular sacrifice. There are specific

times sacrifices must be offered. The Africans use of time does not sacrifice or compromise social duties and human relations on the basis of structured clock time punctuality” (p. 90).

6.7.8 Respect for Authority and elders

The Bukusu community, “respect to authority and elders” is paramount. This is a virtue among others that the young boys coming out of seclusion are taught. It a dynamic of circumcision that enforces strong familial and societal ties. Dower (1997), “Africans generally have a deep and ingrained respect for the authorities and the elders. Though it is natural for the Africans to respect, an elders, it is true that respect for elders starts within one’s immediate family (pg. 97)”. For this reason, Bukusu people claim, ‘*Bakhulu barianibwa*’, “which means, parents, elders have dignity and respect. The elders in Africa are respected for many reasons. For example, they are believed to be the teachers and directors of the young” Kaunda, April, 2018). According to Byng Kato (1976), “The words of one’s elders are greater than amulets. It means that they give more protection than the amulets does. He who listens to the elders is like the one who consults an oracle. The oracles are believed to give the infallible truths, these elders are also believed to say the truth and words and instructions are heeded to for the promotion good morals and behaviour among the young people” (pg. 61). Atypical example is the elderly instructions in the Bukusu moral code.

The significance of having a unified society rests on how people have been brought up and made to understand laid down moral code. Dissension in any given context leads to strife which afterwards may lead to war. According to Kenyatta (1953),

It is to be noticed that the education given at initiation does not concern only sex, but the youth is taught with equal vividness and dramatic power the great lesson of respect for elders, manners to superiors of different grades, and how to help his country. The trials of circumcision teach the youth how the man must bear pain,

meet with misfortune and bear himself like a warrior...He is taught to think matters over carefully and not to act on the impulse of the moment (pg. 109).

As observed by Nathan Sakari and Jafred Sirengo, “The elders must be respected because they are believed to be near to the ancestor. Elders themselves respect authority and hardly abuse it, and often are committed to the demands of their mandate. It is truism that respect given to the elders and the authorities has its practical effect in the maintenance of custom and tradition. The young are always looking forward to being elders and they are often told that if a child respects an elder, he would be respected by the young when he grows old. Furthermore, the elders are taken to be a repository of communal wisdom and therefore they are conceded leadership in the affairs of the people” (Oral Interview, May, 2018).

Being subject to the authorities of the land is a requirement for everyone. Doing so means one is law-abiding. Obeying the leaders in authority is a replica of obeying God because according to Apostle Paul’s thought; those leaders were installed by God to advance his will.

6.7.9 Sense of Proverbs and Language

Language is a powerful tool by which every culture expresses its ideals. Swatz (1994) says, “Indeed people express this thought in speech and both are determined, largely, by their culture. No individual is free to describe with absolute impartiality what he observes in other cultures because he must be constrained by certain modes of interpretation” (pg. 113). A proverb “the stranger who returns from a long journey may tell all he has seen, but he cannot explain all.” For it to be explained well, it must be shared in people’s language classifications. African especially the Bukusu people cherish their language, because ideologically they feel a sense of belonging. According to Graham (1999), “Speaking a language, does not, in the African sense, depend on the peripheral knowledge of the language. It depends on the ability

to express oneself adequately in the proverbs and idioms of the language community. These proverbs, idioms, riddles are based and determined by the culture of the community” (pg. 113). In the Bukusu community, we have very many educative proverbs, idioms, and riddles that are told to the young especially during their period in seclusion. The Bukusu people have a proverb that says, “The child who carries an elder’s back has a very good chance of being a wise man in life”. From Nguthia (1999) point of view, “Such a child follows his father to meetings and places, and listens to the wise words the elders articulate. The result is that, he knows at an early age those idioms and proverbs with which to fool the foolish and baffle the stranger, and also the custom of the land” (p. 118). Similarly, “This is the trajectory that all boys who pass through seclusion are advised to take. When one becomes familiar with the proverbs, idioms, and riddles of a community, it means a thorough knowledge of that community. This is because, they are drawn from, and refer to, the environment, social order and behaviour common to the community. They determine the norms of action in that community and above all, they are didactic in nature” (p. 78).

Geertz (1973: 110) observe that, “Proverbs, idioms, and riddles effect the moral system that teaches religiousness, reverence for ancestors and authority, filial piety, chastity, truthfulness, integrity, honesty and kindness. All these were taught through different avenues of acculturation, including parables and proverbs”. African informal learning is hinged on the principles of consistence with the aim of ensuring that the subjects of the education receive good constructive knowledge. According to Rodgers (2014: 87) opines as follows, “All these elements of African pedagogy were spoken within the traditional usage of familiar and local images to bring home to the addressee the content of the speech. One is truly a member of the community if he or she can live within this climate and level of communication in it”. The

Bukusu community aligned to this trajectory because, despite that challenge of modernity rising up strongly against culture, cultural elements like male ritual circumcision have withstood the tide. Warming to the fact that ritual circumcision is still thriving, a lot can draw together to explore the possibilities of make ritual a source of social capital, so that have stable societies.

6.8 Implications for the Neophyte's vocational training in seclusion: An economic discourse

For the Bukusu community, traditional educational passed to the youth is aimed at inducting the youth into the adult society and preparing them for the social adult responsibilities, as well as sharpen their intellectual, moral and spiritual character (Reagan, 1996). Seclusion for a Bukusu neophyte is also a moment for what I would interpret as “vocational training.” The curriculum for indigenous education in the initiation school was facilitated by the circumciser, the neophyte's father, or a designated reputable elderly men in the community. Vocational training is a period in which the neophyte has to pick up what I would call his “major” for a future career or vocation that awaits him in the wider society. While in seclusion, the neophyte is guided through a broad based traditional curriculum which involves learning the concepts of healing by use of traditional herbs; techniques of hunting for edible and non-edible plants, fruits, animals, birds, insects and fish. He is also taught techniques of trapping and killing animals for food and how not to kill certain animals and reptiles to ensure an ecological balance. The neophyte is thoroughly instructed how and when to attack and/ or get away from fierce animals; how to conduct himself before the most innocent but yet dangerous reptiles such as snakes and crocodiles and how to appease the most humble creatures such as doves and guinea fowls.

The neophytes were also instructed on how to tell and differentiate danger from peace while in the wild. They did this by listening to the sounds of different kinds of birds, crickets and frogs during day or night times. For example, according to William Murumba, the singing of a guinea fowl is a sign of a quite peaceful environment, but its cry is an indication of eminent danger. He also pointed out that there are voices of certain birds in the woods that are permanently associated with danger; he cited the owl (*Lubukusu, esikhikhi*) especially at night as a sign of bad omen. The neophytes were also taught how to interpret different signs in the sky for weather forecast. J. Sirengo, one of my informants in this study is from the rain-makers clan of Balunda. Normally, matters of traditional rain-making techniques are kept secret between the senior members of the Balunda clan. Therefore, there is not much that was revealed to me during the interviews. However, according to Sirengo, the rain-making spirit or technique (*Lubukusu, Bukimba*), he has used for making rain to fall or not to fall emanates from the instructions he received during the initiation school.

6.8.1 Culture and Environmental Conservation as economic drivers

This study involved consulting the respondents about the importance of conserving the environment especially the indigenous forests. As observed under the section, herbal medical care and treatment in chapter four, trees are very important, because a part from having the curative values, they can be planted in for nitrogen fixation and other purposes. To achieve this, young boys who are graduating to adulthood should be prepared to become agents of nature preservation. When they use herbal medication, there concern would be; what about if all forests are depleted. Definitely, there would be no eco – balance. I noticed that there are various challenges against the quest of environmental conservation. First, the coming of Christianity in Bukusu community changed the perception of people “about themselves and the environment,

resulting in a unification of culture. As a result, traditions and the identity of the Bukusu people changed significantly. In my view, the belief system of the Bukusu people and by extension other community with similar cultural orientation, was more than just a religion: it was piety that affected every activity and the way of people's lives" (Onwukino, 2005: 18). Secondly, Mbiti (1990) observes, "gender inequality and stereotypes is another challenge. Agositino (2010) observes, "women and children have limited access to resources and services. This situation is further exacerbated by the community presentation of women and children as subordinates occupying traditional roles of child care, nursing and midwifery" (p. 16). And according to "The Human Development Report of 2007", "The largest percentage of poor people in sub-Saharan Africa are women and children who face gender inequalities such as lack of land, training, limited participation in decision-making, and a more dependence on natural resources and greater caring responsibilities". Apparently therefore, "These existing gender inequalities in the community make worse many of the consequences of climate change" (Tamale, 2005: 97).

According to Matovu, K. N (1995: 113), "Development which is not grounded in indigenous knowledge becomes irrelevant for the present generations. Once such a scenario is manifested, it baffles future direction and sustainability. Thus, development policies, such as those on environment and nature preservation Buganda, as well as elsewhere, must strive to consolidate what was good in the past to mutually interact with present ideals, if the future is to remain meaningful". Elsewhere in this case would apply to Bukusu community and other communities. Deforestation is one other setback environmental conservation. Young people who are going through this process of transition should be given all the information pertaining conservation so that they can pass it to posterity. The researcher visited various forests where herbal medicine is harvested. The forests also acted as seclusion homes for the neophytes where they under informal education. These forests are revered as sacred, and minimal human activity is allowed

to take place in them. For example in Siaka forest and Mount Elgon forests both of them in Bungoma County are set aside for ritual purposes (*see plate 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14 in chapter four*). Bringing rituals to matters of environmental conservation would help balance the ecosystem; enhance people's livelihoods, and economic development.

Forests of this nature contribute immensely to the formation of rainfall; and if they are depleted, chances of having drought are high. According to Tamale, S. (2005), "There is need to integrate indigenous environmental conservation methods in the school curricula across all levels. Indigenous nature and environment conservation methods should be reflected young people's wildlife and environment clubs as well as other activities. There should be deliberate efforts directed towards integrating indigenous environment conservation methods in school course units or developing new programmes that champion indigenous environment education" (pg.56).

In the light of this, the Bukusu male ritual circumcision would serve as basis for the generation of social capital which include environmental education. And as observed by Makila (1978), "Oral tradition could be repackaged and passed on in form of motion pictures, music, drama and media presentations that are appealing to the populace" (p. 189).

In his *Handbook of Medical Herbs*, Duke (1985) reveals that "All species of Eucalyptus contain essential oils" that can be used as insecticide and insect repellent (p.185). Duke continues to report that essential oils extracted from the Eucalyptus has also been used as an antiseptic in cough drops and also as a stimulant. While its leaves are widely used as antibiotic, especially for the traditional Mexicans who chew them to strengthen their gums, people in some traditional African societies use its "finely powdered bark as an insect dust (Duke, 1985). Jafred revealed that his family used Eucalyptus ash to kill and keep away creeping insects such as termites, safari ants, weevils, etc. He also maintained that he learned these techniques during his initiation

periods. Duke (1985) further reveals that blue Gum, from the family species of the Eucalyptus, is a folk remedy (p.185) for a variety of ailments such like “arthritis, asthma, boils , brochitis, burns,cancers, catarrh, cold, cough, cystitis, diabetics, dysentery, dyspepsia, fever , flu, grippe, inflammation, laryngitis, leprosy, malaria, miasma, phthisis, rhinosis, sore throat , spasms, tuberculosis, vaginitis, wounds, and worms” (p. 187). And according to Morton (1981), the traditional Cuban communities, Morton indicates that the essential oils from the Eucalyptus tree were used for the treatment of variety of complications ,which included “bronchitis ,bladder and liver infections, lung ailments, malaria and stomach upsets”(Morton, 1981: 23).

Despite its global use as a remedy, Morton (1981) is also quick to point out that excessive use of Eucalyptus essential oils can be fatal to human health. In his analysis, Morton indicates that symptoms for complications that may result from higher dose include “Intestinal irritation, nausea, vomiting, oxygen deficiency, weakness, dizziness, stupor, difficult respiration, delirium, paralysis, and convulsion” (p. 109). Jafred Sirengo’s sentiments concurred with Mortons views. In a continued interview with him he revealed to me that even though he was introduced to different categories of medicinal plants that would treat a variety of ailments during his initiation schooling, he was emphatic that the mentors also warned him in their excessive use. I have included the above world view information in this section in order to demonstrate the fact that:

1. Matters of alternative health care and hygiene were an important phenomenon for the Bukusu Society just as they were vital to other traditional societies of the world.
2. The use of medicinal plants to treat a variety of ailments is not about invention or a preserve of Bukusu society, but that the knowledge of its implication is inseminated from one society to the other.

3. Just like any other people of the wider African traditional societies , the Bukusu youth were given instructions on proper application of alternative remedy to keep themselves, their families and their domestic animals healthy.
4. My inclusions of information on Morton's (1981) warning especially on the excessive use of the Eucalyptus essential products on human health is to raise awareness among the members of the Bukusu traditional society who still use herbal medicine for the treatment of different ailments.

Since there is no standardized use of medicinal plants, chance of overdose are likely to occur .Therefore this information serves to sensitize the instructors and mentors of the youth initiation schools among the Bukusu to be aware of the alternative health care hygiene. The other objective of my inclusion of this information in this study is to emphasize the fact that mastery of all the above techniques was the whole mark of a "total man" (mine) in the Bukusu Society.

Bodily healing for Bukusu male initiates is treated with higher regard because, as Bowie (2000:89) puts it, it represents both the individual and communal health. A successful recovery of an initiate penile wound is a joy "Not only to his immediate family, but also to the entire community" (Makila, 1978: 106). But if an initiate's healing process is delayed or agony of the pain is prolonged throughout the seclusion period, the family's faith is presumed to be on trial and the community's strength is presumed to be weak. Bowie (2000: 71) argues, "Speaking from an emic inside point of view, the whole of Bukusu male are indicative of peoples strength and consciousness that they do not exist as isolated individuals belong to a hierarchy of a social group" that cares and nurtures for one another.

In the vocational training in seclusion, the neophyte is given instructions on how to conserve the natural resources and take care of the environment. By doing this, he is introduced to different

types of species in the woods and how to master special functions of certain plants ranging from those that are used for healing a variety of human domestic animal ailments and for casting spells on the enemies (witchcraft). The Bukusu do not have a specific term to describe this type of botanical herbal speciality, but in Kiswahili it is known as *uganga* (Swantz, 1990). While in the initiation school, the neophytes were also taught techniques of what is now commonly referred to as First Aid. With techniques in First Aid, neophytes were taught how to handle accidents that involved severe nose bleeding, serious bleeding from cuts, how to handle and care for broken limbs, burns and snakebites. For example, during my time in seclusion, my mother taught me how to stop or slow the spread of venom in the body from snakebite. She also showed me and trained me how to use a certain herb for the treatment of snakebites. But along with these healing techniques, my mother also warned me never to kill any snake; otherwise, the power of the remedial plant would be weakened. However, in my interpretation, the real lesson embedded in this practice of treating snakebites and sparing the life of the snake was nothing less than to ensure a balance of ecology and environmental conservation.

Even though it may not be as complex as it is today, as far as First Aid was concerned, neophytes were taught techniques of saving the life of a choking person by use of thrashing technique from the back or simply applying a contraction on a victim's chest. From their early ages, children were taught to avoid certain eating styles that precipitated choking for example, Lazarus Misiko Namasambu told me in an interview with him on the subject in August, 2016 that as a child, his mother, Murunga often warned him never to eat corn, beans, groundnuts or any chewable foods while lying down on his back. From his mother's argument, as Misiko revealed, such a style of eating was considered awkward and that it invited rats into the house. From Misiko's interpretation, since it was difficult for parents to keep watch on what and how their children

ate, they had to devise a method in order to sustain their children's good eating behavior. The main objective embedded in this lesson was to keep children safe from choking incidents.

Techniques of diving to save a drowning person were very important features for neophytes during their vocational training in seclusion. After retrieving a drowning person out of a river, Misiko pointed out that the neophytes were also taught how to squeeze out water cloaked in the victims belly. Before getting to learn safety diving techniques, the neophytes were first given thorough training in different swimming styles. Along side the swimming and diving techniques, sons of herdsmen who were also being ushered into the culture of cattle rearing, the neophytes additionally received instructions on how to save drowning livestock and how to safely pull out animals that were found stuck in mud drenches.

One important feature in safety was the technique of how to escape from a burning house and how to roll oneself over the ground or wrap oneself in animal hide (*Lubukusu, lisielo*) or in a blanket (*in present days*) to put out the fire. On the overall, neophytes were given instructions on the general awareness of the dangers of fire and how to avoid ways that would cause unnecessary fires anywhere. The aspects of health care and hygiene was taken seriously in the African traditional societies (Swantz, 1990). Like other vocational skills, matters of hygiene are learned throughout an African person's lifetime (Okawe, 1990). Children learn health techniques from their parents, but as they grow and enter into the initiation schools, they are given rigorous instructions on how to take care of their bodies and keep the environment safe and habitable for both human and animals (Ottenberg, 1998). In the interview with Jafred Sirengo on this subject, he said that during his initiation period, the first lessons he received were to prepare him for better future parenthood. He said that as youths, they were given instructions on how to use twigs of certain plants as toothbrushes to keep their teeth white and clean. In the traditional African

Societies, there were certain plants that were specially designated for gum and tooth care (Duke,1985). According to Jafred Sirengo, the best known plants for this type of treatment were those locally known as *Lusangura and kumutakwa (Eucalyptus)*. In the absence of these plants, the youth were also instructed on how to use broken pieces of charcoal to clean their teeth and rinse with clean spring water.

6.8.2 Vocational training and moral instructions for economic independence

During and after seclusion the initiates are given teachings that would turn them in to economically stable and reliable people. They are empowered economically in different ways. They are given gifts which they would use as a foundation for their economic sustainability. After circumcision,a neophyte was prepared to lead his own life. He was instructed in ways of constructing his own esimba, cottage, because during his reintergration (*khukhwalukha*) into the regular society,he was culturally not allowed to go back to the house in which he used to sleep before he got circumcised. The old house, Jairus Walela, one of the senior circumscisers,was a representation of the neophytes old self and old world. After circmcision, the neophytes behavior and attitude is expected to change his lifestyle to make an about turn towards adulthood. Besides learning techniques of how to construct houses and other shelters ,the neophytes were also given instructions on how to construct fences and walls that would keep their families and the entire community secure and safe from enemy attacks.Most fences or walls were constructed with forms of enemies in mind; one was for defense from human attack.This was made from mud walls and rocks(Makila,1978). The second was defense against attacks from fierce animals.This was constructed by use of thorny tress and bush. Along side the construction techniques ,neophytes were also taught methods of self defense from both, human and animal attacks. They

were especially taught how to jealously guard their herds of cattle in Kraals, which were family treasures.

In addition to the moral instruction discussed in chapter four under the subtitle '*Khubita*', administration of the oath to neophyte, knowledge on matters of sex and respect to other peoples' property was passed on to neophytes in the initiation school with great emphasis. Reflecting on his days when he was growing up about seven decades ago, Joseph Wekesi, one of my informants in this study, pointed out that unlike these days when matters related to cases of adultery, rape, incest, and theft are handled by the local government authorities, those days such cases were solved by a council of community elders. During his days in the initiation school, Wekesi was emphatic that the neophytes were instructed to respect other peoples' wives and property. This piece of instruction was indirectly passed on through the Bukusu phrase, *Kumuliango kumwikule ku kwowo, kumwikale kwabene*, literal translation of this would be, enter only through the door that is open, but one which is closed belongs to somebody else. From Wekesi's point of view, the open and closed doors were in reference to the female gender. The open door represented a mature unmarried female while the closed door represented someone else's wife.

Additionally, according to Phanael Waliaula, another informant in this study, the level of warning at which the neophytes were instructed to respect married women was the same breath they were strictly warned to keep away from rape of under age girls and acts of incest. In Waliaula's reflection, depending on the magnitude of the offense, such cases were punishable by fines and/or excommunication from the community.

On the question of taking responsibility for a female pregnancy out of wedlock, Waliaula illustrated a methodology by which the council of elders used to retrieve confessions from male

culprits. In such a case, both the victim and the culprit were made to stand at the center of the elders' circle, and the culprit was asked three times if he was responsible for the baby the victim was carrying. If he denied in all the three times, then both the victim and culprit were told to take off their pants and the culprit was compelled to crawl between the open legs (*Lubukusu, Mung'ati*) of the victim as she stood at the centre of the council of elders. I called this the under-pass. In Waliaula's point of view, this was a time during which culprit confessed the offense if he was guilty. But those who were not guilty of the offense proceeded with the underpass. It was believed that those who proceeded with the underpass while guilty put an instant curse on their heads and those of their offspring. Those who confessed the offense were led into a vow of commitment to take care both the mother and the baby.

6.9 Circumcision and law: Ritual and social capital jurisprudence

The fundamental insight upon which this study is based is that there are a number of practices through which social capital in form of social norms can be instantiated in social life, and that the specific medium adopted has important implications for the normative order. The purpose of this section is to lay an advocacy towards bringing male ritual circumcision into law. The esteemed Kenyan constitution does not speak anywhere in favor of this important ritual that shapes the human life via the normative order. In Module 3 of the Kenyan constitution, it provides for an elaborate and advanced bill of rights compared to the former constitution, the Bill of Rights is more progressive and for the first time recognizes and protects social, economic, and cultural rights as well as group rights. It has elaborate provisions for the protection of minorities, marginalized persons and communities and it provides for affirmative action for the youth, women and the marginalized (Kenyan Constitution, Module 3:27). I would like to point out that in this, a gap is identified, whereby, when it gives leverage to cultural rights as well, there is no

particularity about the kinds and manifestations of cultural practices such like male ritual circumcision that this study is instituting an advocacy for.

It is therefore incumbent upon the government of Kenya to consider litigating the issue of ritual to have an elaborate space of recognition in the constitution. What have been witnessed in the recent decades have been advocacy against such cultural practices. What informs my position is that, many nations today mobilize social capital from the community in order to drive development programs, for instance Israel (Prazak, 2006:118), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations (2004), Japan (Prazak, 2006:119), “have used social capital to drive their economies. Social capital entails community resources such as love for each other, the sense of community, trust, care for the society among others. These resources are developed and natured through socio-cultural mechanisms applied in everyday life”.According to Oscar Mmbali, “In Kenya, studies on how social capital can be tapped from rituals and used for national development are scarce. By strengthening ritual aspects and protecting them in law, the country can attain social, economic, and political development” (Oral interview, 18th June, 2018). By learning from the Bukusu circumcision ritual, “particularly the lived experiences of those who have undergone the ritual; this study will contribute to this perspective” (Sifuna, 1998: 23).

According to Module 3 of the Kenyan Constitution, “The context and development of human rights. It emphasizes the constitutional provisions for the protection of human rights and the role of various actors in protecting the bill of rights guaranteed in the constitution. The module further outlines the international instruments which form the cornerstone of fundamental rights freedom. Human rights should be understood and evaluated by the extent to which they promote good governance and support development (Kenyan Constitution, Module 3:28)” and according to

Mukimba (2013), “I have not seen anywhere, in media or public forums a concerted outcry to protect cultural practices such as male ritual circumcision. The general dissatisfaction is towards such rituals’ paraphernalia and what seems to be obsolete procedures. I may also have a problem with this; but obviously ritual remains ritual even if it is embellished by modern modifications. The bone of contention is not the mode and procedure; but at the outcome of the ritual that this study is focused on” (p. 56).

Litigation should be in place to advance advocacy for the protection of cultural rituals. For example, “Based on the meaning and significance of the bill of rights, it becomes apparently clear that the gap is vivid. Human rights are universal legal guarantees protecting individuals and groups against actions which interfere with fundamental freedoms and human dignity. Human rights oblige Governments to do some things and prevent them from doing others. Consequently, individual rights and fundamental freedoms are universal entitlements of human beings and are part and parcel of the individual self. The purpose of recognizing and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms is to preserve the dignity of individuals and communities and promote fairness and the realization of the potential of all human beings (Kenyan Constitution, Module 3:28)”.

While “Cap 4 of the Module 3, Human rights deal with the relationships among people, between people, and the society and people and nature. It manifests the characteristics of human rights which” are:

- a. They are universal and are recognized internationally;
- b. They are legally protected;
- c. They focus on the dignity of human beings;
- d. They protect individual and groups;

- e. They obligate states and state actors;
- f. They cannot be waived or taken away; and
- g. They are equal and independent

In Mutua's point of view, "Item b and d speak out rightly on the need to identify the cultural practices that can generate social cultural resources and protect them against disdain. This can only be realized if the government will consider bringing such rituals into law on the basis for jurisprudence with social capital. This will not only be restricted to male ritual circumcision but also to rituals identified across the cultural and religious domains" (Oral interview, March 2018).

Concisely, the researcher should say that, first; the Bukusu male ritual circumcision which has been analyzed in this study is a phenomena that has "survived modernity throughout the ages. Secondly, the study of this ritual has not been an attempt to recapture the past, but rather, it was an endeavor to try to understand the present, which is essentially founded on the past" (Musonga, oral interview, 28th April, 2018). Thirdly, by so doing therefore, this study has tried to make a contribution to the "Formation of a possible desirable future for the members of the Bukusu society", and an addition to a body of knowledge that is social capital which already exists in relation to this subject.

Summary

This chapter was in response to the third objective which sought to investigate the way in which social capital embedded in male circumcision ritual is generated and its contribution in the social economy hence, the necessity for the boys to be transformed into adult responsible men for the society. The discussion was undertaken under the following themes: Male ritual circumcision and social capital in building social economy environment, cultural rituals and social entrepreneurship, building trust and integrity for development, towards a culture of tolerance,

Rituals and value-based education, significance and role of ritual and so on. Male ritual circumcision being a phenomenal cultural ritual, which cannot be wished away. It is evident from the data collected and the discussions thereof that culture is a formidable force in positioning and reshaping circumcision among the Bukusu people. Focus was also to assess how and what it is that motivates the members of the Bukusu community to continue performing this practice despite the excruciating pain involved for the initiates, and other overarching factors that threaten the health of the youth and the general economic conditions of the community. In the light of the foregoing justification, it was noted that the majority of respondents are in support of the continuation of Bukusu male ritual circumcision but with modifications.

The Bukusu people of Bungoma County have blended traditional, Christian and Western beliefs, attitudes and practices. For this reason, male ritual circumcision is still being practiced in most parts of the county. The relative peace and cohesion that is witnessed in Bungoma County is partly attributed to the values and virtues of life; some thrive from the practice of male ritual circumcision. In such an environment, value-based education is inculcated to the people who are perceived to be responsible citizens. It was ascertained that the Bukusu male ritual circumcision is significant in various ways. The practice of this ritual brings about sense of community, sense of respect to elders and authority, sense of hospitality, sense of sanctity to life and many others. The process and organization of youth for lifelong goals depends on how well they will adhere to the education passed on to them while in seclusion. The implications for vocational training in seclusion therefore is an impetus to the stability and sustainability of the economy.

With a view to ascertain the extent of generation of social capital in the social economy by male ritual circumcision, this research found that intense teachings that are given to the neophytes while in seclusion, make them fit to belong in a society and contribute to the social-economic

development. Many of the dissenting voices were focused on the rite's effects on the economic and health aspects than on its eradication; therefore they were in favor of the continuation of the ritual. Continuation of this ritual in the present circumstances prompts legislation to maintain the cultural rituals for purposes that protect the cultural rights of the people. This means that bringing male ritual into law will form a jurisprudence that will make people have freedom in practicing their cultural rights without any fear of intimidation, stigmatization, and threats of prosecution. This means that governments will have a say in the planning, preparations, and control measures during and after ritual festivities. The litigation on matters of ritual especially Bukusu male ritual circumcision seek to bring on board various stakeholders who would ensure that the practice is safe. Countries like Japan and Israel have embraced social cultural resources like male ritual circumcision to grow their economies. This can be borrowed by Kenya to tap on the immense social capital embedded in ritual in order to grow the economy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Summary of the Results

The first objective of this study was to ascertain the philosophy, attitude, and perception about Bukusu male ritual circumcision in general in Bungoma County. The objective sought to answer the question: What are the philosophy, attitude and perception on male ritual circumcision in among the Bukusu of Bungoma County? This cultural practice can be treated as a lens through which the rest of the world is judged on the notion that, “ours is the culture that makes men, and therefore our practice is innate – our identity”. And this, if not watched carefully may spill into spheres of cultural relativism, that is, viewing and treating other cultures as less important. From what the researcher got through his participant observation, male circumcision for the Bukusu people is not just about the cut, but also about what is learned by the initiate during the healing period which can also be referred to as vocational training in seclusion. This is what makes a man out of a boy in the Bukusu community. The difference is for those who acquire clinical circumcision, the men-making process, known as *Khubita*, formal inauguration, commissioning or oathing of the neophyte, which is the central focus in the entire practice, is done by the invited family members or pastors. The context of male ritual circumcision provides an environment that is rife for the manifestation of social capital that would be beneficial to the initiates.

Respondents, especially from among the middle-aged groups were of the opinion that the ritual has become obsolete and therefore it was high time for it to be eradicated. I thought this is a wrong view, because whether clinical or traditional, male circumcision is still ritual. The sentiments on traditional circumcision being rendered obsolete are also attributed to the social, economic, health, and religious changes taking place in the modern society. And as noted in the

literature review, cultures are dynamic, and beliefs, customs, norms, and values are all subject to change. Therefore, although it has been viewed as the pillar that has identified, defined, and held the community together for ages, the Bukusu male circumcision ritual is entering into a new era. This new era is propelled by the mind of a new generation who view formal education as an agent for social change in the society. After studying and observing the relationship between the operations of the formal education and the initiation rites, the researcher would argue that both are in contrast as opposed to being in complimentary to each other. The atmosphere and the amount of knowledge exhibited in the structured and unstructured forums for discussions the researcher facilitated among the older and the middle-aged members of Siaka village attest to the fact that indigenous knowledge has helped to create for people their own ethnographers. Formal education could therefore be used as a tool to transform this oral literature into written forms for posterity suitably for enhancement of further research scholarships.

The researcher would also argue that while indigenous systems of education helped disseminate knowledge orally on the local level, formal education would help nationalize and internationalize it in written forms. This is to say that in other words, the African indigenous knowledge will be locally created and globally shared. Therefore, change of certain elements in the male circumcision ritual is inevitable. Moreover, while ritual circumcision is still being viewed as a major means of achieving manhood in the Bukusu community, mobilizing of the socio-cultural resources to drive the economy is an overarching factor.

The second objective was to explore the elements and meaning of social capital in reference to Bukusu male ritual circumcision. The objective answers to our second research question: What are the elements and meaning of social capital in reference to male ritual circumcision? With the researcher's ability to understand and speak the local language, *Lubukusu*, he was mesmerized at

the way the older members of the community approached critical issues within both, the traditional ritual practices and modernity. Older members of the Siaka village who were born between 1947 and mid 1950s contrasted the current modern formal education with what they learned during the initiation rites. For example, with his little formal education as demonstrated in chapter four, Peter Wechuli maintained what other older men would say, that everything he knows today, he had learned it during his initiation school in seclusion. This is in response to the elements of social capital that are brought forth by the presence of Bukusu male ritual circumcision.

There are values within the Bukusu cultural domain that have evolved from within, with minimum or no external influence. Values such as reciprocity, mutuality, social cohesion, and integrity emerge from the practice of the ritual. Other values that have emerged currently are like, the use of newspapers or other papers for *etiang'i* (circumcision spot), and the disposal of the foreskin tissues and blood stains into pit latrines instead of burying them in the anthills as it used to be, have gained prominence among many families. In this very perspective, the researcher would argue that modernity represents cultural change, which of course as evidenced in the data of the current study, is viewed or interpreted by a majority of the participants as cultural loss. While it is vital to note that African cultures including the Bukusu culture are growing, as seen in this current study, it is important to recognize the fact that times have changed. As some members on the forum conceded in chapter four, the present generation is living in different and difficult times. The Bukusu traditional property which was valued in form of cattle has now been transformed into money. Land, which is the community's main resource has become less and over utilized with increased population. This increased population has also resulted into heightened levels of diseases which were otherwise unknown to the community, more especially HIV/AIDS.

From the findings, this study reveal that despite the opposition from the anti-circumcision proponents focusing on the health concerns and economic constrains and setbacks, a majority of the Bukusu people are in consensus that the rite is still relevant as a practice. Based on the information from the interviews, notes from my participants' observation backed by literature on previous studies related to the subject, the researcher registered his argument that the Bukusu male ritual circumcision plays an important role of enforcing positive values in the society. These values have been discussed in sections of chapter five. African rural folks also had, and still have, the capacity to think about who they are and where they come from, articulate their beliefs and customs authentically and formulate knowledge that sustains their beliefs and customs. For example, participants of the thirteen member forum of discussion which was held at B. Masinde's home during Wanyonyi's circumcision ceremony had the capacity to remember clearly and articulate what they knew with regard to their cultural practices. They demonstrated their capability in critical analysis of the circumcision rite which they have practiced for ages. In their analysis they were not focused on the positive, but also on the negative aspects that accompany the male circumcision ritual practices. Some of these negative aspects include economic and health effects to the initiates and the entire community. Sorcery and witchcraft are the vices that are collectively guarded against at most circumcision ceremonies. This explains the reason why initiates are always guarded, guided and assisted by selected groups of the male and female close relatives.

Third objective was to investigate the role of Bukusu male ritual circumcision in the generation of social capital in the context of social economy by Bukusu people of Bungoma County. This was in answer to the third question of the research, which was: What is the role of male ritual circumcision to social capital in the context of social economy in the context of Bukusu people of Bungoma County? It is evident from the data collected and the discussions thereof that culture

is a formidable force in positioning and reshaping circumcision among the Bukusu people. Focus was also to assess how and what it is that motivates the members of the Bukusu community to continue performing this practice despite the excruciating pain involved for the initiates, and other overarching factors that threaten the health of the youth and the general economic conditions of the community. In the light of the foregoing justification, it was noted that the majority of respondents are in support of the continuation of Bukusu male ritual circumcision but with modifications. The immense social capital embedded in male ritual circumcision can highly contribute to the economic development of the society; hence leading to a positive social change. As earlier noted, countries like Japan and Israel have used rituals to grow their economy. This also can be replicated by Kenyan communities that still practice cultural rituals.

For a long time rituals such as Bukusu male ritual circumcision have been undermined. They have been looked at from the negative point of view, thus failing to understand the values that come with it. It is worthy noting that the Bukusu people of Bungoma County have blended traditional, Christian and Western beliefs, attitudes and practices. For this reason, male ritual circumcision is still being practiced in most parts of the county. The relative peace and cohesion that is witnessed in Bungoma County is partly attributed to the values and virtues of life; some thrived from the practice of male ritual circumcision. In such an environment, value-based education is inculcated to the people who are perceived to be responsible citizens. It was ascertained that the Bukusu male ritual circumcision is significant in various ways. The practice of this ritual brings about sense of community, sense of respect to elders and authority, sense of hospitality, sense of sanctity to life and many others. With a view to ascertain the extent of generation of social capital in the social economy by male ritual circumcision, this research found that intense teachings that are given to the neophytes while in seclusion, make them fit to belong in a society and contribute to the social-economic development. The process and

organization of youth for lifelong goals depends on how well they will adhere to the education passed on to them while in seclusion. The implications for vocational training in seclusion therefore is an impetus to the stability and sustainability of the economy.

Many of the dissenting voices were focused on the rite's effects on the economic and health aspects than on its eradication; therefore they were in favor of the continuation of the ritual. Continuation of this ritual in the present circumstances prompts legislation to maintain the cultural rituals for purposes that protect the cultural rights of the people. This means that bringing male ritual into law will form a jurisprudence that will make people have freedom in practicing their cultural rights without any fear of intimidation, stigmatization, and threats of prosecution. This means that governments will have a say in the planning, preparations, and control measures during and after ritual festivities. The litigation on matters of ritual especially Bukusu male ritual circumcision seek to bring on board various stakeholders who would ensure that the practice is safe. Countries like Japan and Israel have embraced social cultural resources like male ritual circumcision to grow their economies. This can be borrowed by Kenya to tap on the immense social capital embedded in ritual in order to grow the economy.

7.2 Conclusions

The study concluded that Bukusu male ritual circumcision wields an influence on the initiates that are made to go through it. The influence permeates to the community where these boys come from. The influence is demonstrated by the following conclusions and findings:

First, Bukusu people have a culture pertaining to male ritual circumcision. This important aspect defines them as a particular people. This aspect cannot be wished away easily. Some of the cultural practices are good while others are bad. The good cultural practices that support and perpetuate life have to be encouraged while those that undermine life discouraged. The whole of

the Bukusu male circumcision ritual is premised on the notion of solidarity for the young, the old, the dead, and the unborn. It serves to enhance and mend broken relationships between neighbors, relatives, and friends. Bukusu male ritual circumcision can be basis for the growth of the social economy. The gathered groups at various ritual performance: whether at an animal slaughter place (*khwibakilo*), at the riverside (*esitabicha*) for the mudding of the initiate (*khumana*), or at the threshold (*khuluya*) for an operation, they all represent the whole concept of solidarity for the nucleus and extended families.

Secondly, Social capital is generated by Bukusu male ritual circumcision through various ways. Participation at the ritual performance enhances people's thinking, feeling, behavior, and cohesiveness towards one another in the Bukusu community. In other words the researcher concludes that it is at the ritual function that the process of learning the characteristics of the social and cultural rules are grasped. The misunderstanding of opinion between the antagonists and protagonists of the ritual as evidenced in the data is based not in the scientific explanations, but rather in the socio-economic and health implications. Those who maintain this ritual are motivated by one common trait-the unquestionable loyalty and obedience to their cultural authority. The circumcisers are simple ordinary people who perform their work without any particular hostility construed to be inflicted to the initiates. Before a ritual operation is done on the initiate, cultural indoctrination has already taken place. This meant to bash away any sense of trauma and resentment by offering as sense of conformity, acceptance and belonging to the norm. However, without putting fundamental health standards in place, mostly this humble practice of using traditional circumcision tools is destined to causing serious discursive, and destructive health ramifications on the entire community, especially in this era of HIV/AIDS. Apparently, social capital generated by ritual circumcision has the power to influence the community and the individuals undertaking it. The unquestionable loyalty, obedience, and trust

to cultural demands is what should inform the outside world to be able to fathom why pertinent and serious questions linked to the excruciating pain for the initiates, and the community's health and economic effects are overlooked.

Third, Bukusu male ritual circumcision generates immense social capital, which can be a reliable contributor to the development of the social economy. It was ascertained that the Bukusu male ritual circumcision is significant in various ways. Through the conversations in the course of this research, it was ascertained that the practice of this ritual brings about sense of community, sense of respect to elders and authority, sense of hospitality, sense of sanctity to life and many others. With a view to ascertain the extent of generation of social capital in the social economy by male ritual circumcision, this research found that intense teachings that are given to the neophytes while in seclusion, make them fit to belong in a society and contribute to the social-economic development. The process and organization of youth for lifelong goals depends on how well they will adhere to the education passed on to them while in seclusion. The implications for vocational training in seclusion therefore is an impetus to the stability and sustainability of the economy. However we have other reasons why some people continue embracing traditional circumcision. The data gathered from this current study indicates the majority of parents and guardians who choose to have their boys ritually circumcised in the village to do so by the commencement and convincement of their social custom plus a myriad of other reasons. First, they desire to have their son's genitalia look like their fathers and grandfathers. Secondly, they do as a fulfillment to their cultural requirements. Third, they do so as a means to sparing their sons from the socio-cultural and psychological effects, which is, saving their sons from being ridiculed by the ritually circumcised members of the community.

Finally, Bukusu male ritual circumcision has persisted for a long time because of the social capital elements embedded in it and its contribution to the development of social economy as outlined below. Bukusu male ritual circumcision is a very important rite of passage such that social enterprises are created as a result of giving space for the formation of social capital. In such an environment, the social economy would stabilize and thrive hence by extension there would be enhanced macroeconomic development. Social capital therefore is a platform upon which relationships are built and society held together. The elements of social capital such as trust, social cohesion, sense of community, and many others influence people towards realizing mutuality and solidarity in the society.

7.3 Recommendations

The first recommendation relates to the first objective of this study which sought to establish the prevailing philosophies, attitudes, and perceptions on Bukusu male ritual circumcision. The study found out that people have divergent attitudes and perceptions about Bukusu male ritual circumcision. There were those who advocate for its total annihilation and there those who advocate for its continuation but with radical modifications. This study therefore recommends that Bukusu male ritual circumcision should be recognized as important ritual that marks the heritage and identity of the Bukusu people. Some norms, values and attitudes on Bukusu male ritual circumcision are good while others are negative and dehumanizing. All that advocates for human rights such as the Christian community and other agencies should engage with institutions to mitigate the negative and dehumanizing aspects of male ritual circumcision. This could be through open forums that discusses these cultural practices that highlight, educate and empower young people and others on the situation and importance of circumcision ritual. While concurring with other speakers on the forum by staying in favor of the continuity of the male

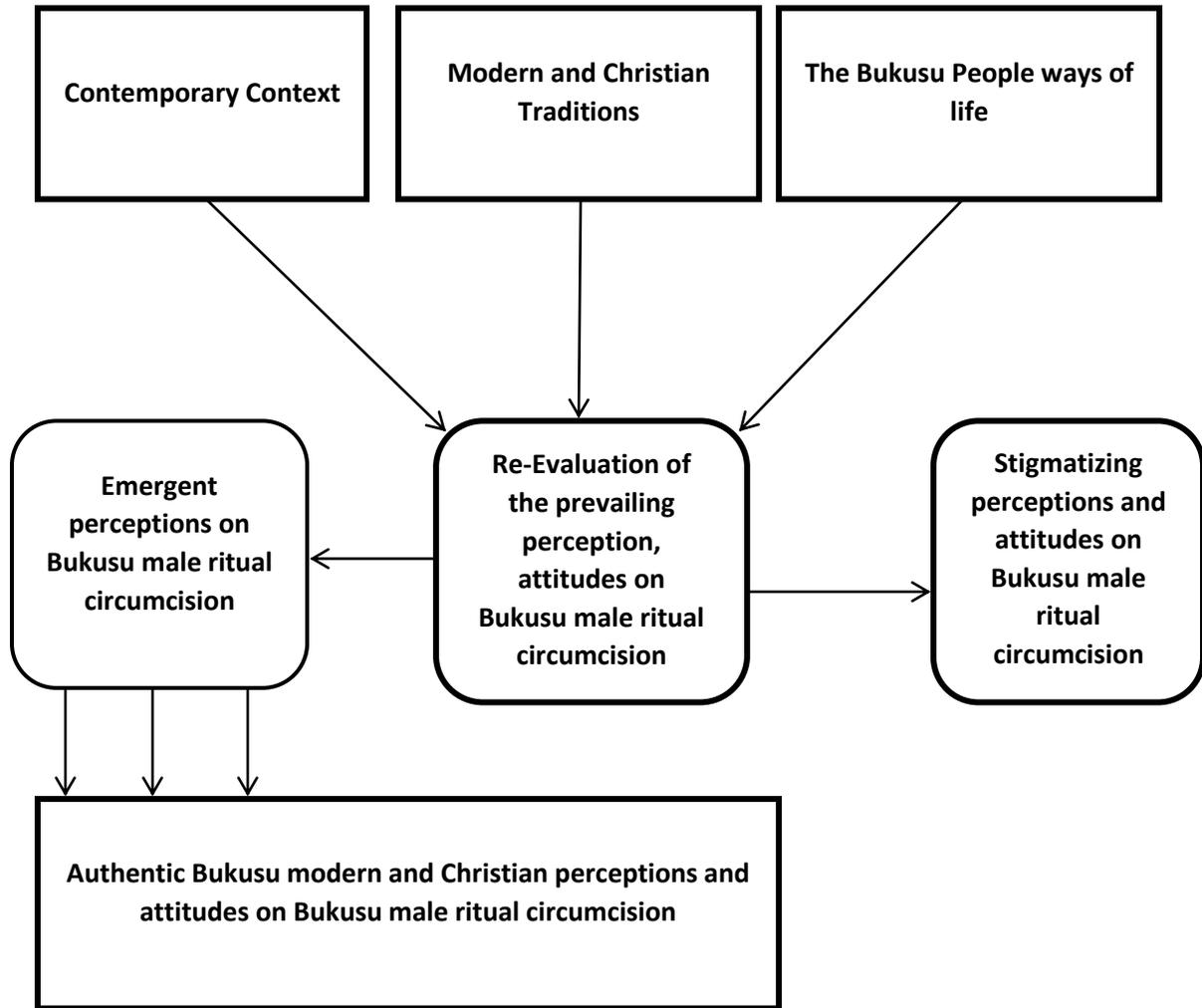
circumcision rite among the Bukusu people, the researcher offered his suggestions, which he thought if adhered to, would make it more safe and hygienic. The researcher also found these suggestions more realistic and concrete, and would recommend them for by Bungoma County and National Government authorities for adoption. In suggesting that it was fine for certain core elements within the ritual to be preserved, the researcher also proposed that for the critical sanitary reasons, it is imperative for certain other elements to be modified. The researcher's

Four-point comprehensive proposal went as follows:

1. Bukusu male ritual circumcision to undergo a modification so as to shed off the retrogressive aspects and keep those that are valuable to the subjects of circumcision. The modification should be done with a focus on mobilizing the immense social capital that is beneficial to both the individual and the society.
2. All practitioners' operatives, which include the circumcisers, nurses and nurse aides to be supervised by the County office of health. The ministry of health in conjunction with the county authorities under the county government Act to legislate laws and statutes that will govern all ritual practices. These laws and statutes, he proposed, would compel all practitioners will include ritual circumcisers and local nurses and nurse aides that participate in the rituals to be registered with the County Government concerned offices and be issued with certificates of operation, which will be subject to renewal annually.
3. All practitioners to attend mandatory regular meetings, seminars, and trainings on sanitary health care under the organization of the ministry of Health in the County. Particular attention can be directed to care and proper use of tools such as traditional circumcisers' knives and their finger nails (one knife one initiate policy to be instituted) as a means of mitigating the infectious spreading of hepatitis B and related ailments.

4. All prospective initiates for either traditional ritual circumcision or clinical ritual circumcision to be registered in advance between the month of January and April of every circumcision year and the names forwarded to the County authorities in preparation for circumcision in August. This will be done basically for statistical and budgetary purposes in regard to the supply of sanitary equipment for use during the circumcision period.
5. Society and to be particular learning institutions should see rituals as sources of social capital upon which economies can grow. This can happen through a process of legislation in order to recognize rituals as fundamentals to social-economic and political stability. The curriculum should give emphasis on embracing rituals such as circumcision in order to tap on the value-based education embedded in them.

Figure 7.1: Showing Re-Evaluation process that would result in an authentic Bukusu perceptions and attitudes on male ritual circumcision



Source: Author, 2018

Figure 7.1 demonstrates a hermeneutical process that would result in the ultimate Bukusu philosophy, perception and attitude on Bukusu male ritual circumcision. It takes cognizance of the fact that there exists both good and retrogressive aspects of male ritual circumcision. The authentic Bukusu perception on male ritual circumcision is to see it from the perspective of modernity; thus, there should be a re-evaluation, which foresees a free and just society towards culture. Hence, stigmatizing and discriminatory attitudes towards Bukusu male ritual circumcision undermines the cultural rights of people.

The second recommendation relates to objective two, which sought to explore elements and meaning of social capital in reference to Bukusu male ritual circumcision. The study found out that Bukusu male ritual circumcision has immense social capital, which is manifested through various forms such as trust, social cohesion, patience, integrity, community, tolerance and so on. These elements if recognized and utilized can be of great importance to the society as well as individuals. This study therefore recommends that Bukusu male ritual circumcision should be recognized as a source of immense social capital because it provides core elements of preparation to the African child's real life situation. This would enable the initiates to have the capacity to think about who they are and where they came from, articulate their beliefs and customs, and authentically formulate knowledge that sustains their history, beliefs and customs. For example, participants of the thirteen-member forum of the discussions had the capacity to remember and clearly articulate what they knew with regard to the cultural practices. They demonstrated their capability in critical analysis of the circumcision rite which they practiced for ages. In their analysis, they were not only focused on the positive, but also on the negative aspects that accompany the male ritual circumcision practices. Some of these negative aspects include the economic and health effects to the initiates and the entire community. Sorcery and witchcraft are the vices that are collectively guarded against and most circumcision ceremonies. This explains the reason why the initiates are always guarded, guided and assisted by a selected group of the male and female close relatives. Cultural ritual enhancement programs need to be developed to train youth and the society as a whole appropriate ways of rising up children to embrace a liberated view on Bukusu male ritual circumcision. The community and the country would do well to tap from indigenous knowledge on nurturing young people to embrace the responsibility of blossoming and jealously guarding their heritage and sexuality for posterity of the society. This has to blend in with the contemporary scientific knowledge that contextually

addresses issues to do with circumcision ritual. The following process will greatly enhance such education in this modern era.

The third recommendation relates to the third objective, which sought to investigate the role of Bukusu male ritual circumcision in the generation of social capital in the social economy by the Bukusu people of Bungoma County. The study recommends that the County and National Governments should explore ways of how to expedite the process of mobilizing cultural resources such as male ritual circumcision in order to grow the economy. There is need for the society, especially through the modern and church lens, to listen more attentively and resolutely and to honestly seek to understand the importance of rituals such as Bukusu male ritual circumcision by creating channels and forums for free dialogue on issues pertinent to their heritage especially male ritual circumcision. This will provide authentic curriculum content for the training of pastors, religious and cultural instructors on male ritual circumcision. This will help avoid sloppiness when handling very important rituals of the community. The social economy in the society won't thrive in the environment where there is animosity against the rituals that have the capacity to bring people together, generate social networks and trust. The manifestation of social capital elements in the social economy through male ritual circumcision would bring about social stability, tolerance, trust. Sense of community, respect among people, sense of sanctity of life and so on. In the presence of all these forms of social capital in the social economy would generate social enterprises that would improve people's livelihoods. While it is important to note the Bukusu culture is a growing culture as seen in the research data, it is also important to recognize the fact that time have changed. As some members on the forum conceded in chapter six, the present generation is living in different and difficult times. The Bukusu traditional wealth which was valued in form of cattle has now been transformed into cash. Land, which is the community's main resource has become less and over utilized with

increased population. This increased population has also resulted into heightened levels of diseases, which were otherwise unknown to the community, more especially HIV/AIDS pandemic. Based on the findings from the interviews, a number of the participants, especially from among the middle-aged groups were of the opinion that the ritual has become obsolete and therefore it is high time for it to be eradicated. These sentiments can also be attributed to the social-economic, health, and religious changes taking place in the modern society. As noted in the literature and the preceding chapters, cultures are dynamic, and beliefs, customs, norms, and values are subject to change. From this point of view, the social capital embedded in ritual circumcision can be tapped upon to grow the social economy hence; the social enterprises that would be people's livelihood.

Predicated on these recommendations, the researcher envisions that the Bukusu traditional male circumcision ritual would evolve itself into a benevolent agent for a reconstruction of an informed, healthy and organized society. As observed in chapter four by those interviewed, these proposals would bring some form of order in the way traditional practices are carried out. Besides instilling order, these proposals would also minimize the differences and tensions that have existed between the government administration, human rights activists, and the media in relation to the practice of the traditional ceremonies.

7.4 Recommendations for further study

A study should be done on the form and content of other traditional Bukusu musical arts and practices such as: wedding music, funeral music and harvest music with a view to examine in detail, their theory and practice in the context of indigenous and/or contemporary African humanistic, creative, artistic and theoretical thoughts and practices. Moreover, and related to the former, aesthetics in Bukusu verbal arts such as: proverbs, epic, lyrics, dictums and other poetic

formations should be examined in relation to how they are musically theorized, practiced and expressed.

Since this study was limited to the Bukusu community, and hence may not have adequately reflected features in other African communities that practice male circumcision, a comparative study based on form and content of circumcision music of other African communities should be carried out. In this connection, it is also noteworthy that research on aesthetics of other African cultural and artistic practices inclined to human development spheres such as: guidance, counseling, entertainment, leisure, and spiritual, social, philosophical, historical and psychological matters could be carried out.

Lastly, laboratory tests should be undertaken to ascertain the possibility of using the Bukusu traditional herbs (enguu), used in healing the circumcision wound, for the treatment of other wounds. This dimension would be an example of how African indigenous knowledge may contribute to the development of human medicine in modern times.

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APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY

Bukusu – It is a name for the tribe in Bungoma County who speak luhya language called *lubukusu*. “It is one of the seventeen Luhya tribes of Western Kenya” (Makila, 1978).

Bungoma – Formerly called Bungoma District before the promulgation of the 2010 constitution. “It is one of the Counties of Western Kenya which is dominated by the Bukusu people” (Sifuna, 1998).

Busee – these are the excrete kind of substance or the internal products of the intestines of an animal especially the one slaughtered during circumcision that is used to smear the initiate.

Dini Ya Musambwa – “This is the renowned pre-colonial and post colonial religious movement which agitated for fairness and justice for the Africans. It is a religious movement with its headquarters in Bungoma. It advocates for traditional view of all aspects of life” (Wafula, Oral interview).

Elijah Masinde Wanameme – A spiritual leader of the *Dini Ya Musambwa* who advanced both religious and political ideologies with a view of rebelling the colonialists.

Engokho eye luswa – This refers to a chicken that is reminiscent of the scapegoat of Leviticus 16. It is released to the forest carrying the curses and sins of the people as assign of cleansing the community.

Jinyinja – This refers to a traditional way of wedding

Khubita – “It literally means the act of blessing somebody”.

Khukhalaka kimikoye – literally means cutting robes; a ritual performed in honor of somebody that was great and passed on.

Khukhwekhebuka – means a time when a girl begins attending her monthly periods.

Kumusee – Refers to the Bukusu community council of elders

Kumukomosi – Refers to a venerated special tree used for erecting houses and it had a religious significance

Kumusiola – A typical hardy tree used for construction and firewood purposes

Lubukusu – a language typical of the Bukusu people of the Luhya tribe of formerly Western Province of Kenya.

Luhya – These people come from the Western region of Kenya and speak luhya language. “It is a tribe comprising of seventeen sub tribes found in former Western Province of Kenya, Bungoma County” (Sifuna, 1998).

Mulembe – This refers to the act of making peace with everyone. It is commonly used for greetings so as to enhance tolerance and harmony among members of the community. It is a word for peace in Bukusu community and applied to everyone.

Munju – Means the inside of the house.

Namulekhwa – It means someone whose husband or wife died and deemed to be a widower or widow.

Namwima – This refers to a shrine or “a worship place or house of prayer in Bukusu community” (Otiende, 2004).

Nasikoko – This refers to a woman who got pregnant before she got married or commonly said, she got pregnant at home.

Omukhebi – This refers to the person with a gift and talent of circumcising men, hence, a circumciser in Bukusu community

Omukuka– This means a person revered in the community for particular functions. It also “refers to an ancestor in Bukusu community or somebody who can advise on matters of religion and culture so long as he is aged and has strong believe in the ancestors”(Otiende, 2004).

Sisili– This is a traditional hoe typical of the Bukusu people

Webuye – This a town administratively found in Bungoma County and it is also the researcher’s area of study (Webuye Sub County).

Wele Khakaba – This is a reference to a mighty God of heaven who provides. Typically it means God the Provider.

Wele Mayindu – It is an attribute of God which refers to God as eternal. It means God the everlasting- who lives for ages without extinction.

APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

RODGERS WEKESI MUKIMBA
MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
P.O BOX 190 – 50100
KAKAMEGA – KENYA (EAST AFRICA).

OCTOBER, 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: FIELD RESEARCH

I kindly ask for your assistance in helping me carry out field research on the topic: **BUKUSU MALE RITUAL CIRCUMCISION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL: A QUEST FOR THE FUNDAMENTALS**. This is in partial fulfillment of the course requirement for the award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Religious Studies at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

I therefore kindly request you to respond to the questions in the attached questionnaire faithfully and truthfully so that I can get your honest responses concerning the subject of the study. Note that the information you shall provide will strictly be treated with utmost confidentiality, and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Your assistance and ultimate cooperation will be appreciated greatly.

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

Rodgers Wekesi Mukimba

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE RESPONDENTS

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Instructions: Please don't write your name on this form

1. Your age in Years

Below 25

26yrs - 30yrs

31yrs-50yrs

Above 50

2. Sex

Male

Female

3. Marital Status

Single

married

Divorced

Others

4. Education level

Class eight

Tertiary College

Form Four

University

5. Employment

Casual

Salaried

Business

Other

SECTION B: INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

1. What is your understanding of Male ritual circumcision?’

2. How did you come to know about this concept of male ritual circumcision?

3. What characterizes this ritual of circumcision in the most unique ways?

4. Do you understand the historical background of this ritual circumcision in your context?_____

5. What are the underlying values embedded in the male ritual circumcision?

6. How would you explain male ritual circumcision as a source of social capital in the light of trust, social cohesion, mutuality, integrity and sense of community?

7. To what extent can the traditional male ritual circumcision be compared with the modern ways of circumcision in the Kenyan context?

8. What is your perception of underlying values of male ritual circumcision?

9. How has traditional male ritual circumcision been impacted by modernity?

10. Do you understand the reasons as to why male ritual circumcision has persisted despite oppositions in the contemporary setting?

11. Do you perceive any functional values of male ritual circumcision that can be beneficial to social-economic development of the society?

12. What aspects of ritual circumcision do you think are retrogressive that can be changed to suit the contemporary setting?

13. To what extent has male ritual circumcision influenced the social-economic development of the society?

14. Should traditional male ritual circumcision continue being practice? Explain your answer

15. What should be the government's response towards male ritual circumcision?

16. In which way can the society mobilize social-cultural resources for social-economic development?

17. How does these values that are generated from the ritual in the form of social capital bear positive impact in the contemporary society?

18. Should this practice of ritual circumcision continue in the way it has been from time immemorial or should there be some changes? If so, what should be changed and/or

should be maintained, and why?

19. Why do you think it is important for the male ritual circumcision rites to be recognized by the County and National governments?

20. Should the government consider litigating matters to do with ritual be officially recognized?

21. How different is Bukusu male ritual circumcision from other communities?

22. What aspects of the Bukusu male ritual circumcision appear retrogressive that requires removal?

23. How best can clinical circumcision benefit from the structured traditional circumcision so that valuable aspects of ritual won't get lost?

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What are the dynamics inherent in African traditional culture and religion that characterize the African traditional circumcision?
2. Explain from your perspective and context how circumcision is culturally and religiously practiced?
3. Who are the key religious and cultural leaders in the whole process of circumcision and what role do they play?
4. What are the characteristic features of the traditional male ritual circumcision that distinguish it from the modern modes of circumcision?
5. What are the reasons why some people and scholars challenge the manner in which the Africans conduct the male ritual circumcision?
6. Is there any religious significance in the dissemination of the whole process of circumcision in the African traditional way?
7. To what extent does the Biblical mode of circumcision similar to the African traditional circumcision?
8. How does the church view traditional male ritual circumcision in the contemporary setting?
9. What aspects of ritual circumcision can be mobilized for the social-economic development of the society?
10. What is the clear-cut distinction between traditional male ritual circumcision and Christian/clinical circumcision?

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW WITH KEY INFORMANTS

I. Church and Religious Informants

1. What is your understanding ordinarily about male ritual circumcision?
2. Do you perceive any way that male ritual circumcision has been beneficial to the society?
3. What is the social capital of male ritual circumcision in general?
4. What can be the contribution of the church towards sanitizing male ritual circumcision to be in tandem with the contemporary setting?
5. Should male traditional male ritual circumcision be abolished completely?
6. Which way can Christian/clinical circumcision be treated as a rite of passage?
7. Similarities between the Old Testament circumcision and that of your culture?

II. Interview with Cultural Informants

1. Do you have any knowledge about the origin of the male ritual circumcision in your culture and what could be the underlying values that informs the element of social capital?
2. What makes you think that male ritual circumcision should continue being practiced despite the influence of factors that come with modernity?
3. To what extent do you understand circumcision from the Biblical Old Testament perspective?
4. Do you have symbols of theistic divinity such as three-legged stool, spear, and traditional clothes in your culture which are associated with the male ritual circumcision?
5. As far as the sacrifices are concerned, blood is very significant. How is this significant both in your culture and as compared to the Old Testament model?
6. To what extent does male ritual circumcision serve as platform for the formation of social capital that would be important for social-economic development?
7. Are you familiar of the personalities that underwent ritual circumcision; and which ways have they influenced society positively?
8. In which way can the society mobilize social-cultural resources for social-economic development?

III. Interview with the initiates

1. How old are you?
2. What is your knowledge about circumcision?
3. Why did you choose to be circumcised at home and not the hospital?
4. What are some of the challenges that come with traditional circumcision?
5. Do you think Traditional male ritual circumcision should continue in its forum?

IV. Interview with parents of the initiates

1. Why is circumcision important?
2. Why did you consider your child be circumcised at home and not the hospital?
3. What are the economic implications of this ritual?
4. Why do you think this mode of circumcision should continue?
5. Are there any modifications you think can be done to Bukusu male ritual circumcision?

APPENDIX 6: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Opening

My name is Rodgers M. Wekesi and a PhD candidate at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. I am undertaking a research on the topic: BukusuMale ritual circumcision and Social Capital: A quest for the fundamentals. I would like to ask you some questions concerning the significance of male ritual circumcision in relation to social capital. I hope to use this information to help the scholars, psychologists, social workers, teachers, educationists, curriculum and the society to better understand the underlying values of this important ritual. The interview should take about 3 hours. Please air your views as honestly as possible. Let me begin by asking you some general questions.

Body

A. Objective 1

- i. What is your understanding of male ritual circumcision?
- ii. Are you familiar with the stages of male ritual circumcision?
- iii. What is the significance of each stage?
- iv. Is male ritual circumcision still relevant in this modern time?

B. Objective 2

- i. What is the relationship between male ritual circumcision and social capital?
- ii. What is social capital?
- iii. Are you familiar with the elements that form social capital such as integrity, mutuality, sense of community and trust?
- iv. To what extent does male ritual circumcision generate social capital?

C. Objective 3

- i. In your own opinion, what is the role of male ritual circumcision in the social economy?
- ii. What are some of the social enterprises in the social economy that come because of the social capital generated by male ritual circumcision?
- iii. How best can governments, societies/communities mobilize the social capital of male ritual circumcision as social-cultural resources to grow the economy?
- iv. What is the significance of the values embedded in male ritual circumcision?

Closing

- A) I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there any information that you would consider beneficial to this research?

- B) I should have all the information I need. Would it be all right to call you while am at home if I have any more questions? Thanks again.

APPENDIX 7:

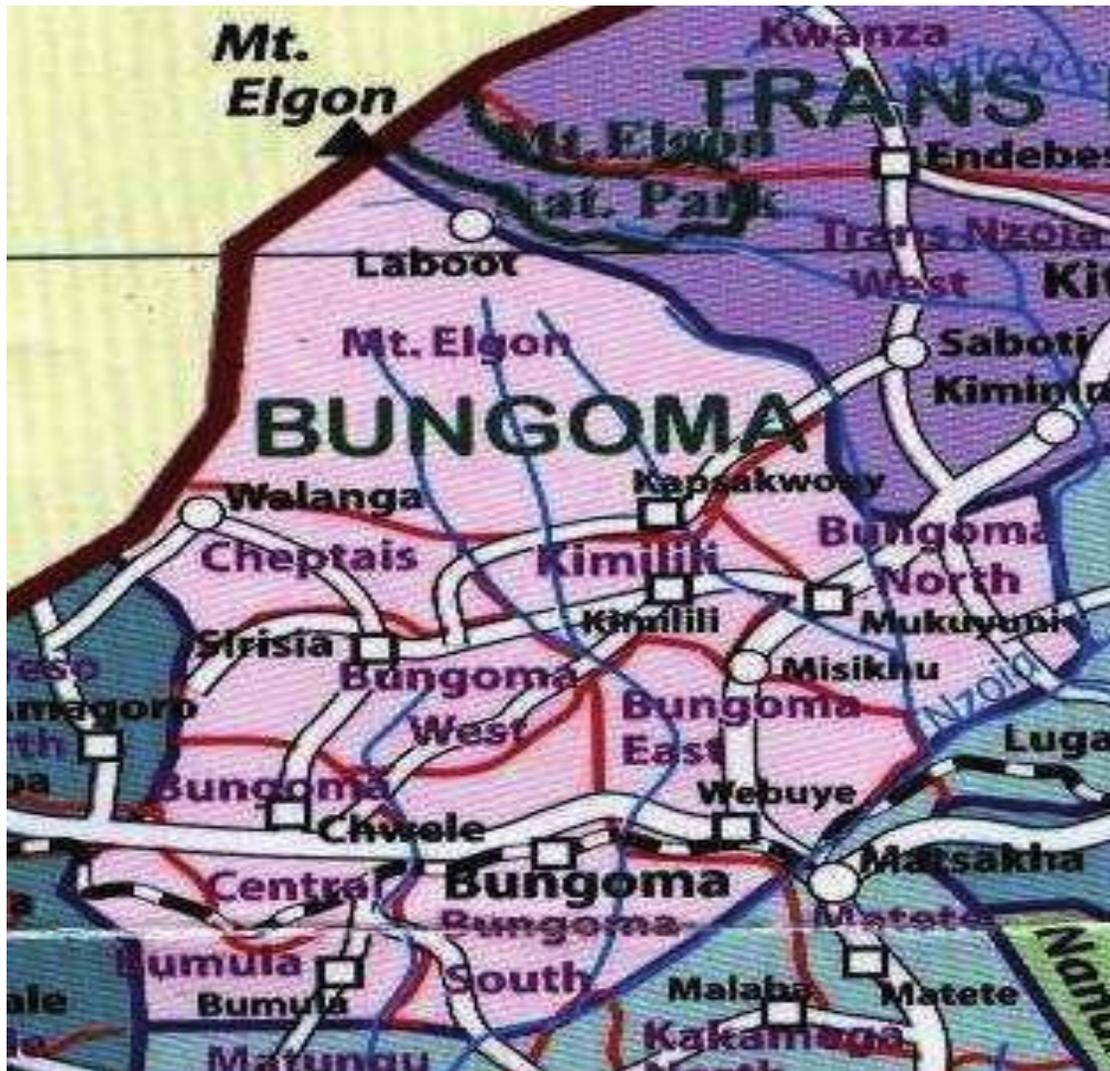
MAP OF KENYA



SOURCE: “<http://cog.go.ke/downloads/category/82-county-integrated-development-plans-2013-2017?>” download

APPENDIX 8:

MAP OF BUNGOMA COUNTY



SOURCE: “https://www.researchgate.net/figure/304771787_fig4_Figure-8-Map-of-Bungoma-county-in-Kenya”

- The white straight road from east to west represents the famous great North road

Note:

- “The areas marked with pink are divisions or sub counties of Bungoma County”
- “The areas marked with blue color represent neighboring Counties of Kakamega, Busia, and Transzoia of the defunct Western Province”.



APPENDIX 9: UNIVERSITY RECOMMENDATION LETTER

Tel: 056-31375
Fax: 056-30153
E-mail: sse@mmust.ac.ke
Website <http://www.mmust.ac.ke>



P.O Box 190
KAKAMEGA 190 - 50100
KENYA

MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

1st February, 2018

National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovations

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Recommendation Letter for Rodgers Mukimba Wekesi REL/H/300/2015

The above mentioned has been our student taking a Degree in Doctor of Philosophy in Religious studies. The final year consist of a major research work leading to a dissertation of more than 40,000 words

The student selected topic is '*Male Ritual Circumcision and Social Capital: A cultural Autopsy in the Kenyan context*'.

The research will take place in Bugoma County of Western, Kenya from May 2018 to November 2018.

Kindly grant this student the required permit.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Ochieng Ahaya
CHAIRMAN, SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

APPENDIX 10: NACOSTI RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION LETTER



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,
2241349,3310571,2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245,318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website : www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

NACOSTI, Upper Kabete
Off Waiyaki Way
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No. **NACOSTI/P/18/47082/21195**

Date: **16th February, 2018**

Wekesi Rodgers Mukimba
Masinde Muliro University of Science
And Technology
P.O. Box 190-50100
KAKAMEGA.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on *“Male ritual circumcision and social capital: A cultural autopsy in the Kenyan context,”* I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Bungoma County** for the period ending **16th February, 2019**.

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Bungoma County** before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit **a copy** of the final research report to the Commission within **one year** of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

GODFREY P. KALERWA MSc., MBA, MKIM
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Bungoma County.

The County Director of Education
Bungoma County.

APPENDIX 11: AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



THE PRESIDENCY
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND COORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Telephone: 055- 30326
FAX: 055-30326
E-mail: ccbungoma@yahoo.com
When replying please Quote

Office of the County Commissioner
P.O. Box 550 - 50200

BUNGOMA

12th March, 2018

REF:ADM.15/13/VOL.11/58

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION.

Reference is here made on a letter Ref; NACOSTI/P/18/47082/21195 dated 16Feb, 2018 from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation on the above subject matter refers.

The bearer of this letter Mr. Wekesa Rodgers Mukimba is a student of Masinde Muliro University of Science and has sought authority to carry out a research on, "**Male ritual circumcision and social capital: A cultural autopsy in Kenyan context**," in this County for a period ending 16th Feb, 2019.

Authority is hereby granted for the specific period and any assistance accorded to him in this pursuit would be highly appreciated

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'G.W. Khaemba'.

G.W. Khaemba
For: County Commissioner
BUNGOMA COUNTY

APPENDIX 12: AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
State Department of Education – Bungoma County

When Replying please quote
e-mail: bungomacde@gmail.com

County Director of Education
P.O. Box 1620-50200
BUNGOMA

RefNo: BCE/DE/19/VOL.1/125

Date: 13th March, 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**RE: AUTHORITY TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH – WEKESI RODGERS MUKIMBA -
REF: NACOSTI/P/18/47082/21195**

The bearer of this letter Wekesi Rodgers Mukimba is a student of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. He has been authorized to carry out research on ***“Male ritual circumcision and social capital: A cultural autopsy in the Kenyan context,” Bungoma County*** for the period ending 16th February 2019.

Kindly accord him the necessary assistance.

pp 
JACOB ONYIEGO
COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
BUNGOMA COUNTY

APPENDIX 13: RESEARCH PERMIT

CONDITIONS

1. The License is valid for the proposed research, research site specified period.
2. Both the Licence and any rights thereunder are non-transferable.
3. Upon request of the Commission, the Licensee shall submit a progress report.
4. The Licensee shall report to the County Director of Education and County Governor in the area of research before commencement of the research.
5. Excavation, filming and collection of specimens are subject to further permissions from relevant Government agencies.
6. This Licence does not give authority to transfer research materials.
7. The Licensee shall submit two (2) hard copies and upload a soft copy of their final report.
8. The Commission reserves the right to modify the conditions of this Licence including its cancellation without prior notice.



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



National Commission for Science,
Technology and Innovation

RESEARCH CLEARANCE
PERMIT

Serial No.A **17441**

CONDITIONS: see back page

APPENDIX 14: PARTICIPANTS INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Tel: 056-30870
 Fax: 056-30153
 E-mail: sgs@mmust.ac.ke
 Website <http://www.mmust.ac.ke>



P O Box 190
 50100 Kakamega
 KENYA

MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. HEADING

a. Name and address of the institution:

MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,
 P.O BOX 150, KAKAMEGA – 50100

b. Researcher's name and address:

WEKESI RODGERS MUKIMBA
 P.O BOX 9, TIRIKI, TEL. 0700108940, 0734207896
 E-mail mroderswekesi@yahoo.com

2. TITLE OF THESIS

BUKUSU MALE RITUAL CIRCUMCISION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL: A QUEST FOR THE
 FUNDAMENTALS

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this study is to:

This study investigated the relationship between Bukusu male circumcision ritual and social capital. Among the areas that were examined included: First, ritual circumcision as source of social capital which is the indigenous knowledge passed on to the initiates through this rite. Second, the ways in which social capital embedded in the circumcision ritual constitute the adolescents' moral, economic and intellectual development. Third, focus in this study was to investigate the relationship between institutions; that is how the ritual circumcision constitutes social capital that would be basis for the construction of social enterprises in social economy, social cohesion and values.

4. PROCEDURES: Since Bukusu circumcision ceremony (*sikhebo*) takes place in the month of August of every even year, I am duly prepared to carry out the research this years as from April to September, 2018. It will be conducted in two sessions:

- a. From the month of April to July, 2018, the researcher will interview key informants, elders and the elite in the Bukusu community. The participants/subjects who will have earlier been identified by purposive sampling will be orally interviewed about various aspects of the rite.
- b. Between July and September, when the accrual circumcision take place in the month of August, the main subjects/participants will be: parents of the initiates, initiates, circumcisers among others. Except on the eve of circumcision when the research will extent to the night, the rest of the study will take place during daytime. The researcher will participate while observing and taking the relevant photographs and video and audiotaping the proceedings.

5. BENEFITS: The participants contributing to the study will be given a honorarium. They will also be allowed access to the data collected and will be free to share the findings with the

researcher. The findings will m be printed and bound for future reference by the university and other scholars.

- 6. PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS AND CONFIDENTIALITY:** Participation is voluntary. The participants may withdraw from participation in the study at any time without negative consequences. All information will be treated as confidential. Anonymity is assured and the data would be destroyed should d the subject withdraw. The persons who will have access to research data will be:

- a. My supervisors and the chair of Faculty of social sciences
- b. Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology – special collection archival sections.

- 7. DECLARATION:** After reading and understanding, and abiding by the above conditions, you can therefore make a declaration:

I..... do abide by this informed consent letter/form requiring me to participate in this study about *Bukusu Male ritual Circumcision and social Capital: A quest for the fundamentals*. My role in this study will be at..... In Bungoma County. I therefore append my signature.....today on/Date.....